

To: San Mateo County Parks Dog Management Work Group

From: The Board of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

Date: August 4, 2019

Subject: Public Comment re: Opposition to Off-Leash Dog Use Along the Bluff Trail at Pillar Point\*

The Board of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve (Board) has received regular updates on the status of the Dog Management Pilot Program. My comments today relate to the County's Dog Management Program for Fitzgerald Marine Reserve (Reserve) only.

The rocky intertidal habitat of the Reserve is home to harbor seals that reside year-round. As you are aware, harbor seals are federally protected marine mammals. They are especially vulnerable to disturbance by humans and their animal companions, and if you are a seal, both are regarded as predators. Regarding dogs at the Moss Beach location, The Board supports the County's current position that dogs are prohibited in all areas except along the Reserve's Coastal Trail and only on leash.

The County has placed what seems to be adequate signage stating the "no dogs allowed" policy along all trails and access points to the beaches and tidepool areas at Moss Beach, However, compliance remains a concern. In fact, just yesterday, within a 1 ½ hour period, I personally stopped 4 dogs (and owners) from going down the Seal Cove stairs which lead directly to the tidepools and resident harbor seals.

As for the Bluff Trail above the Ross's Cove area of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, the Board recognizes this area to be one of particular concern for compliance with the Dog Management Pilot Program. The Bluff Trail has several access points that lead to the tidepools and to harbor seal haul out sites located at the southern end of the Reserve. We are concerned because compliance with the on leash restrictions are not as well observed as at the Moss Beach location.

Therefore, the Board would not support the Pillar Point Bluff Trail becoming an off leash site. In fact, we would like to see more enforcement resources allotted to patrol the Bluff Trail to ensure compliance with the Dog Management Pilot Program, especially during harbor seal pupping season, every February through May.

\*These comments were made in public session to the Dog Management Work Group meeting by Marsha Cohen on August 4, 2019



# WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND HAND IT TO STAFF

DATE: *Aug. 5, 2019*

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

*Please hold main vote on coastline and listen to the people who live there.*

*Permits or licenses to walk off-leash?*

*Consider 2 off-leash sites for comparable information.*

*Choosing Serrano Park as a site for off-leash would remove a lot of public push back on coast.*







# WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND HAND IT TO STAFF

DATE: 8-5-19

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

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PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

I AM 72 YEARS OF AGE AND HAVE BEEN WALKING DOGS ON & OFF LEASH FOR OVER 60 YEARS. OWNERS OF DOGS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR DOGS ACTIONS IT IS ONLY COMMON SENSE THAT DOGS BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE JOY OF RUNNING WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO. IT IS PARAMOUNT TO THEIR HEALTH AND WELL BEING THAT THE JOY OF RUNNING MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE BE EXTENDED TO OUR FLESHY COMPANIONS. WE ARE ALL GODS CREATURES.

- Your comments will be distributed to the Work Group.



## WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND HAND IT TO STAFF

DATE: 8/5/19

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNER

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

ADD MORE AREAS FOR DOGS TO WALK OFF LEASH.  
TOO MUCH GAS IS WASTED DRIVING TO THE FEW (HOW MANY)  
PARKS THAT ALLOW DOG OFF LEASH. DO NOT REDUCE  
THE NUMBER OF AREAS.

DOG WALKING IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE AS WELL AS K9'S  
ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT AS THE COUNTY GETS MORE & MORE  
PEOPLE

WLT  
William L. Tates





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DATE: 8/5/19

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

By denying dog owners the ability to walk dogs  
off-leash I would like to know who in  
particular does that benefit

Thank you!



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DATE: 8/5/19

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

I've lived in El Granada for 11 years & what I love most about living on the coast is the chance for all dogs to run free & off leash.

My dog is healthy & happy thanks to all of the time he spends on the beaches or trails every day.

We're the only county with 5% or less with parks open to our dogs & owners. We need MORE! Please hear our dog community.

And if there's a pilot - we need both Pillar Point & Coway Park.

Thank you,



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PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

I think that off leash areas are super important to ~~social~~ socializing dogs. It gives them enough exercise and lets them meet lots of people + other dogs. I believe this leads to happy pets that are not aggressive. I believe many dogs are <sup>not</sup> getting enough exercise or proper ~~social~~ socialization, leading to behavioral problems. And dogs are a vety big part of our society!

Your comments will be distributed to the Work Group.

I want to stress the importance of having off leash trails on both the Bayside and the coastside.

Two of the counties newest parks are located on the coastside, the Bluff top, and Quarry Parks, historically these were cow and horse pastures. For more then 40 years these rural areas where used as off leash trails. San Mateo County acquires them and then suddenly the rules change and no longer do we have usage like we did in the past. These dog ordinance rules do not make sense for these rural County Parks. I would like you to consider flexibility on the ordinance rules based on historical factors.

The coastside parks are more rural and not manicured like some of the Bayside parks, and should be treated differently. Many people from the Bayside drive 30+ minutes to the Coastside because they don't have any access to walk their dogs at any county parks near where they live.

I also want to mention that Quarry Park is not ideal for all users because of the steep incline of most of the trails. If you are disabled, elderly, or walking with strollers, this park is not very accessible to them. And I am referring to the walking trails, not at the playground area for children.

San Mateo County is a wealthy county in comparison to the rest of the Bay Area . We are all taxpayers and want to have access to our parks just like our neighboring counties do.

Dogs need space to run and socialize while owners are also getting their exercise. Dog parks do not allow this.

Thank you





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PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

Thank you Work Group for looking into off leash options.

My hope is studies will be done on ratio to dogs in this area in relation to those who work and need dogs for companionship & service.

Very few breeds (toys) do not need active runtime that off leash can provide. Off leash is natural for dogs.

