

USFS to enforce use of bear proof containers

By Kathryn Reed

While bear proof containers and trash receptacles exist at most developed campgrounds owned by the U.S. Forest Service, people aren't always using them.

This is creating a problem. It means bears are learning campgrounds are an easier way to get food than foraging for it in the woods.



All that food needs to be stored in a bear proof container. Photo/LTN file

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is looking to enforce the rule that people must use the containers. An environmental assessment is being prepared for a forest order. Comments are being sought until March 14. More info is available online or contact Stephanie Coppeto at (530) 543.2679 or sacoppeto@fs.fed.us.

"The idea is not to punish people. It's for their own safety," Lisa Herron, spokeswoman for the local USFS office, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We are trying to promote good habits."

The other goal is to reduce the number of human-bear

conflicts.

Kiosks at the entrance of campgrounds explain the importance of using bear boxes. But people either aren't reading the signs or they are blatantly disregarding the rules.

If they keep violating the regulations, they could be fined.

Several national parks have had a zero tolerance policy for years. If a ranger sees food out, they confiscate it. And if you don't get back in time, they could have your cooler overnight. A lecture and fine come with getting the food back.

The Forest Service is taking action now to try to get ahead of the camping season.

Day use areas like Kiva, Pope and Baldwin beaches on the South Shore would also be affected.

The proposal is to phase in the enforcement. Fallen Leaf Lake Campground, Meeks Bay Resort and Meeks Bay Campground would be the first areas in the basin to be monitored more rigorously.