

SMC Parks Dog Pilot Project Work Group

Work Group Goals:

1. 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
2. Provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors about a possible off-leash pilot location

Notes from Meeting

March 4, 2019

400 County Center, Board Chambers, Redwood City

Work Group Members Present: Cervantes, Corwin, Erridge, Merrilees, Sullivan, Brophy, Hearn, Johnson, Del Carlo, Bonilla

Workgroup Members Absent: O'Brien

Staff: Jensen, Finnegan, Schoof, Dallman

Facilitator: Brown

Goals for this meeting:

1. Receive research on approaches to on-leash dog management in neighboring agencies
2. Discuss pros and cons of potential on-leash pilot locations identified at the February meeting
3. Agree on 1-2 park locations to implement the on-leash pilot
4. Identify next steps in the process

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

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

Public Comment

There were 11 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:

- Many households own 1 or more dogs and they should have access to County parks with their dogs
- On-leash dog walking should be allowed in all County parks except Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- Desire for Parks Department to allow off-leash dog access in Quarry Park
- Suggestion to partner with adjacent city to allow off-leash access in County parks, similar to Santa Clara/Milpitas partnership
- Suggest the process map be extended to show next steps following September 2020
- Thank you to the work group and Parks Department for moving the pilots forward to increase dog access
- Suggestion to discuss both on-leash and off-leash dog access to move both pilots forward simultaneously

Review of Written Input

Peggy Jensen, Acting Parks Director, then reviewed a summary of the written comments submitted to the Parks Department email that have been shared with the Dog Work Group members:

- 22 emails were submitted
- 18 people expressed a general desire for dog access in San Mateo County Parks
- 8 people expressed concern regarding conflict between horses and dogs, especially on single tracked trails
- 2 people expressed concerns regarding conflict between humans and dogs off-leash
- 2 people expressed concerns regarding conflict between dogs and wildlife

A work group member requested to have the emailed input posted online. Park staff agreed to follow up with Counsel about this request.

Dog Access Approaches in Other Agencies

Ellie Dallman reviewed the handout summarizing research of dog access approaches in neighboring agencies (see handout attached at the end of the meeting notes with links to webpages where the information was found).

A request was made to add Santa Cruz County to the list, and to clarify how many miles of trails allow dog access in San Mateo County Parks, and how many miles of trail allow equestrian access in San Mateo County Parks.

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 146 educational contacts have been made by park rangers January 1 through mid-February 2019:

- 60 contacts at Pillar Point Bluff
- 42 contacts at Coyote Point Recreation Area
- 18 contacts at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- 17 contacts at Coyote Point Marina
- 5 contacts at Devil's Slide Trail
- 3 contacts at Quarry Park
- 1 contact at Mirada Surf

Ranger DelCarlo mentioned there have been fewer contacts made at Quarry Park, in part due to low visibility in the park.

The top two contact types encountered by rangers include dogs off-leash (106 on coastside and 7 on bayside) and dogs in undesignated areas (17 on coastside and 62 on bayside). It was mentioned that most of the undesignated area dog contacts were made in parks where dogs are only allowed in a specific area of the park (Coyote Point and Fitzgerald Marine Reserve). There were 26 contacts made where dogs were off trail (15 on coastside and 11 on bayside). Two contacts on the bayside had leashes longer than 6 feet. One contact reported unbagged feces, and 10 contacts reported owners who had properly bagged their dog's feces.

Review Parks Locations that Meet Dog Management Committee Recommended Criteria

Then, Peggy Jensen reminded the group of the Dog Management Committee's recommended overarching policy statement: *It is the policy of the SMC Parks Department, in managing dog access to County parks, to promote healthy, safe and varied experiences for all park users and to protect natural resources.*

Based on this overarching policy and guiding considerations developed by the Dog Management Committee, Parks Department staff identified the following parks as on-leash pilot site recommendations:

- Coyote Point Recreation Area
- Flood Park
- Junipero Serra Park
- Memorial Park
- Old Haul Road at Pescadero Creek Park

In response to a question from the work group at the last meeting, Parks Staff confirmed that the marbled murrelet bird (federally threatened and state-listed endangered) has been seen in Memorial Park and Pescadero Creek Park flying below the canopy line which indicates presence in those locations, though would not be a reason to prohibit on-leash dog access throughout the entire park.

Work Group Discussion

During the work group discussion, members had a variety of suggestions:

- Desire to select pilot parks that serve the most people
- Request that dog access be considered in Flood Park Redesign project
- Desire to maximize sustained dog access
- Desire to avoid very remote areas for dog access pilot
- Request to test out dog access in camp grounds
- Preference is to not select parks where visitors have to pay to access the park
- Suggestion to closely monitor Parks Department's need for additional resources to manage new dog access in County Parks

The facilitator asked each member of the work group to share their thinking and to identify their top two choices for the on-leash dog pilot. Coyote Point Recreation Area received 9 votes, Junipero Serra Park received 6 votes, Memorial Park and Old Haul Road at Pescadero Creek Park tied with 2 votes each, and Flood Park received 1 vote.

Confirm Work Group Decision Regarding Pilot Sites for On-Leash Dog Access

The Facilitator asked the group to use fist-five to indicate agreement with the two parks identified during the discussion for piloting on-leash dog access: Coyote Point Recreation Area and Junipero Serra Park. All of the workgroup members indicated they were in agreement.