Perhaps as part of pilot, consult Woodside Horse Association that has secured numerous trails on public land for horse riding.

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IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

San Mateo County should provide off leash dog walking trails. This is a health benefit for our dogs and our community members. Quarry Park has been off leash trails for many many years and has proven this safety.

Quarry Park <sup>should</sup> ~~needs to~~ be mandated as off leash dog trails. As it has for years.

Large cities like New York even allow off leash times to dog walking in central park.

Dogs in parks have already been tested in many other communities.



# WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

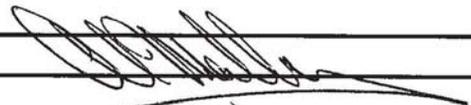
PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND HAND IT TO STAFF

DATE: 8/15/19

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

I AM A NATIVE SAN MATEO COUNTY RESIDENT WHO HAS LIVED MORE THAN 70 YRS  
HERE - THE NEED FOR DOGS TO RUN OFF LEASH HAS NOT  
CHANGED - JUST THE AVAILABLE SPACE -  
PLEASE ALLOT THE QUARRY IN EL GRANADA AS  
WELL AS THE BUFFS OPEN SPACE IN PRINCETON  
MOUNTAIN AREA

  
8/15/19



## WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

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IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

I want to go on record that I am writing as a concerned citizen & not as a representative of the San Mateo County Harbor District

That being said I am a Deputy Harbor Master in charge of the marinas & its cleanliness

Pillar Point Beach & Bluffs are some of the cleanest & respected parts of the Coalinga District.

And dog walkers & Beach goers tend to respect & take care of the trail & beaches.

Allowing & creating designated off leash parks is the responsible choice, that way dog walkers & Beach goers are preemptively aware of the area & what takes place within it.

Giving those who choose to have their dog off leash a safe place to do so.

- respectfully





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DATE: 8/5/19

IF WRITING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANIZATION, PLEASE IDENTIFY:

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

Dog owners can donate money

for off leash parks too!

Let's try + learn from the Horse

people + their ability to have

areas that are free to ride on.



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PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

- Thank you to the group & especially Parks & Rec employees for maintaining beautiful spaces we have as a public.
  - Housing in this area is extremely expensive. Denying community members who need a place to exercise w/ their dog is discriminatory. Especially when there is no private property we have to do this since they live in very expensive small spaces & apartments.
  - Shelters will fill up if we discourage healthy dog ownership by not allowing dogs in public spaces.
  - The severe limitation of off-leash spaces impacts professional dog walkers & sitters who depend on these spaces for their livelihood.
  - By & large, dog owners are RESPONSIBLE. Trust the community. We will leash our dogs - even in off-leash areas if needed.
  - Designating just a few spaces for off-leash runs those spaces RAGGED. They become crowded with people & dogs. Pulgar Ridge is an example.
  - I'm extremely disappointed about the decision to make Pilar Point on-leash after decades of off-leash responsible usage. Don't make exceptions the rules.
  - The moderator of this session was rigid, adversarial & clearly biased against dog advocates. She is not representative of our community & the community democratic process.
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Your comments will be distributed to the Work Group.



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PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

Please allow quarry park to continue off leash  
as it has for many years.

This has proven the safety of your off leash  
dog pilot

We need to expand off leash dog trails  
in some more suitable areas.

This is healthy for our community  
members and our dogs.



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PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

As some of you know - Sustainable San Mateo County and San Mateo Acting Responsibly Together are working hard to expand their green initiatives with many different policies and programs including their Active Transportation.

The County's Active Transportation Program supports policies and programs that reduce traffic congestion and the release of harmful greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging residents to bike, and walk and to take public transportation.

So San Mateo County Parks should align itself with County of San Mateo office of Sustainability by providing on leash (which should be allowed in all county parks with exception to The Marine Fitzgerald Reserve) and off leash dog spaces - trails and beaches in all of its communities - so that local residents of their respective communities can enjoy outings with their dogs on regular basis without having to drive long distances - there by reducing their carbon footprints!

So please go back to the board of supervisors and

tell them that one off leash site is not at all acceptable! Ask them please to look to our neighboring San Francisco county for guidance to dog-friendly policies and ordinances. Officially just in San Francisco city alone has 28 off leash parks. The San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission has designated specific park areas throughout the city ~~as~~ off leash areas so that local residents in their respective communities can enjoy regular outings with their dogs without having to travel for miles!

So please do the right thing for the earth and for your communities, don't just blindly march to the board of supervisors' demands but challenge the status quo and provide fair access to county parks and beaches for sanctioned off leash dog walking throughout San Mateo County.

Thank you,



## WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND HAND IT TO STAFF

DATE: August 5, 19

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

I've lived in El Comado since 1973. Until recently there has never been problems with walking our dogs. More people more problems!

But putting that aside, the changes should make the Coast side a very advanced place to live and visit please make the right choice of all leash places so our private dogs can enjoy themselves & us well.

The worst part of the parks are the Bicycle riders who so much of the time are extremely rude and ride their bicycles very fast and act as they own the outdoors.

Dogs are much better to run into instead of Bicycle riders.

We can get along but we must work together. You have to know that people get very upset and disorderly when you try to take everything away from them (us).

Please work with the people (public) in a more considerate atmosphere instead of a heavy handed demand.

A lot of us work, take a work to come to speak at these important meetings.

Then us speak, more than 20 minutes when we come for our requests to be heard.

Your comments will be distributed to the Work Group. Thank you





## WRITTEN COMMENT TO THE DOG PILOT WORKGROUP

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DATE: August 5, 2019

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS:

Please consider developing a dog park in Quarry Park that would allow an open field where dogs could get a lot of exercise. Rent up dog park more and are a nuisance in neighborhoods.

If the park is designed based on activities - there could also be a jogging area to run with your dog.

