

Opinion: Important to protect Tahoe's bears

By Carl Lackey

When Gov. Brian Sandoval proclaimed July as Bear Logic Month in Nevada he challenged Nevadans to think like a bear.

That is what Bear Logic is all about, thinking like a bear.

Homeowners, vacationers and even day visitors need to think about their property and even their campsites as a bear would think about those things. Remove items that a bear would find attractive and bears will not become conflict bears.

A number of items can peak a bears "culinary curiosity" including bird feeders, pet food, barbecue grills and of course, trash. You cannot leave these things out in bear country and expect the bears and other animals to ignore them.

The battle to keep bears alive and wild is highlighted in July, but is actually a yearlong challenge. I have worked with homeowners associations and other property management concerns in the Lake Tahoe Basin and across the rest of western Nevada to educate residents about the advantage of using bear logic in their neighborhoods. To reward those neighborhoods that do their best to avoid attracting bears, NDOW has started recognizing some of these communities as Bear Logic Communities.

The Caughlin Ranch Homeowners Association on the west side of Reno and the Tahoe Village Homeowners Association in the Kingsbury area of Douglas County are the first two "communities" recognized under the program. These two neighborhoods have stood out in their ongoing efforts to educate their property owners on the importance of following bear logic practices. They have taken a consistent proactive

approach to removing garbage and other food sources that attract bears to their neighborhoods.

“We are proud to be recognized by NDOW as a Bear Logic Community,” said Lorrie Olson, general manager of the Caughlin Ranch Homeowners Association. “NDOW has recognized our efforts to educate our residents on bear awareness and safety in dealing with this important issue.”

The Tahoe Village Homeowners Association located atop Kingsbury Grade was one of the first neighborhoods on the Nevada side of Tahoe to recognize the emerging bear/garbage problem in the early 2000s and work toward solutions. Bear proof garbage containers were installed and continuously improved and residents are continually reminded of their duty to protect the bears by removing attractants.

“The bears were here first,” said TVHA maintenance supervisor Mike Paulson. “We owe it to the bears to manage our trash properly.”

The challenge at Tahoe Village is a big one. There are over 1,000 units and 29 garbage receptacles that Paulson and his crew are responsible for. To complicate matters, many of the condominium units are rentals and during the summer the population of those units turns over bringing a whole new group of people each week.

The work of protecting the bears is ongoing. The key to success with any of these efforts is consistency. The bears will take advantage of any slip up by residents and communities so being vigilant is important in these bear logic efforts.

I’m excited to add more communities to the list and wants residents or homeowners who want to know more to contact ndowinfo@ndow.org with the subject line of “Our Bear Logic Community.”

Carl Lackey is the black bear biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.