

Tahoe does it, why not Mammoth?

Written by Benett Kessler
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Mammoth's Wildlife man, Steve Searles, trained Anne Bryant of the Tahoe Bear League on how to manage bears with flash-bang devices and other non-lethal fire arms.

Ironically, she can use those tools on Forest Service land in the Tahoe area. So far, in Mammoth Lakes, Searles can not.

This week, the Animal Planet features Bryant and her work in Tahoe in three episodes called Blonde vs. Bear starting Thursday at 10pm. More than seven years ago, when Searles worked to save Arthur

Searles remains hampered while woman he trained in Tahoe uses full arsenal of non-lethal tools.

the Bear in Mammoth, he also remained in contact with Bryant and helped her develop her own bear management work in Tahoe. Bryant told the Sierra

Wave that when she gets calls from home owners, campers or law enforcement, she can respond on Forest Service land with her non-lethal weapons. She also carries a real gun in her truck, just in case.

"I use a 12 gauge with rubber slugs, bangers and heavy duty paint ball guns," she said. Bryant is aware that the Forest Service in Mammoth has so far forbid Searles to use these necessary tools for his work. Bryant said in Tahoe the Forest Service and Fish and Game are in partnership. "They've come around quite a bit," she said.

Bryant does not function under a government contract. She works independently as the Tahoe Bear League. She points out that in Tahoe, it's a different branch of Fish and Game. For whatever reason, her program works with their programs.

In Mammoth, Police Chief Dan Watson continues to work with the Forest Service to get permission for Searles to use the tools he needs to do his work on forest land which winds in and around the Town of Mammoth. Last year, Searles ran into repeated frustrations in his effort to control bear activity when the animals would cross over onto federal land.

Chief Watson did discover that another Fish and Game department outside the area came up with a training plan to allow their seasonal workers to use firearms on forest land. He has submitted a similar request to the Inyo National Forest for Searles.

Blonde vs. Bear airs Thursday at 10pm on cable and 6 or 9pm on satellite. Check local listings. Three episodes will air weekly followed by three new episodes of Steve Searles show, Bear Whisperer.