Having an open field would enable a break from wildlife.

Please have a place for small dogs too.

The dog park in ATTB is small, dirty, and hard to clean because of the ton park.

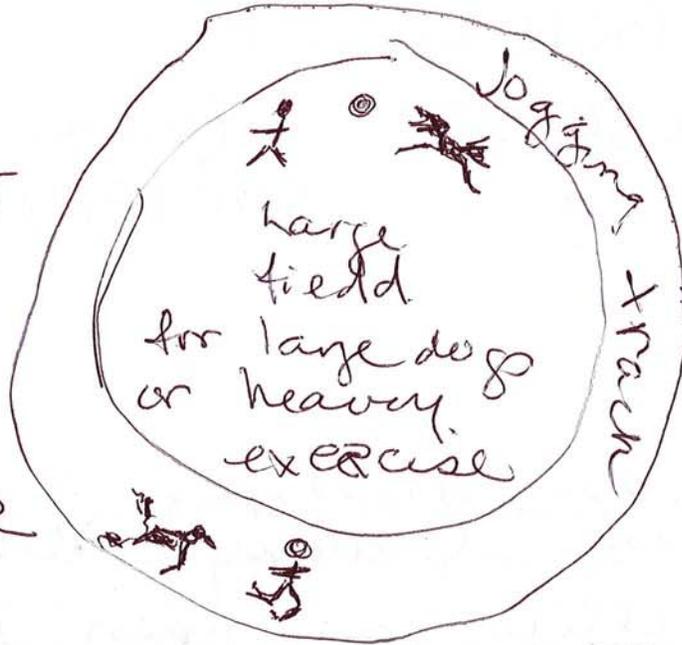
Ideas on other side



OVER

Your comments will be distributed to the Work Group.

EXERCISE  
FIELD  
LARGE  
AREA FOR  
MULTIPLE  
DOG/OWNER  
"FETCH"  
ACTIVITIES



CAN  
ACCOMMODATE  
AGILITY  
EQUIP-  
MENT



SMALL DOG  
AREA

SMALLER DOG  
AREA FOR  
FAMILIES TO  
SIT + LET  
DOG RUN

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, August 5, 2019 9:42 AM

**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** San Mateo County Parks Off-Leash Access Meeting, August 5

Dear Sirs:

I am writing this email from the airport. We were planning to attend today's meeting but, sadly have an unexpected trip to attend a funeral out of state. This is not the first time I have emailed or called to voice our support of providing continued off-leash access for the dogs in our community. We have lived here since 1990 when we built and opened Seal Cove Inn. We have enjoyed walking to the coastal bluffs from the inn and now our home in Montara for almost thirty years with a succession of our family dogs.

We are proud coastside residents and being able to get out and walk our dogs on the coastal bluffs was a large part of the reason and decision to move here. I can only assume the outdoor activities, dog walking included is/was an enticement to many who choose/chose to live on our coastside. It seems so wrong to now take the ability away. I would STRONGLY urge that you consider Carmel as a prime example of how a dog friendly community benefits financially. It benefits GREATLY and has earned a wonderful, positive, international reputation as a result.

It seems so wrong that you can mandate changes without taking into consideration all the coastside residents as well as people who travel to the coastside to walk their dogs and enjoy the coastal bluffs. At this point it is hard not to express frustration and outrage as it seems that the restrictions seem bias against dog owners. I have called and spoken to people in your office(s) numerous times and honestly feel that our expressed concerns and sentiments fall on deaf ears.

For decades, San Mateo County dog owners (40% of residents in our county) have been shut out of most of our county parks system—a system that we have been paying for. Dog owners have 5% trails access while other user groups such as equestrians have 90% access.

Three years ago, dog owners were told that County Parks was working to fix this problem. Unfortunately, what started as a process to make San Mateo County Parks more dog-friendly appears to have been twisted into a way to levy heavy fines and to take away our historic off-leash dog walking areas on the coast.

Every other Bay Area county provides equitable trails access, including off-leash, for its residents—except for San Mateo County. My understanding is that as of July 1, San Mateo County your began ticketing residents. This does not seem right, rather it is our County who is to blame for not providing its residents with fair dog walking access.

I would urge that the county reconsider and reinstate off-leash options at Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluff. This right has existed for decades and it seems wrong to just take away what has been available to residents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please know if we could be in attendance, we would be to strongly voice our objection to denying off-leash access.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, August 5, 2019 5:33 PM

**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>; Coastside DOG Christine <[christine@coastsideog.org](mailto:christine@coastsideog.org)>; PARKS\_DogManagementCommittee <[DogManagementCommittee@smcgov.org](mailto:DogManagementCommittee@smcgov.org)>; Peggy Jensen <[pjensen@smcgov.org](mailto:pjensen@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** Prepared 2 minute speech for 8/5/19 Dog Work Group meeting

Dear Dog Work Group Participants,

After spending several full business days + monetary expenses for 2 minute presentation at today's Dog Work Group meeting, very disappointed not to have had a chance to speak despite submitting the speaker form. Clearly the 15-20 minutes allotted for attendee input was not enough for the number of attendees in favor of dog off-leash reform.

Here was my prepared speech:

Subaru figured it out, Mercedes-Benz picked up on it and followed. The multi-billion dollar pet industry is well aware and this Friday Hollywood debuts "The Art of Dancing in the Rain" dog movie. WE LOVE OUR DOGS. And we're not leaving them behind to pursue our love of nature and outdoors which includes BEACHES and TRAIL HIKES. So when you shut out 43,534 licensed and estimated additional 25-30% unlicensed dogs you are excluding ~55,000 residents from San Mateo County Parks.

