

# LTWC submits expansion plans to TRPA for wild animal rehabilitation facility in Meyers area

By Kathryn Reed

Before Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care backers begin an all-out fundraising campaign to get the dollars together to buy a 16-acre parcel in Meyers and transform it into a state-of-the-art rehabilitation-education center, they want to make sure TRPA is OK with their plans.

This is why even though LTWC doesn't own the property, plans were submitted last week and assigned to a planner on Monday who will review the documents.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has 30 days from Dec. 10 – the date the plans were submitted – to determine if all the documents are in order. Then it could be 120 days before a decision is made.



LTWC is still in need of

whole fish to keep feeding the raptors and bears it is caring for.  
Photo/Provided

However, Kristi Boosman, spokeswoman for the bi-state regulatory agency, said a hearing officer is expected to make a ruling in February. LTWC would need a special use permit for a public services facility. The use is allowed under either Regional Plan.

Boosman added that TRPA supports what LTWC wants to do.

“We are looking at a three-phase project. The first would be to move the rehab center from the current site to the new location,” Tom Millham told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Millham and his wife, Cheryl, have been running LTWC for more than 30 years. One of the main problems is they have been doing so in their back yard on three-quarters of an acre.

They are limited in the numbers of animals and types they can take in. LTWC has 10 bear cubs – the most in its history. Capacity meant the state Department of Fish & Game had to find another facility for two cubs that were injured and in need of help.

The three bear cages LTWC uses are all approved by the state.

In all, the center has nine cages. It’s anticipated that would increase to 14 at the new location. Plus, they would be larger.

The Millhams have devised a makeshift area for waterfowl. That’s something that would change at the larger location – having a dedicated site for those birds.

Plus, the plan is to have three areas for raptors. This would eliminate the need to seasonally take the netting up and down.

Right now LTWC volunteers are nursing a bald eagle and peregrine falcon. Both should be released back into the wild.

If TRPA approves the plans, then Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care supporters will begin in earnest raising the \$10 million to \$12 million that is needed to acquire the property and transform it into the animal rehab-education center.

What the education center – the second phase – would look like is also in the plans. The downstairs would be a teaching room, amphitheater, café and shop, while upstairs would be offices.

A large vacation rental is on the property now. The footprint would not change – just what the inside looks like and the use.

The property also has an active TRPA permit, so what LTWC is doing is amending it a bit.

“We submitted the plans with elevations, where cages would be placed on the property, all the water and electrical,” Millham said.

The third phase of the new facility would be to create a park for non-releasable animals. Only native animals to the Sierra would be housed there.