

## SMC Parks Dog Pilot Project Work Group

### Work Group Goals:

- Recommend to the Parks Department 1-2 park sites where on-leash dog access can be piloted and evaluated, based on the work of the Dog Management Committee, and
- Provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors about a possible off-leash pilot location

## Notes from Meeting

April 1, 2019

400 County Center, Board Chambers, Redwood City

**Work Group Members Present:** Cervantes, Corwin, Merrilees, Sullivan, Brophy, Hearn, Johnson, Bonilla, O'Brien

**Workgroup Members Absent:** Erridge, DelCarlo

**Staff:** Jensen, Finnegan, Schoof, Dallman, Arechiga

**Facilitator:** Brown

### Goals for this meeting:

1. Confirm selection of two on-leash pilot parks
2. Develop criteria for evaluating the success of the on-leash pilot parks
3. Determine the time frame for the pilots
4. Discuss communication plan for on-leash dog pilots
5. Introduce discussion of an off-leash pilot location

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm. Pat Brown, facilitator, introduced herself and asked work group members and staff to introduce themselves. She then described how this group is different than the Dog Management Committee. The Work Group is:

- working on implementation rather than policy development
- composed of community representatives and Parks Department staff
- charged by the Board of Supervisors with implementation and evaluation of pilot sites to test the feasibility of dog access to SMC Parks, specifically to identify 1-2 on-leash pilot sites and 1 off-leash pilot site

Pat reminded the group of their decision to use consensus decision-making within the Work Group using the fist-five method. She also referenced the process map timeline which outlines the process for this work group, and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Pat also presented and obtained the Work Group's approval of the following group agreements:

- Members prepare for meetings by reading meeting packet
- Speak respectfully during meetings
- Listen for understanding
- Allow the facilitator to guide the process

### **Review notes from the March 4<sup>th</sup> Work Group Meeting**

A work group member asked for the sentence regarding marbled murrelettes birds to clarify that the birds' presence would not be a reason to prohibit on-leash dog access throughout the entire park. Staff agreed to incorporate this change. The notes were modified to reflect this information.

### **Public Comment**

There were 13 community members present.

Pat explained that at this point in the agenda members of the public were invited to address the work group and they were asked to keep their comments brief and relevant. She also mentioned there are written comment forms if attendees prefer to submit their input to the workgroup in writing.

Comments addressed the following points:

- Expressed thanks to the work group for moving forward with increasing dog access in San Mateo County Parks
- It was mentioned that before POST owned Pillar Point Bluffs, dogs roamed and accessed this land for many years
- It was mentioned that when Quarry Park was originally established as a county park, it allowed dog access
- Suggested that the work group consider user surveys as a way to collect information for the pilot projects
- Request to reconsider Coyote Point as on-leash pilot park due to negative impact increased dog access would have on animals kept at CuriOdyssey

### **Brief Review of Written Input**

Staff confirmed 4 additional written public comments were provided to the work group, 3 comments submitted at the March work group meeting and 1 comment was emailed.

### **Follow up from March meeting – information requests**

- An addendum hand out was provided to the work group members with on-leash information for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Sonoma Counties.
- Carla Schoof confirmed there are 155.2 miles of trail in San Mateo County parks, not including non-county owned trails such as Crystal Springs. She also confirmed the following:
  - 11.4 miles of trail allow dog access (some are multi-use trails)
  - 98.8 miles of trail allow equestrian access (some are multi-use trails)
- Ellie Dallman confirmed that written public comments have been posted on the Dog Work Group website.
- Peggy Jensen confirmed that environmental documents must be prepared to allow ongoing dog access once the pilot projects are completed.