Following last mid-Coast meeting I asked Parks Director Peggy Jensen a simple question "where are we supposed to take our dogs off leash?". Her response: Google it. So I did. Out of (13) San Mateo County Parks, (2) allow on-leash in Pilot program, Woodside Store is not designated and (1) off-leash Pilot program is to be considered. Final answer for San Mateo County Parks: ZERO.

Off-leash outside of San Mateo County Parks other than municipal fenced dog parks are Esplanade Beach, Pacifica and 16 acre section within Pulgas Ridge, San Carlos. Not too much.

In closing I was going to hand each Dog Work Group member a packet including "Guidelines for Establishment and Maintenance of Successful Off-Leash Dog Exercise Areas" produced by U.C. Davis Veterinary Behavioral Medicine, #1 in the world for Veterinary university. Since I did not have the opportunity to speak during the meeting, handed the informational packets to Ellie at closing.

But my bigger concern over not being able to speak at the meeting, was the astonishment of having the Sheriff brought in because some attendees at the meeting voiced their opinions with frustration. I sat there for over 2 hours watching the Sheriff sitting in the back of the room, sometimes yawning, likely out of boredom. There was no justification for our tax dollars to be spent on having a Sheriff sit in on a meeting to discuss off-leash dog options - particularly with the increase in drugs, burglaries, crimes... real issues in our community that Sheriffs need to attend to. And I am not going to hesitate to contact my Sheriff's office and let them know how irrational that was.

At this point I am questioning myself why I continue to attend these meetings, what is the value-add of my presence? What has changed in the year of attending, not much. This past weekend alone I turned down (2) social invitations to prepare for today's meeting and this morning missed an invitation from one of my dog's pals for a play date - perhaps my own fault for not evaluating the value of my time. So tomorrow, time and money better spent driving the 1 hour 15 minute to Lake del Valle in Livermore where I know my dog will have the best of times - and I will be so much happier knowing this was worth the investment.

Many thanks - I wish you luck in future endeavors.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

- land line only (no text please)

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Monday, August 05, 2019 6:13 PM  
**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>  
**Subject:** Off-Leash Dog Trails and concerns

Good Evening,

I had the pleasure of being at the the Dog Work Group meeting this afternoon. This is truly a complex issue with voices heard from many sides. I would like to commend the moderator for trying to keep people on track and obeying the rules of the meeting.

There are clearly many points to be made that I would hope that the Working Group would be able to address in its next update. Some of these are historical, and can be addressed quickly and simply, I am sure; others are current and will be useful for consideration by the Working Group at this time.

Historical:

It appears that the major outcry is one from those who have seen Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluffs move from a traditionally \*off\* leash area to on-leash only. According to [coastsidedog.org](http://coastsidedog.org) both of these areas were off-leash for more than 40 years. The issue here is that there seems to have been no consultation at this point. (Information from Flyer posted at Stulsaft Park).

Potential Solution: Put out a statement explaining the process that was undertaken, and if it was truly non-consultative, put out an apology?

Current:

There is a statement that there is only 1 off-leash area in San Mateo County. I would submit that this is false (knowing of 2 myself, and a quick search of the City of San Mateo shows 6 areas in that City alone). What this points to is a lack of information. I would submit that the Dog Working Group undertake to display prominently on its website ALL off-leash areas and links to them, whether or not San Mateo County Parks governs these areas.

There is a trend to see more and more control of dogs, and the easy remedy here is to make parks on-leash only. The issue here is that there is a lack of understanding. Aggressive dogs are aggressive whether they are on-leash \*or\* off-leash. There is another type of dog "Leash Aggressive" - and these dogs are \*not\* aggressive off-leash. In fact an internet search for "dog aggressive on leash but not on" returns only results for Leash Aggressive dogs. i.e. it is more likely for any unknown dog to be aggressive on-leash rather than off.

The effect of walking dogs on-leash on the owners is that the owner will tend to restrain the dog, that social interaction is reduced to controlling the animal rather than interacting with any other owners. The effect on the dog is that they too have less social interaction as they are being physically controlled at this point. This reduces the beneficial effect of a walk for both owner and animal.

Dog parks, especially off-leash dog parks, are community building areas. I for one have never been to a community event, attended a community hearing nor have I ever felt I have cause to. The potential for losing off-leash areas for my community members (and not even me - I live in Redwood City, and was not affected by Quarry Park or Pillar Point) brought me out to see what the plan is/was. It is clear that there are many benefits to dog parks which I shall outline below, including sources. Along with the good that off-leash areas bring, the advantages clearly benefit the County of San Mateo and its community.

In this day and age while we lament the disintegration of our communities, bringing resources to bear that increase our social interaction and benefit the local community should be a priority it seems to me.

Overall 91% of Americans believe that dog parks provide benefit to their communities:

<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/park-pulse-survey-providing-a-place-for-pooch-to-play/>

Again, I understand that this is a more complex and nuanced issue than this fast email can address, and I know that the Dog Working Group will look at the evidence provided and do the best it can to keep off-leash parks a part of the San Mateo County infrastructure.

Thank you for your time,



### Community Benefits of Dog Parks

1 - <https://apdt.com/resource-center/dog-park-pros-cons/>

Excellent source of people-people social interaction

Concentrated area for dogs, lessening dog damage/refuse to non-dog oriented areas (e.g. fire hydrants, feces on the street etc.)

