

Women guilty of tampering with Incline bear traps

By AP

A mother and her adult daughter have been convicted of tampering with a bear trap at Incline Village in an effort to thwart wildlife officials' efforts to capture the animals.

It's the first such case prosecuted in Nevada, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported today.

Cheryl Ann Morrison, 63, of Truckee and Season Morrison, 35, of Reno each face up to \$3,000 in fines – \$1,500 for each of two misdemeanors.

Incline Village Justice Court Judge E. Alan Tiras found them guilty of obstructing or interfering with a Nevada Department of Wildlife officer and tampering with a vehicle.

The two women admitted during a daylong trial last month they deliberately tripped a bear trap set to capture a black bear that was becoming a nuisance in October. They said they thought state wildlife officials had set the trap illegally but the judge disagreed.

In his six-page ruling issued Monday, Tiras concluded the law cited by the defense that makes it illegal to set steel traps within 200 feet of a public road was written to target leg traps used to catch small fur-bearing mammals.

Those traps are "very different" than the large culvert-style traps used to capture bears, the judge said.

Prosecutors say state wildlife biologist Carl Lackey placed a motion-activated camera near the trap outside Incline Village that captured the Morrisons and a third unidentified woman tampering with the trap.

Authorities were able to identify by the woman by, among other things, Facebook postings regarding the incident. Their sentencing date has not been set.

The incident occurred during a year of mounting conflicts between people and trash-raiding black bears.

Critics say the Department of Wildlife is killing too many bears. State officials counter they're having more and more trouble doing their job because people are interfering with efforts to capture problem bears, including tampering with traps.