The work group requested additional information from the Parks Department:

- Request for list of trails that do not allow equestrian access

- Request for more information regarding potential conflict between dogs and the marsh at Coyote Point

### **Update on Ranger Contacts/Education and Data Collection**

Laurel Finnegan, Visitor Services Ranger, then provided an update on the first couple months of monitoring of dog access and ranger outreach in the parks that allow on-leash dog access per the new ordinance:

- 1) Devil's Slide Trail
- 2) Pillar Point Bluff
- 3) Quarry Park
- 4) Mirada Surf
- 5) California Coastal Trail/Dardanelle Trail (Fitzgerald Marine Reserve)
- 6) Bay Trail (Coyote Point Park)

A total of 205 educational contacts have been made by park rangers January 1 through mid-March 2019:

- 68 contacts at Coyote Point Recreation Area
- 67 contacts at Pillar Point Bluff
- 25 contacts at Coyote Point Marina
- 21 contacts at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- 17 contacts at Quarry Park
- 6 contacts at Devil's Slide Trail
- 1 contact at Mirada Surf

The top two contact types encountered by rangers include dogs off-leash (136 on coastside and 17 on bayside) and dogs in undesignated areas (98 on coastside and 19 on bayside). It was mentioned that most of the undesignated area dog contacts continue to be made in parks where dogs are only allowed in a designated area of the park (Coyote Point and Fitzgerald Marine Reserve). There were 28 contacts made where dogs were off trail (17 on coastside and 11 on bayside). Three contacts on the bayside had leashes longer than 6 feet.

The work group suggested it would be helpful to see a month by month comparison. They also asked for more information about the frequency and number of hours rangers are monitoring dog access.

### **Confirm Proposed Sites for Piloting On-Leash Dog Access**

Since new concerns were raised regarding potential conflicts with CuriOdyssey and increased dog access at Coyote Point, the work group agreed to wait until the end of the meeting to confirm the on-leash pilot sites.

### **Consider Evaluation Criteria for Pilot Sites**

Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director, presented the following proposed evaluation criteria to the work group:

- Environmental impacts including:
  - Vegetation – digging; significant increase in invasive species

- Wildlife – change in presence, behavior, location, timing
- Water quality – unattended dog waste
- Visitor conflicts: number of reported conflicts with dogs and people and other dogs; conflicts in restricted areas such as playgrounds
- Staff workload: number of education and violation interactions
- Park use: changes in the number of park visitors

A number of questions and comments were raised by the work group members regarding the proposed evaluation criteria:

- Suggest that horses be added as a potential conflict.
- Request for more information regarding how staff work load will be measured. There is concern that Parks may need additional resources to ensure success.
- Request for more information regarding methodology.
- Suggestion that staff be sure to capture both positive and negative interactions.
- Suggestion to work closely with CuriOdyssey to ensure success.
- Request to look at other counties who have completed a similar process.

In response to a question about water quality monitoring, Ramona Arechiga, Parks Natural Resource Manager, confirmed there are markers to determine bacteria sources however it is very expensive to monitor. She mentioned there is an active Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan at Pacifica State Beach and dog waste is a huge concern. San Vicente Creek also has a water quality improvement plan and the state has required additional dog waste stations as a result.

Staff confirmed they would come back with an updated chart of evaluation criteria keeping in mind input provided by the work group. The work group was reminded that the evaluation data from the pilot sites will be presented to the Board of Supervisors in early 2020. After that data is presented, the Board of Supervisors will decide whether to continue dog access at the pilot sites beyond the pilot period.

### **Confirm Timeline for Pilot Projects**

Staff proposed to initiate the 6 month on-leash pilot projects on May 15, 2019 and that a report back on the 6 month pilot would be presented to the Board of Supervisors in December 2019. Based on the conversation regarding the evaluation criteria, the work group agreed their preference is to change the on-leash pilot project start date to June 15, 2019, to allow the work group sufficient time to finalize the evaluation criteria for the pilots.

### **Present Communication Strategy to Support New On-Leash Dog Pilots**

Carla Schoff, Parks Department Communication Specialist, reviewed the proposed communication plan for on-leash dog pilots, which includes communication to the Parks Commission, Board of Supervisors, Parks department staff, pilot park neighbors and users as well as adjacent organizations including Peninsula Humane Society and CuriOdyssey.

### **Prepare for May Discussion of Possible Off-Leash Pilot**

In preparation for the off-leash dog access discussion, Ellie Dallman presented the off-leash hand out summarizing dog access policies of neighboring jurisdictions (see handout attached at the end of the meeting notes with links to webpages where the information was found).

In addition, the facilitator acknowledged that the May meeting would also include continued discussion regarding Coyote Point as an on-leash pilot park since the work group members continue to have some concerns.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM.

