

Later trash pick up best thing for Tahoe bears

By Cheryl Millham

The problems of bears and garbage have gotten worse over the past 15 or so years.

Put yourself in a bear's mind for the next few minutes. It's about 5:30am with no humans and no cars in sight. You (the bear) walk around the corner and the street ahead of you has bear-size bowls (trash cans) at every house. How kind the humans are to feed me out of these wonderful bear-size bowls or easy to open plastic bags.

Now I don't have to go out of my way to forage out in the forest all day. Never mind the mess I make. The humans will clean it up.

This is the thinking of a bear.

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care starts getting calls about "bad bears" because of situations like this. People want us to come and take the bears back out to the forest. We try to educate the public that we are in the forest and that the bears come to where the "easy" food source is located. We try to plead with them to not put their garbage out until just before it is to be picked up.

That will help solve the problem of bears coming around neighborhoods for food.

One comment we hear is, "I'm not going to get up out of bed at 5am to put out my trash. Period!" I can totally understand. I am not a morning person either, but, Tom gets all the trash ready the night before and at 5:15am on trash day, he gets up and takes it out. What a guy.

We have spoken with the South Tahoe Refuse company and asked if there were any way the trash pick-up hours – for residents – could be a little later in the morning. We were always told what a large job it would be to change all the pick-up routes and we were always told how sorry they were, but “no”.

About two weeks ago, as I was sorting through the mail, I threw out a flier from the refuse company, but noticed on the front cover a line (in red) that said there would be a change of pick-up hours. I was so excited I picked up the flier. This is monumental. I would encourage all South Lake Tahoe residents (and visitors) to get behind these new hours and clean up Tahoe’s trash problems.

The new hours started March 1. So, we all have time to figure out what time pick up will be at your house.

The male bears should start coming out of hibernation in the middle of March. If they find no garbage to eat, they should go back to the normal grazing on grasses, which should be plentiful then because of the rain we have received lately.

Another interesting fact is that if the sows don’t have all that food out of garbage cans to put on the extra weight, they should go back to having one cub and not 2 or 3.

So, come on Tahoe, let’s get behind the new pick-up times. You have no more excuses.

Oh, and one more thing, thank you South Tahoe Refuse.

Cheryl Millham is executive director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.