

DOWNED FENCES A DANGER TO BEARS

In July, federal agency Wildlife Services set a bear trap at Lane County Waste Management's Rattlesnake Road facility without consulting Patti Hansen, manager of the facility. Hansen says that the bear trap was set while she was on vacation and that she had the trap removed before any bears were trapped and killed.

The fences at the Rattlesnake Road disposal facility are in a continuous state of disrepair, which encourages bears and coyotes to climb through the fence and forage in the waste facility, according to Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense. He says the facility's managers were "baiting wildlife and doing nothing to mitigate it" when they failed to prevent animals from entering the premises and instead set a bear trap.

While she is aware of the fence problem, Hansen says that nightly vandalism prevents the facility from having se-

cure fences. "We fix them as soon as we can," she says. "We walk the perimeter constantly. It's a never-ending battle."

Fahy says he is also concerned about the waste facility's relationship with Wildlife Services, a federal animal control agency that sometimes competes with local animal control businesses. Kevin Christensen, Wildlife Services' assistant state director, says that the agency set the live bear trap in response to a request from Lane County Waste Management and reports of bear sightings in the surrounding area.

"We did not take any bears on site," Christensen says. "We put the trap out, and we later determined that we were safe to go in and remove the trap." He says that if a bear had been caught, he was unsure whether Wildlife Services would have relocated or killed the bear after capture.

Both Hansen and Christensen say that bears were not a problem at this facility, and they have not caused problems since the trap was removed.

Fahy says that using non-lethal methods of mitigation, like electric fences, are considerably more humane and cost-effective. "It's easy to keep bears out of places with electric fences, and that's why we need a permanent solution to this problem," Fahy says. "It doesn't have to involve the destruction of wildlife. There is just no excuse for this." — Amy Schneider



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