

Washoe County adopts rules to address problem bears

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

New rules designed to keep bears and other animals away from garbage will take effect across Washoe County within a few weeks, health officials say.

Regulations adopted by the Washoe County Health District are primarily driven by mounting problems with garbage-raiding bears but are also designed to address other animals, including coyotes, raccoons and domestic dogs, said Jeanne Rucker, an environmental health supervisor for the district.

For years, Washoe County took fire from officials with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and other critics for not having a trash ordinance on the books to help deter garbage-raiding bears. In Washoe County, only Lake Tahoe's Incline Village General Improvement District has enacted a law that prohibits giving wildlife easy access to garbage.

Lack of such a law in other parts of the county where bears are common, including Verdi, Washoe Valley, Galena, Sky Tavern and Caughlin Ranch, represented "an exasperating problem," said Carl Lackey, a biologist and bear expert with the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

Bears gobbling protein-rich garbage – many of them much larger than normal wild bears – are an increasing problem. Many break into homes and cars and end up being killed by authorities as a result.

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