Dogs can get adequate physical and mental exercise, thereby lessening destructive and annoying behaviors in general lowering the burden on the City/County to resolve these issues (e.g. escaping/runaway dogs, digging up sewer lines/electrical cables etc)

Provides a space where owners can learn from more experienced owners, and thereby help provide better behaved dogs

Concentrated off-leash areas lessen the chance of owners letting their dogs off-leash in on-leash parks

Lower child - dog interaction in these areas, as there are no cars, rollerbladers, skateboarders, bikes, etc. likely to be encountered

Removes the likelihood of poor encounters with people those who do not enjoy dogs are unlikely to attend such dog parks

2 - <http://www.fetchparks.org/why.html>

Dog owners create an atmosphere of safety in our public parks

Users of dog parks are self-policing so as to maintain the appealing environment

Reduces the burden of enforcement on police/animal control personnel

Other more supporting links:

<https://www.playgroundprofessionals.com/parks-and-recreation/dog-park/benefits-dog-parks103>

<https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/culture/how-cities-may-benefit-from-dog-parks/>

And finally a great breakdown of both advantages and liabilities in a Master's

Thesis: [https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=mes\\_capstones](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=mes_capstones)

Again, Thank you for your time and your consideration (a \*new\* community advocate, who wouldn't be here except because of an off-leash dog park)

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 07, 2019 11:34 PM

**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** Dog Work Group meeting August 5

This letter is addressed to the Dog Work Group as a whole. Please distribute to the individual members.

I was an observer of the Dog Work Group Meeting on August 5. There were a number of members of the public that were permitted to speak -- all but one were passionately in favor of expanded dog privileges, particularly off-leash, within the San Mateo County Parks. It was clear the spectators feel strongly about this topic and they were arguably not on their best behavior. It was also clear the moderator, Pat Brown, was more than a little annoyed. While the need to maintain order and adhere to an agenda are necessary to any successful meeting, I will urge the members of this committee to recognize and acknowledge what is behind the obvious frustration on the part of the public. In understanding the source of their frustration, perhaps greater tolerance and understanding would result.

- Public sentiment at this meeting and at all of the others (GGNRA, MCC) I have attended on the subject of dog access to the parks strongly indicates there is a very large majority of the public in favor of greater dog access to the parks. While the County Park employees rightfully consider themselves to be stewards with a priority to protect the park wildlife and environment, it is foolish to disregard this strong public desire for the parks to also serve the functions that are of value to them, namely the opportunity to share outdoor experiences with their four-legged companions. No matter how you personally feel about dogs, you need to recognize that the dog-owning members of the public are also stakeholders in how the park resources are used. Some folks may not want to share the public parks with noisy, disruptive, messy children, but I think we all recognize this is one of the roles for the parks and that the parks are supported by child-rearing, tax-paying public. The same is true for dogs.
- Dogs are an integral (and positive) part of our society. Again, however you personally feel about them, this is a fact. And it isn't going away. To point out that there are other places where folks can go with their dogs entirely sidesteps the fact that dog access to the parks is one of the things the public wants and justifiably expects. Dismissing the dog-owning public and relegating them to a long drive to a more "dog friendly" park or a small fenced-in "dog park" is simply shirking the responsibility of the urban San Mateo County parks.
- Dogs have an essential need to run. This cannot be accomplished on leash. To deny dogs this necessity will allow destructive, pathologic behaviors to emerge. We live in an urban environment. Folks who own dogs live in houses with small yards or in apartments. They rightfully look to their public resources to provide communal space for dogs, just as they expect libraries to provide resources they don't have at home.
- Historically, dogs have had widespread access on the coastside. Quarry Park, Pillar Point Bluff, Rancho Corral de Tierro to name a few, have been legally accessible to dogs for decades. Then the GGNRA and San Mateo County Parks System became involved and our dog access was severely restricted. To denote "pilot places" to study on-leash access where off-leash access was previously available is bluntly considered a slap in the face to dog owners who have used these facilities without negative consequence for years. Please recognize this. We would like to strive to be law-

abiding and to feel that the County Parks system is taking care of what we all consider to be an invaluable resource. We would also like to feel that our interests are recognized and heard.

- Dogs and safe spaces for wildlife and plants CAN coexist in the same park. It has been widely accomplished in other counties and other states. I am not suggesting that dogs have free run of the County Parks. But I am saying that, just as the needs of the equestrians and bicyclists have been addressed, dog owners are NOT the nemesis of the natural resources in the parks, but equal stakeholders with the other represented groups.

- Quarry Park, in particular, has enjoyed off leash access for decades. It was donated to the County Park System with the explicit understanding that the dog access we have enjoyed would continue. I hike in this park several times a week and regularly meet others with dogs. I have never witnessed an unpleasant interaction. I'm sure it is possible for such a thing to occur, just as there are risks attached to sharing the trails with bicycles and horses. Allowing all of these groups to co-exist is manageable and it is the right thing for a County Park to do in a situation as well-suited to it as Quarry Park.



From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2019 9:17 AM  
To: Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>  
Subject: Please enforce the Pillar Point Bluff Trail leash law

I do not support allowing off leash dogs on the Pillar Point Bluff Trail.

I was attacked by an off leash pit bull on the Pillar Point Bluff Trail and I sustained significant injuries.

It was very traumatic and extremely painful.

The owner of the dog that bit me lives in Moss Beach and she did not have any control over her dogs. They were running on the trail in a pack and she was far from them when the attack occurred.

Please keep the trail safe for everyone.

[REDACTED]  
Seal Cove-Moss Beach

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Monday, August 26, 2019 7:02 PM  
To: PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>  
Subject: Off-Leash Comment for the Dog Work Group

Hi there.

I live in El Granada and own an amazing dog. I moved to the coast about a year ago BECAUSE of all of the opportunities for her to run amok on the trails and the beaches. A well-exercised dog is a happy dog...

I have a hard time making it to the meetings where you take public comments because I have a full-time job in Cupertino, but I want to weigh in with my thoughts. As you know, over half of Coastsiders have dogs; while some dogs are happy playing in dog parks or back yards, many breeds need to be able to stretch their legs and run in wide open spaces. We need places on the coast where we can run these dogs off-leash so that they stay happy and well-adjusted. Not only that...Many dogs (mine included) are FAR better behaved when off-leash.

