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DURANGO

BEAR PUT DOWN

CPW, city officials stress importance of securing garbage

BY JANE ROONEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Colorado Parks and Wildlife euthanized a male bear last weekend in west Durango that was later found to have its stomach and upper intestine blocked by plastic garbage bags and at least 10 non-flushable cleaning wipes.

"This is the sad reality of bears eating trash," said CPW District Wildlife Manager Luke Clancy in a news release.

The bear was reported to be lethargic and unresponsive to human presence. It was found Saturday behind a home in west Durango on Delwood Avenue.

"It kind of dug itself a little hole in the area behind this person's house," said John Livingston, spokesman for CPW. "And it was kind of just trying to lay down. It wasn't really trying to stand up."

The bear appeared bloated and was moaning in a way that indicated distress and pain. CPW officers tranquilized the bear and could immediately tell something was seriously wrong with its stomach, Livingston said.

After conducting a health assessment, three CPW officers made the decision to euthanize the roughly 300-pound bear, according to the news release.

The officers did a necropsy and discovered the bear's stomach and upper intestine were completely blocked by trash. The lower intestine was empty, further indicating the extent of the blockage.

Wildlife officials estimated the bear to be about 18 years old.

District Wildlife Manager Stephanie Taylor said the plastic was so compacted that the bear could no longer digest food and would likely have starved



Courtesy of Bear Smart Durango

A tranquilized bear was later euthanized and found to have a blocked intestine from plastic garbage bags and cleaning wipes. The bear is suspected of rummaging through trash and entering homes in west Durango.

to death over the course of months if it did not die from illness/infection sooner, according to the news release.

Wildlife officials suspect it may be the same bear to have entered homes in the area. It likely would have been euthanized regardless of its health issues, Livingston said.

The bear was caught and tagged during a 2012 research study, and hadn't been involved in any conflict behavior before this year.

Natural food sources below 7,500 feet in elevation in the Durango area have been low this year as a result of a late spring freeze and a prolonged drought. Still, bears should not have access to human-provided food sources like unsecured trash, the CPW release said.

Marge Rebovich, a county resident, said what happened is "heartbreaking."

"I figure that was just a little 4-year-old bear, probably, when he got tagged and lived all the

way to be 18 years old – and then to have to die that way. It's just unconscionable that we can't do better with trash somehow in town," she said.

To prevent bears from accessing unsecured trash, it is crucial for residents to ensure their trash is secured. That means not overfilling bear-resistant trash cans, making sure they are latched correctly, not putting trash out until the morning of pick up and maintaining a trash can's functionality, Livingston said.

Bryan Peterson, of Bear Smart Durango, said if people have maintenance issues with city-provided bear resistant trash cans, they can call 375-5004 to have them repaired.

He said it is the city's responsibility to require proper use of bear resistant trash cans. He said it's not enough to provide the infrastructure alone; there needs to be enforcement of citations, with fines, for noncompliance with bear and trash laws.

In the last six weeks, the Durango Police Department recorded 268 bear-related calls, said Amanda Garrison, spokeswoman for DPD, in an email to the *Herald*. Of those, officers initiated 207 calls and residents reported 61 of them.

During the same period, officers and code enforcement personnel issued 23 written warnings and five citations related to bear activity and compliance, she wrote.

"It's really important that if people do have bear-resistant trash cans, that they're using them properly," Livingston said. "And for folks that don't, looking for ways to secure that trash in other ways, whether it's inside a garage or a shed."

As of Sept. 8, Bear Smart

See **BEAR, 8A**

CIVIC CAMPUS PROJECT

Demo concerns lead to lawsuit

Police building would start from scratch instead of renovating

BY GABRIELLE WALLACE
HERALD STAFF WRITER

A local developer has filed a lawsuit against the city of Durango to stop the demolition of the former Arts and Science Building at 215 E. 12th St.

The building is home to the city's Community Development and Engineering departments. The two teams will move into a temporary office space with Axis Health Systems in October ahead of the demolition of their current office building.

The building is set to be demolished as part of a new joint city hall and police station project. Voters approved a 30-year extension of a half-cent sales tax last year to fund the construction of the joint city hall and police station.

Aspects proposed in the project's conceptual design that residents had in mind when voting on the sales tax extension have changed. The conceptual design included an underground parking structure, which has now shifted to a secure surface lot for Durango Police Department. Additionally, the police department was originally going to move into the 215 E 12th St. building housing Community Development and Engineering, but the building was ultimately deemed not structurally fit for DPD and the city determined the department would benefit most from

See **CITY, 8A**

Neighbors post signs against suspected drug activity near school

Residents say concerns have been ongoing for long time near Park Elementary in Durango

BY JANE ROONEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

As the chatter of children playing on the playground fills the air in Durango's Park Elementary School neighborhood, residents suspect that drug deals are taking place in the area.

People in the neighborhood said they have reported suspected illicit activity to police,

but they are frustrated the issue persists even with police interventions.

On the same block where drug activity is suspected across from the elementary school, a resident has posted five signs in an effort to deter the sale of drugs.

"Sharing is good," the signs read. They display a list of "good things" to share such as toys, books, ideas and kind-



Signage is posted on East Seventh Avenue across the street from Park Elementary School by neighbors concerned about drug activity on the block. The five signs on the block were posted Tuesday.

JANE ROONEY/Durango Herald

ness, juxtaposed against a warning that reads, "Sharing drugs near my school is a FELONY."

At the bottom of each sign is a final message: "Make smart choices. Protect yourself and

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