

Wildlife Advocacy in Nevada....A Brief Summary Since 1975

Sportsmen have been organized for some time. For example, Nevada Waterfowl Association, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Nevada Trappers Association and other groups have had a presence for many years. Sportsmen have been energetic in promoting their self-serving interests. They have also been successful in providing a PR image to the general public, legislators and others that many of us regard as misleading, particularly in this day and age.

On our side of the advocacy issue, the Nevada Humane Society (Reno) and Dart Anthony's advocacy group in Las Vegas were quite active during the late 1970'S and early 1980's. Most of our energy was directed at trapping issues, and bobcat trapping in particular which, in our view, was out of control. The treatment and management of wild horses, mountain lions and other wildlife issues were also of concern.

Two requests for an injunction against bobcat trapping were filed by 1985. We lost both, though the second request was nearly granted. The next year, the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners curtailed the trapping season by a couple of months due to concerns about the animal.

After the mid-80's, advocacy on our side of the issues subsided, though there were flurries of activity from time to time, such as the debate about the \$3 "predator fee" that was passed by the Nevada Legislature about 15 years ago. The Nevada chapter of the Sierra Club, the Nevada Humane Society and others did get involved in that issue.

Our current version of advocacy was born in 2007 when "Trish" Swain and an associate started TrailSafe (TrailSafe.org), a group advocating trapping reform for protection of domestic pets. TrailSafe proved to be a durable, persistent and successful group that garnered lots of support and was successful in getting regulations and bills passed that did provide added protection for pets in the Reno/Las Vegas areas, mostly by mandating trail offsets for setting of traps along popular hiking trails.

In 2010, the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners decided to establish a black bear hunt for the first time in 80 years. Because the Nevada black bear population is low (few hundred) and located near Lake Tahoe/Incline Village/South Lake Tahoe where many bear enthusiasts live and enjoy their presence, a predictable backlash occurred. To this day, the bear hunt and management of urban/bear conflicts are very unpopular with the general public. Acrimony and disagreements abound over bear management. This push-back by the general public has added considerably to the momentum created by TrailSafe since 2007.

At the same time, the emergence of social media...particularly Facebook, and the advent of digital photography with prolific posting of images by sportsmen has brought a new and rapidly increasing awareness to the general public about what is being done to wildlife in this country and around the world. (The story of Cecil the Lion is a great example). What was relatively invisible to the public in years past can be on its computer screen every day.

Nevada Wildlife Alliance came into existence because of these factors and because wildlife advocates who want better, more democratic, less self-serving wildlife management see a need to get organized, just as sportsmen have done in the past. While most of our base is in Northern Nevada, we welcome all to join us if your interests coincide with ours. We're also hopeful that we will have a sister organization in Las Vegas soon.

Times are changing.....