Because the coast traffic is pretty gnarly lately and we only have small roads connecting us to the rest of San Mateo County, it's really important that we have off-leash pilot sites that are on the coast. Specifically, we are asking for Pillar Point Bluffs and Quarry Park...Two areas that seem to be used predominantly by dog owners anyhow. Driving 30-40 minutes after work to an off-leash dog area after driving an hour to get home just feels crazy...In addition to being a habit that is really bad for the environment. With all of the Spare the Air days lately it seems to make the most sense to have local off-leash pilot sites to cut down on adding cars to the road. It also improves the quality of life for Coastsiders.

One more thing...If these pilots are contentious why not do something like have Quarry Park and the Bluffs off-leash during the week and on-leash during the weekend when more tourists are using the areas? During the week these areas truly ARE used predominantly by locals with dogs...

Thanks,

- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

El Granada, CA 94018

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 27, 2019 9:57 AM

**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>; Coastside DOG <[christine@coastsidedog.org](mailto:christine@coastsidedog.org)>

**Subject:** Off-Leash Comment for the Dog Work Group - Ft Funston visit

If the Dog Work Group has not yet visited Ft Funston on a weekend morning, then I would highly recommend it before making any further decisions on off leash dog parks..

It is one of the largest off-leash dog parks in the United states and is a mere 4 miles north of the San Mateo County border.

The rangers spend virtually no time overseeing the activity in the park and yet dog vs dog problems are virtually non- existent, dog litter is rare and policed by the walkers and litter in the park is extremely rare..

All this at an unstaffed park (don't bother knocking on the door of the park station, there is rarely anyone there and even then they are, they doing GGNRA admin work, not monitoring the park - not that there is any need.; Other than the park employee emptying trash cans I have never seen a Ranger actually in the park The park has a weekly usage of almost 2,000 cars per week of dog owners (there are a few folks fishing, hang gliding, surfing and walking the beach, but 90% of visitors are dog walking.. 75% of whom are walking unleashed dogs.

How many San Mateo County parks have 8,000 visitors per month with no staffing and an expense of 2 visits per week by a sanitary truck to pull out sewage and trash cans emptied several times per week?

I have attached a photo from a recent Sunday morning about 9 am showing 2 of the 3 the parking lots with almost 200 cars and a photo of one of the more remote areas where 10 dog owners are allowing their dogs to play happily off leash.

No, we do not need off leash where there will be wild animal interactions or where there are bridal trails, but you folks are missing the boat and far behind the times if you prevent the several hundred thousand dog owners of San Mateo County from having many large off leash dog parks to allow these citizens to stay in San Mateo County to walk their dogs off leash.

I would be happy to meet any of the Group to show you around Ft. Funston and let you see how a minimal amount of expense provides a vast amount of community enjoyment.

Best Regards

[REDACTED]  
Pacifica, CA 94044  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Saturday, August 31, 2019 1:29 PM

**To:** Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>

**Cc:** Edmundo Larenas <[surfdoggie@gmail.com](mailto:surfdoggie@gmail.com)>; Linda Ciotti <[l8428@aol.com](mailto:l8428@aol.com)>; [korrine.skinner@gmail.com](mailto:korrine.skinner@gmail.com)

**Subject:** Pillar Point Bluff Off Leash Dogs

Hi Carla,

As a docent at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Devil's Slide and a frequent bike rider at Pillar Point Bluff, I have had many years of opportunity to observe dog and owner behavior at the bluff. Dogs are frequently off leash at the bluff and at the slide. Off leash dogs chase rabbits and disturb birds, dig for gophers, and deposit their poop, on and off trail, all of which are detrimental to bluff wildlife. The owners frequently ignore their off leash dogs, particularly when the dogs have left a deposit. And please do not forget the incident 2 years ago when a large dog killed an adult seal on the beach. Also, the beach has just been made more accessible by the Airforce trail "improvements"! More off leash dogs and greater beach accessibility will undoubtedly increase these incidents. Give our wildlife a break!

A reasonable off leash dog site would be an area in Quarry Park where there is little native flora or fauna to contend with.

Thank You [REDACTED]

Date: September 1, 2019

To: SMC Parks Dog Work Group

From: \_\_\_\_\_ Moss Beach

Subject: **Opposition to Off-Leash Dog Recreation at Pillar Point Bluff**

Living adjacent to Pillar Point Bluff, I have spent countless hours over the years, doing habitat restoration there. The quiet solitary activity of weeding brought me the frequent reward of sight and sounds of the wildlife present there.

The purchase of Pillar Point Bluff and preservation of this natural open space has brought many more people and dogs to the trails in recent years. Doubtless, they enjoy the views, but probably they don't notice, or perhaps don't care about, the wildlife that is now missing from the experience. Wildlife will habituate, to some extent, to regular human trail use, but not to dogs, which are always perceived as predators. The scent dogs leave behind greatly extends the period of avoidance and loss of habitat for wildlife. People with dogs are much more detrimental to wildlife than people alone; off-leash dogs are worse; and off-trail impacts are the highest.

Designating an open space preserve as an off-leash dog area ignores the essentials of what was meant to be preserved. Our pets are an extension of human impact on other species and the environment.

In addition to the impact on wildlife, there are impacts to people and other dogs from uncontrolled or aggressive behavior of unleashed dogs. I have had two very frightening experiences with aggressive uncontrolled dog encounters on the bluff and at Ross' Cove, as well as been jumped on by friendly but unmannered dogs. As trail use and the dog population increases, so do these events.

