

MHC Thousand Trails Limited Partnership
Two North Riverside Plaza, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606.

RE: Bear boxes in Tahoe Valley Campground

As you are probably aware, Lake Tahoe receives millions of visitors each year. Unfortunately, try as we may, many of these visitors remain uneducated about coexisting with wildlife - specifically as it relates to securing their trash. This has become problematic for our Black Bears – especially in campground settings – and it often results in their demise. This can be due to vehicles striking Bears as they cross roads to access campsites, slowly dying from poisons that are tossed in dumpsters and ingested, or euthanization because they have become aggressive. There are also real hazards to people when bears are attracted to campgrounds. For these reasons, it is imperative that we do everything we can to supply our visitors with the tools necessary to keep attractants away from animals.

The El Dorado County (California) Fish & Wildlife Commission serves as an advisory body to the County's Board of Supervisors. Our members have expertise in biology, conservation, or other fields related to fish and wildlife. A portion of our county is in beautiful Lake Tahoe, and the Tahoe Valley Campground falls within our jurisdiction. We are writing to request your cooperation in assisting the county and state and federal agencies with managing the bear/human problem in the Tahoe Basin, where the conflict between humans and bears has reached epic proportions.

Tahoe Valley Campground is one of only two campgrounds in the Lake Tahoe Basin that does NOT have Bear boxes in the campsites. It is our hope that we can encourage you to rectify this by installing Bear boxes in your campsites, especially in the sites that are only available for tents. Here are some of the reasons that Bear boxes are so important here:

- We know that guest safety is a priority for you, but Bears can become aggressive if food is left out available.
- Visitors often look for campgrounds with Bear boxes in them when searching for places to vacation. Researching social media campground information sites demonstrates that it's one of the first questions asked, especially for tent campers.
- The campground is in a residential area, and attracting Bears to sites can be an imposition on neighbors who must work harder to prevent Bear break-ins to their vehicles and homes. El Dorado County currently has an ordinance requiring Bear

boxes for residents, and not providing them for campground guests is inconsistent with the hard work being done locally to reduce human/Bear conflicts.

- Tent campers are especially at risk if they are not given a secure location for their food, as well as any item that has an odor (lotion, shampoo, soap, sunscreen, etc).
- When break-ins to tents, RVs and/or vehicles by Bears do occur because there is no Bear box, guests are less likely to return.
- Bears who become habituated to human food may have to be euthanized. It would look bad for the campground to be the cause for a Bear's demise.
- The south shore of Lake Tahoe has a higher-than-normal population of Black Bears, which puts your campground guests at significantly higher risk.

We at the commission recommend the installation of Bear boxes at the Tahoe Valley Campground to assist with managing and reducing human/bear conflict in the Tahoe Basin. Purchase of Bear boxes would not have to be an "all at once" situation. Implementation of a Bear box system could begin with tent sites and progress incrementally. There are programs through South Tahoe Refuse that help with Bear box purchasing (<https://southtahoerefuse.com/bear-info/>).

We would appreciate hearing back from you and can be contacted via e-mail at _____.

Sincerely,

Patrick Weddle, Chair
El Dorado County Fish & Wildlife Commission