Review of Next Steps in Moving Forward with the Pilot

Peggy Jensen reviewed next steps now that the work group has identified their selected on-leash pilot sites:

- Present recommendation to Parks Commission
- Present recommendation to Board of Supervisors
- Expect to begin piloting on-leash dog access by May 15, 2019

Parks would like to implement off-leash access as soon as possible since the demand is clear. Peggy mentioned Quarry Park is recommended by ranger staff as a suitable off-leash pilot site.

Preview of April Meeting Agenda

Pat noted that the next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, April 1st at 2pm** and will cover the following items:

- Discuss evaluation criteria – how the success of the pilot sites be assessed
- Determine timeline for piloting on-leash access
- Discuss how to publicize pilot parks to neighbors and other stakeholders and to members of the larger community

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Research: On-Leash Dog Access Policies

Prepared March 2019 for the SMC Dog Pilot Project Work Group

Alameda County
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alameda County policy states that dogs are not permitted to be or run at large in any public or private place, except for private places where the person in charge has provided consent.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Dogs must be kept on leash no longer than six feet at all times.• Exception granted for dogs “being used without leash to hunt... or otherwise work domestic animals... as long as such dog does not wrongfully harm or damage or threaten... person or public or private property.”
California State Parks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Parks has designated areas where dogs are permitted on a leash not exceeding six feet in length at all times. Dogs are not allowed off-leash in any areas of State Parks.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ For sanitary reasons, dogs are not permitted on most beaches. In San Mateo County, dogs are allowed on-leash at Montara State Beach and Bean Hollow State Beach.○ Park Superintendents have the discretion to further restrict areas open to pets (i.e., trails, buildings, etc.), and vicious or unusually noisy dogs will not be allowed in the park.• Butano State Park allows dogs on-leash in campgrounds and on paved developed areas only, and they are not permitted on park trails. At night they must be confined with their guardian inside a tent or vehicle.• Portola State Park allows dogs on-leash in campsites and picnic areas and on paved roads and the Upper and Lower Escape Roads only. At night they must be confined with their guardian inside a tent or vehicle. Dogs are not allowed in the visitor center or on hiking trails or dirt roads.
Contra Costa County
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contra Costa County policy prohibits animals from being “at large.” In the case of dogs, it states that they must be “under effective restraint by a leash.”<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Exception granted on dog owner’s private property only for dogs that do not stray from their owner while off-leash.

East Bay Regional Open Space District

- [Dogs](#) are allowed in most parks unless otherwise posted. There are certain exclusions to dog access due to the sensitive nature of habitat areas, and to the presence of endangered or threatened species.
 - Dog are required to be on a leash no longer than six feet in all parking lots, staging areas, public roads open to vehicle traffic, picnic areas, lawns, turf areas, play fields, developed areas, decks, patios, concession areas, equestrian centers unless posted 'no dogs', archery ranges, gun ranges, campgrounds, and any other area posted 'dog on leash'.
 - Dogs are not permitted in posted areas including historic areas, nature study areas, golf courses, stables, some wilderness trails, overnight backpack camp, stream protection areas, botanic gardens, resource or wildlife protection areas, beaches, swimming pools, and wetland or marsh areas.
- Visitors may have no more than three dogs unless they have obtained an annual permit.
- See the [FAQ page](#) for more information.
- Off-leash policy information will be distributed at a later date.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA)

- [GGNRA](#) provides trails, beaches, and open spaces that are available for dog walking.
 - There are signs indicating where pets are permitted in the park.
 - Pets must be restrained on a leash (except where noted otherwise).
 - Dogs must be on leash in all parking lot and picnic areas.
- Off-leash policy information will be distributed at a later date.

Marin County Parks and Open Space

- [Dogs](#) are permitted in designated areas in Marin County Parks and facilities when restrained by a leash.
 - Dogs must not enter playground or play areas, marshes, tide pools, ponds or other sensitive wildlife areas.
 - Dogs are not permitted at McNears Beach Park, Paradise Beach Park and Stafford Lake Park.
- Dogs are required to be on leash no longer than six feet in all parks except for parks or areas where dogs are not allowed at all.
- Off-leash policy information will be distributed at a later date.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space

- MPROSD has on-leash [dog-friendly trails](#), some entirely dog-friendly and others with designated trails and areas.
 - Dogs are not allowed in any District water areas, including streams or ponds.
- They allow for retractable leashes up to 25 feet long, however they are required to be no longer than 6 feet in the following cases:
 - Within 100 feet of any parking area, trailhead, picnic area, campground, horse stable, public roadway, restroom, visitor center, ranger station, or other place or structure of public assembly;
 - Within 50 feet of any person that is not the person or persons who entered District lands with the dog;
 - Within 50 feet of any District Water Area; or
 - When the dog is not visible to the owner.
- Visitors may have no more than three dogs per person.
- Off-leash policy information will be distributed at a later date.

Napa County Regional Park & Open Space District

- With only a few exceptions, [dogs](#) must remain on leash at all times.
- Napa County policy states that dogs must not be permitted to “run at large upon any public street, highway or other place, or to permit such dog to run upon the property of another without the consent of the property owner”.

Santa Clara County Parks

- Most areas are open to [dogs](#) on a six foot leash except for areas where dogs are prohibited entirely and posted with an international “no dog” sign.
 - Common areas where they are not permitted include children's playgrounds, interpretive facilities, archery ranges and a few designated trails.
 - Dogs are generally not permitted in the waterways of the County Park system. Water access may be available at non-sensitive sites by special permit.
- Handlers must be at least 16 years of age, or accompanied by an adult if under 16.
- Only two dogs permitted per handler, and handlers must supervise and be able to verbally control their dogs at all times.
- Off-leash policy information will be distributed at a later date.