

# LTWC could have new home in 2014

By Kathryn Reed

In a matter of days Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care may secure a 27-acre parcel on the South Shore where it will move to and develop a facility that encompasses its current rehabilitation headquarters, and add an education center and a site where animals that can't be released will live out their lives.

Tom and Cheryl Millham, who founded and have operated LTWC for more than 30 years, will be meeting with a representative of the property owner on Oct. 8 with the intent to cement a deal.

Until an agreement is signed the exact location is not being made public.



Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care has been rehabbing animals for more than three decades.

Photo/LTWC

The plan is to enter a long-term lease agreement instead of the center buying the land.

Some of the money for the deal would come from a pot of cash that was left to LTWC by a South Lake Tahoe resident who died. However, it will only cover a fraction of the more than \$10

million that the new facility plus lease is expected to cost.

Securing necessary permits from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the jurisdiction where the property is located would still have to happen.

When LTWC was looking at the Echo Creek parcel at the bottom of the Old Meyers Grade, TRPA was open to having the animal care center go there.

LTWC is now in the middle of a residential community on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe. For years they have been looking to move.

The Echo Creek deal fell through when the property owner wouldn't budge on the asking price and more areas were deemed stream environmental zones, which meant less land could be covered with structures.

The plot of land across from Lake Tahoe Airport where people sled in the winter has been considered. LTWC reps have looked at about a half dozen locations this year, including two outside the basin. But in the end they want Lake Tahoe be a place as much as part of the name.

The parcel now under serious consideration is flat and comes with more than 200,000 square feet of coverage.

If all goes as planned, the first phase would be built next year. It would include all of the cages, roads, maintenance garage and house for the caretaker. At all times someone will be on site.

In addition to increasing the number of cages of injured animals, many will be larger than they are today.

It's possible the great horned owl at LTWC could become its first animal at the permanent care facility. With it being blind in its right eye, the bird may not be able to be released into the wild. That decision will be up to officials

with the state Fish and Wildlife Department.

Today LTWC has three bear cubs, the owl, some squirrels, a red-tailed hawk, and nine raccoons. The raccoons will be released Oct. 12.