

Nevada trapping regulations subject of lawsuit

By Martin Griffith, AP

RENO – Two men suing Nevada wildlife commissioners say trapping regulations are causing needless suffering for thousands of animals not targeted for their fur, including dogs, golden eagles and mountain lions.

The lawsuit by Donald Molde of Reno and Mark Smith of Incline Village, filed Thursday in Washoe County District Court, seeks an injunction to halt the upcoming trapping season and force change.

Their complaint comes after commissioners in August voted against increasing the number of times trappers must check their traps or snares in most of Nevada. Now, fur trappers must do so every four days except near the urban areas of Reno, Carson City and Las Vegas.

Days between checks means animals not targeted by trappers will suffer injury or death that earlier release might have been prevented, Molde and Smith said. Even targeted animals such as bobcats, foxes and coyotes should not have to suffer because of regulations that allow for trapper “convenience,” they added.

Typical injuries include broken bones, dislocated joints and tissue damage, Molde said. Some animals such as mountain lions and dogs break teeth when they bite at traps and can lose toes and claws if they manage to get free. Captured animals also are vulnerable to attack by other wildlife.

“This action has been long in the making and is a direct result of the recalcitrance by the commission to consider public concerns about trapping,” Molde said. “Wildlife is not

the private property of sportsmen and trappers. It is an invaluable public asset and deserves protection.”

Commission vice chairman Jeremy Drew declined to comment on the suit, saying, “I am confident in our public process and consideration of our mission.”

Last month, wildlife commissioners approved changes that would require visits once every two days to traps set around Reno, Carson City and Las Vegas. But they kept the four-day interval for the rest of the state.

Joel Blakeslee, president of the Nevada Trappers Association, said the suit lacks merit and trapping would end in Nevada if Molde and Smith have their way.

“They would love to have us on a 24-hour trap check because it would make it impossible to trap in the state,” he told the Associated Press. “This lawsuit has to do with just regulating us out of business.”

Long mileages, adverse weather and other factors already make it difficult for trappers to check traps in remote areas once every four days, Blakeslee said.

But Molde and Smith say Nevada has one of the longest trap-visitation intervals in the country.