## **Research: Off-Leash Dog Access Policies**

Prepared April 2019 for the SMC Dog Pilot Project Work Group

### **City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) in Colorado**

- [Dog regulations](#) vary on Open Space and Mountain Parks' (OSMP) lands and are posted at each trail/trailhead.
- All dogs must be leashed unless the dog guardian and the dog are registered in the [Voice & Sight \(V&S\) Tag Program](#) and on a trail that allows Voice & Sight control. All dogs walked off-leash must display a City of Boulder V&S Control Evidence Tag and current rabies tags, and must be under "voice and sight control" of their guardian at all times. V&S renewal is required every year.
  - Voice & Sight Control means a dog guardian or keeper has completed the required education class and must be able to prevent their dog from engaging in the following behaviors, regardless of the circumstances or distractions:
    - Charging, chasing, or displaying aggression toward any person.
    - Charging, chasing, or displaying aggression toward any dog.
    - Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife or livestock.
    - Failing to come to and stay with the guardian or keeper immediately upon command by dog guardian.
- Dogs are required to be on-leash in the following circumstances:
  - If a dog and/or guardian have not completed the voice and sight control program;
  - upon exiting their vehicle at all OSMP trailheads, and in the area of the trailheads per the Trailhead Leash Program;
  - During [seasonal leash restrictions](#) in certain areas that prohibit dog access off-leash during different times of the year due to wildlife activity;
  - In picnic areas;
  - Within 100 feet of lakes (there are certain lakes where dog access is prohibited entirely).

### **East Bay Regional Open Space District**

- [Dogs](#) may be off-leash in open space and undeveloped areas of parklands separated from developed areas by at least 100 yards or by fences, provide they are under control at all times.
  - Dogs are considered under control when they are within direct eyesight of the owner/handler and when they have the ability to quickly return to leash when called. Dogs that annoy, harass, or attack people, wildlife, livestock or other dogs, leashed or unleashed, or which enter leash-required or dog-prohibited areas, are presumed to be not under control.
- See the [FAQ page](#) for more information.

### Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA)

- [GGNRA](#) has particular areas designated for “responsible dog walking off-leash when under voice and sight control.”
  - "Voice control" means dogs are within earshot and eye sight of their owner/handler and respond immediately to commands to return to a leash when called.

### Marin County Parks and Open Space

- In certain [Marin County Open Space District Preserves](#), dogs are allowed off-leash on fire protection roads only when under the direct and immediate control of a responsible person.
  - There is a maximum of three dogs per person except for permitted commercial dog walkers.
  - Dogs may not run free in Marshes, meadows, ponds, hillsides or on trails.
- Marin County Parks and Open Space does not have a formal dog park “where dogs can socialize and run off leash in a safe, secure environment.”

### Midpeninsula Regional Open Space

- [One preserve](#) has a marked off-leash area and “visitors must have a leash in their possession and keep their dog under voice control so they do not harass other park users, dogs, or wildlife.”
  - The off-leash area is an unfenced 17.5 acre area located in the center of the preserve.

### Santa Clara County Parks

- There are three [off-leash dog facilities](#): Los Gatos Creek County Park, Ed R. Levin County Park, and Hellyer County Park.
  - Los Gatos Creek County Park has two fenced areas to keep small and large dogs separated.
  - Ed R. Levin County Park has two separate fenced areas to keep small and large dogs separate. This is the largest of all the fenced off-leash facilities.
  - Hellyer County Park has one large area where small and large dogs share roaming space.
- Off-leash areas are for dogs, their handlers and those accompanying them. No other use is allowed, and visitors assume all risks related to park use.
- Dogs must be on a six foot leash prior to entry and after exiting the area.
- Dogs with aggressive tendencies are not allowed. Any dog showing aggressive behavior must be removed from the off-leash facility immediately.
- Dog handlers/owners are responsible for all injury caused by their dog(s).
- The facilities are closed one day a week for routine turf and grounds maintenance.

### **Sonoma County Regional Parks**

- [Dogs](#) are allowed off-leash within enclosed dog parks at Ragle Ranch, Sonoma Valley, and Ernie Smith Parks. The lagoon at Spring Lake turns into an off-leash swim zone and dog playground for several weekends each September. At Doran Beach, a small section of the shore along the harbor is sometimes open to off-leash romping at low tide – inquire at the entry kiosk for details.