Letter: NDOW bear actions questioned

To the community,

Many of you are probably aware of the female mother bear captured at Incline High School last Wednesday morning without her cub. The story has been covered by the **media**. There have been daily reports since Wednesday through Saturday.

Unfortunately, many of the details within the reports are misleading and not truthful on the part of NDOW.

The mother bear was on the football field of Incline High School on Wednesday morning and the school went into lockdown. A volunteer for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, who is also an Incline Village resident, was called to the school to act on NDOW's behalf. The NDOW volunteer treed the female bear on campus and kept her there for two hours until NDOW personnel arrived. Despite her being a lactating female, she was tranquilized and removed from IHS and taken to Carson City. NDOW said this mother bear was caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and was not a "threat".

She was brought back to IHS in the late afternoon in the hopes of reuniting her with her cub. The BEAR League and other bear advocates were aware of the plan and steered clear so the mom and cub could be reunited. NDOW brought a family trap with the mom to IHS Wednesday late afternoon behind a locked gate. NDOW, however, reported that "someone found their way in there and disrupted the area and kept the reunion from happening."

Chris Healy of NDOW further stated, "Unfortunately, NDOW bear trapping efforts in Incline Village have been greatly hindered by people tampering with traps. The strategy has a chance of working only if the trap is not tampered with. Over the past few years, a small group of people have seen fit to prevent

NDoW from trapping bears at Incline Village by encouraging activists to monitor traps and prevent bears from entering those legally set traps”

As many of you know, from 2009-2013, NDOW killed 48 percent of trapped Incline Village bears. Because of this, some Incline Village BEAR League volunteers and bear activists have peacefully protested and monitored trap activity in Incline Village the last few years. It is clear to those in the community and beyond that NDoW’s comments about the disruption Wednesday night are clearly targeting and accusing the BEAR League volunteers as interfering and disrupting the mother-cub reunion. NDoW’s comments are not only dishonest but NDOW knows they are highly misleading:
Since the story broke out on Mynews4 on Wednesday, the BEAR League, BEAR League Incline Village volunteers, and other bear advocates all chose to “stand down” and not discuss or post anything publicly relating to the trapped mother bear. Bear advocates only concern was reuniting the mother with the cub. Everyone agreed to stay clear of IHS so NDOW could reunite the mother and cub in the family trap. Unfortunately, this did not happen Wednesday night/Thursday morning.

On Thursday morning the BEAR League received a call about a cub sighting near IHS. Two BEAR League volunteers immediately went to the area and also immediately called NDoW to report the sighting.

BEAR League volunteers canvassed the neighborhood. Four different households reported seeing a cub. Three sightings on one street still appear legitimate while a fourth sighting on a different street turned out to be a yearling.

At this time, NDOW also said they would prefer to place the trap very near to the last sighting of the bear cub.

BEAR League volunteers approached, asked and secured full approval from a property owner to place the trap on their

property. The BEAR League then called NDoW explaining they secured a placement of the trap and the location was not readily visible for others to see.

The trap stayed in place from Thursday night through Saturday morning. Unfortunately, the cub did not enter the family trap. The lactating mother bear was released out of the area Saturday afternoon with a GPS tracking collar in case the cub is located.

NDOW should have never trapped and removed a mother bear without getting the cub. She could have been easily escorted off the school property. Mother bears typically place their cubs in trees for their safety and leave only to come back a short time later. Again, this lactating mother should have been allowed to leave school grounds to get back to her cub. Instead, she was treed for two hours, tranquilized, and taken to Carson City.

Furthermore BEAR League volunteers assisted NDoW both in reporting sightings and arranging permission on private property for the trap to be set so the cub can be reunited with his mom. NDoW, however, has implied and continues (with Saturday reporting) to infer that BEAR League volunteers hindered their efforts. NDoW's Chris Healy through carefully crafted Press Releases, emails and interviews continue to slander and tell untruths about bear advocates in Incline Village and continue to blame others for their actions that lead to an abandoned cub.

It's unfortunate that this Incline incident is not the first time NDoW abandoned a cub. On June 2nd of this year, NDOW quietly trapped a lactating female in Carson City. They did not catch the cub and NDOW relocated this lactating mother bear in the Pinegrove Mountains two and one half hours away. NDOW is not always transparent as this information was obtained through a public records request. Because this most recent abandoned cub happened in Incline Village where bear

advocates monitor NDOW’s activities, NDOW could not sweep this under. Instead, they are attacking the very organization and people who truly wanted to reunite the mom and cub as NDOW handled this situation wrong from the beginning.

If anyone sees this lone cub with two tags in both ears, please call the BEAR League at 530.525.7297.

Thank you,

Carolyn Stark, BEAR League volunteer