Off-leash dog areas should be dedicated, fenced, and maintained for this purpose, and located where sensitive habitat and wildlife, as well as other park users, will not be impacted. People can throw a ball for their dog and let them run with other dogs in this dedicated area, and then leash them for a trail walk if they choose.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 1, 2019 3:53 PM  
**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>  
**Subject:** Off Leash Dog Walking Options

**The Dog Work Group:**

A few observations of the current situation:

- We need more off-leash access near where we live on the Peninsula AND near the coast.
- The population of dogs in our county is growing and putting a strain on existing parks; hence, the need to increase the trails where dogs can hike on-leash and off-leash. 40% of residents have dogs in our county.
- While fenced in dog runs are fine in some situations, they do not provide for real exercise options for the dogs and their owners.

We hope you will take these points into consideration as you develop your plans for dog access in our parks.

Sincerely,

-----  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, September 2, 2019 7:59 AM

**To:** PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** Off-Leash Comment for the Dog Work Group

I have been a home owner in Pacifica, San Mateo county, for over 25 years. My husband and I have walked our dogs at the Quarry in Rockaway Beach for all those years. It has improved our lives through exercise and socialization(both our dogs and ours). It has allowed us to meet our neighbors and get to know what is happening in our community and that includes our dogs getting to know their canine neighbors.

Over the years we have encouraged those we see on the path to respect other walkers, with and without dogs, pick up litter, dog litter as well as rubbish left by humans. And over the years we have seen improvements. We have been able to see the lovely garden that has been established and maintained by Mr Mooney.

Without this off leash area our dog would not know the pleasure of running off leash. Others in the area, largely populated by dog owners, would not be able to enjoy walking their dogs unleashed. We are a community of dog lovers and it is becoming increasingly more common to find people who have dogs to share in the joy of walking their dogs, meeting and greattin old friends and new in areas where the dogs have the opportunity to meet and great each other.

It is true that occasionally we have are problems, but this is far fewer in canine society than it is in human society!

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, September 2, 2019 12:06 PM

**To:** Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** Re: Consideration of the Pillar Point Bluff Trail as an Off-leash Dog Recreation Location

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in opposition to the consideration of the Pillar Point Bluff Trail as an Off-leash Dog Recreation location. I have worked with both wildlife and domestic animals in my 30 year career as a veterinary technician. I am a dog owner and a harbor seal naturalist with Bay Net for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. I also run the Facebook page for the Harbor seals of Pacific Grove with over 9300 daily followers. Harbors seals are skittish by nature and because of the way they move on land are frightened easily by people and dogs. During a time of climate change, the seals are having to deal with a lot of natural stresses in the way of food shortages and increased white shark populations. To add dogs to their stress load would be disastrous. We have already witnessed the deaths of seals by dogs up and down the coast. This Trail is not appropriate for off-leash dog use due to unobstructed access to areas of FMR which are harbor seal haul-out and pupping sites. Off-leash dogs along the Trail is incompatible with the mission of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, which is to protect and preserve the unique intertidal environment at the Reserve.

I know many people who travel to the area to see the harbor seals particularly, but if the off-leash dogs are allowed, they would not bother coming anymore because seals would cease to be there from the amount of disturbances that would occur. Dogs chase wildlife and they kill seals and that is something I do not care to witness nor support. I would also not be able to have my mom visit the area because of the potential for injury by a dog jumping on her or tripping her.

Please protect the area for the wildlife and for everyone who enjoy the beauty of nature and enjoy walking the trail in a safe and quiet manner.

Thank you for your time.

[REDACTED]  
Pacific Grove, CA

From: [REDACTED] >  
Sent: Monday, September 2, 2019 12:42 PM  
To: PARKS\_ParksAndRecreation <[ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:ParksAndRecreation@smcgov.org)>  
Subject: Dogs in parks

Thank you for expanding areas for dogs on leash. Dogs are companions for many of us without spouses or partners. When dogs aren't allowed, I am effectively barred from visiting San Mateo parks because I don't choose to walk alone as an older woman. My dog is my companion and safeguard.

Please continue to open the parks to dogs on leash. Quicker the better!

[REDACTED]  
Menlo Park, CA.

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, September 2, 2019 3:29 PM

**To:** Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** Proposed Pillar Point Bluff Trail as an Off-leash Dog Recreation Location

Dear San Mateo County Parks Dog Management Work Group:

I am writing to you regarding the proposed Off-leash Dog Recreation site at Pillar Point Bluff Trail. The area is a resting place for harbor seals and pups in addition to other wildlife.

The harbor seals are in a particularly difficult period with the shortage in their food supply and shrinking beaches, allowing for additional disturbance would severely impact these already stressed animals. In addition, other wildlife such as birds are undergoing likewise difficulties. As a volunteer for Bay Net and the Black Oystercatcher monitoring project I see first hand the impact of human and pets on the ecosystem.

Since wildlife is protected along our coastline, allowing off leash dogs in nearby areas would be a breach of regulations.

Please do consider these factors in your decision.

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, September 2, 2019 6:08 PM

**To:** Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** Dog off-leash space is not appropriate at Pillar Point Bluffs

To Carlo Shoof

SM County Parks Dog Management Committee

I would like to register my concern over the consideration of Pillar Point Bluffs as a site for off-leash dog recreation. I am currently a board member of the Friend of the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve (FFMR), and we have followed the developing policy very closely. Here I would like to add my insight as a large dog owner, user of Pillar Point Bluffs, and someone who would enjoy an off-leash space on the coast. However, I do not feel that Pillar Point Bluffs meets even the minimal criteria for creating a space that would be highly attractive for many dog owners. The reasons for this are:

A) The bluffs are dangerous and unstable, and the trails are in flux. It is very easy for a dog to wander along a trail, ahead of its owner, leading both into areas of potential cliff detachment.

B) The low bushes seem to be a home to numerous song birds, and one would assume that there are numerous nesting sites in the area. Even my own dog, who I would like to consider to be highly trained, does wander into the brush, after an animal, if my attention wanders.

