



A bear cub awaits its fate after its mother was shot and killed last summer.

*Emma Garrard/Sierra Sun file photo*

## Seeking a bruin solution

### Bears will make Placer agenda

Lake Tahoe's black bears are now sleeping, but some of the humans they got into trouble with last year are already planning what to do when they wake.

Residents will remember the spring, summer and fall of 2007 as a record period for bears breaking into homes and bear deaths. Tonight at the monthly Placer County Fish and Game Commission meeting in Auburn, biologists and game wardens will get together to talk about the large mammals and discuss what may have caused the record fatalities and break-ins, said Jason Holley, a wildlife biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game.

Holley said he will also be asked to give a prediction for the coming months, he said.

Bear advocates say the agency did too little too late last year to protect the bears and residents' interests.

"I would like to see them say they are willing to work with us, the BEAR League and the sheriff's department," said Ann Bryant, executive director of the BEAR League. "They have tied our hands in every way imaginable."

Bryant said local agencies that want to help have been thwarted by the state department. She said "adverse conditioning," tying negative experience to humans and their food, is a proven method that her group practices.

She said in 2004, Fish and Game banned the use of "Bear-B-Gones" — trash cans rigged with a pepper spray trap inside. When the lid is opened the bear receives an eyeful of spray. The state agency, Bryant said, told her to stop using the \$1,000 traps because they constituted bating and harassing of wildlife.

Meanwhile, Bryant's organization is willing to help Fish and Game with the bear issue with 150 trained volunteers, while the agency suffers from a slim presence in the Tahoe Basin, said Bryant.

"They don't have anybody, not a single person [in the Basin], and even if they did they wouldn't be able to do anything," she said.

When faced with a problem the agency takes hours and sometimes days to respond because they are based in Auburn, Bryant said.

Others who do not align themselves with the League's philosophies still feel not enough is being done.

"The sad thing is that the sheriffs will come out and say 'we can't do anything,'" said Timberland homeowner Don Harder. "They say don't call Fish and Game, they can't do anything. Who is supposed to take the ball with this? The homeowners?"

The under-funded agency could see further reductions because of California's \$14 billion deficit, said the area's state senator, Dave Cox. No new funding is earmarked to address the bear problem, Cox said.

Harder said he applauds the efforts undertaken in Nevada's Department of Wildlife, with its three strikes rule for bear break-ins and bear relocation programs.

With proposed budget cuts throughout California, Placer County Supervisor Bruce

Kranz said as near as anyone can tell, the effort will need to come from the existing resources.

"The county has never used money for those [bear] programs," Kranz said. "In order for us to deal with this bear problem we are going to have to find someone in the private sector to help. In some ways I don't think it's about money."

Cooperation between agencies is the key, said Kranz, indicating that the BEAR League, homeowners, restaurants along with law enforcement should find common ground to solve the problem. The District 5 supervisor said he might even consider strict trash ordinances to curb the bears. Such an ordinance is something Bryant said her volunteers are lobbying for as well.

**Bear hunting kills**

1997: 1,677  
1998: 1,676  
1999: 1,836  
2000: 1,796  
2001: 1,633  
2002: 1,768  
2003: 1,670  
2004: 1,848  
2005: 1,418  
2006: 1,822  
2007: 1,700

**Bear hunting tags sold**

1997: 15,264  
1998: 18,475  
1999: 18,321  
2000: 20,620  
2001: 19,796  
2002: 22,157  
2003: 22,331  
2004: 21,000  
2005: 23,160  
2006: 24,076  
*Calif. Department of Fish and Game*

**Bear Depredation Permits**

1997: 175  
1998: 250  
1999: 340  
2000: 260  
2001: 175  
2002: 200  
2003: 240  
2004: 225  
2005: 175  
2006: 180  
2007: 150  
*CDFG*