C) The biggest benefit of an off-leash area is ample space to allow dogs to run together, or to exercise. Pillar Point is not appropriate for that type of activity. In particular, ball chasing is extremely dangerous. A far better site for off-leash activities would include a flat beach or an adjacent field.

As a member of the FFMR, my concerns are over the general lack of understanding among the public that the beaches in this zone are part of a marine protected area, and should not be accessed from the bluffs. It is to be sure confusing, because the other side of the point, Mavericks Beach, is a well-established, if unofficial, off-leash beach area, and many of the beaches on the coast are used in an off-leash fashion, regardless of posting. The Parks Dept can increase signage and monitoring of the Pillar Point Bluffs area, but the level of monitoring will need to be maintained at high levels in perpetuity; given the popularity of the coast with ever increasing numbers of visitors, it cannot be assumed that everyone will get the message after a short intensive burst of public education by park staff.

It is understandable that the long-time residents are upset. However, this is now public space, and we have to come to terms that now it will be used by people from out of the area, from SF down for a weekend trip, from people coming over from the bay side, to escape the heat. To think that this is still our own backyard is to ignore reality. To allow dogs off-leash in this zone would certainly be highly publicized among various websites that aggregate information for dog owners. There are no standards in place for what constitutes a well-trained dog, that can be allowed off-leash in such an environmentally sensitive area. Recorded events of dogs killing seals, both on Ross Cove Beach and in Pt. Reyes, make this point very dramatically. I could not even be certain that my well-trained dog would respond to the usual voice commands, if they somehow got into an instinctual frenzy over chasing another animal.

In conclusion, I am a dog owner, I have certainly taken my dogs to Pillar Point Bluffs for walks, and in the past I have let them be off-leash. It was fun. But, it was not right. I am pleased to see the new signage at the Bluffs, and I still enjoy myself immensely there, with my dog on-leash.

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Monday, September 2, 2019 8:07 PM

**To:** Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>

**Subject:** I Oppose the Pillar Point Bluff Trail for Off-Leash Dog Recreation

I am writing in opposition to making the Pillar Point Bluff Trail an Off-leash Dog Recreation location. I'm a dog lover and owner but I also understand that dogs do not mix with wildlife - often causing damage as a direct or indirect result. An officially sanctioned off-leash dog use area along the Trail is incompatible with the mission of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. Off-leash dogs would have unobstructed access from the trail to the Ross' Cove and Frenchman's Creek areas of FMR.

One species of wildlife in particular would be in significant danger and stress with the sanction of off-leash dogs. That species is the harbor seal. The Reserve is a special place for seals to haul out and give birth. Dogs off-leash become predators of seals and leave their scent which can scare seals away.

We humans love our dogs and treat them as a part of our family. But an amenity for dog exercise should not come at the expense of the health of a wildlife species. Harbor seals fight to survive every day - finding adequate food and avoiding natural predators. We should be working to preserve places for the seals health; not eroding the quality of the few places that are left for them.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern,  
Gail Griffin, Pacific Grove CA;  
NOAA Bay Net and Point Lobos State Reserve Docent

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 4, 2019 2:09 PM  
**To:** Carla Schoof <[cschoof@smcgov.org](mailto:cschoof@smcgov.org)>  
**Subject:** Pillar Point Bluff Trail Off-leash Dog Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

The website for Pillar Point describes the trail as open to hikers, joggers, bicyclists, equestrians and dogs on leash. The change to off-leash is totally incompatible with the use of the trail by joggers, hikers and equestrians. Dogs can easily frighten and disturb horses and the trail is narrow at points and could be a serious safety issue if a horse and rider with spooked in some areas (see photo).



- The Trail is not appropriate for off-leash dog use due to unobstructed access from the trail to the Ross' Cove and Frenchman's Creek areas of FMR which are harbor seal haul-out and pupping sites. Dogs are prohibited within the boundaries of the Marine Protected Area of FMR.
- There is a body of research that clearly demonstrates off-leash dog areas have a negative impact on local wildlife causing everything from habitat abandonment to negative water quality impacts to the spread of disease.
- Many incidences of off-leash dogs killing seals within marine protected areas have been well documented.
- Dogs are predators by nature and their presence or lingering scent will disturb and frighten nearby wildlife including resident FMR harbor seals.
- An officially sanctioned off-leash dog use area along the Trail is incompatible with the mission of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, which is to protect and preserve the unique intertidal environment at the Reserve.

Off leash dogs can deposit excrement where the owner does not see to pick it up, they can escape the owner's control to kill and vex other animals and can pack up with other dogs to be a real danger to people and animals in the vicinity. We recently had a problem in our local dog park (see link) <https://www.kion546.com/news/police-owner-stabs-kills-pit-bull-in-self-defense-during-dogfight-at-pacific-grove-park/1057639382> .

This proposal is totally incompatible with the uses and proximity to a marine protected area.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

[REDACTED]

Pacific Grove, CA 93950

**Information provided by member of the public  
at August Dog Pilot Work Group meeting.**

**GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE  
OF SUCCESSFUL OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS**

Produced by:

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## **GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF SUCCESSFUL OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS**

### **General Comments**

There are many perspectives and types of information that need to be taken into consideration when developing and managing off-leash dog parks that are successful in terms of harmony with the surrounding community as well as with the park users. Community support and involvement is integral to this process, especially in promoting a harmonious relationship with the neighbors of the park. Maintenance, along with the proper selection of a location, is essential in the continued success of a park. Indeed, our research, based on a study of 17 off-leash dog parks, profiles maintenance of the park as probably the single most important determinant of success. Although our research did not show a statistically significant correlation of dog park club involvement and perceived success, the correlation was positive. Managers of parks repeatedly stressed the importance of an active dog park club, and we strongly recommend that these clubs be involved in the planning process, as well as helping to maintain an ongoing relationship with the management of the park. The lines of communication must remain open between the municipality or organization managing the park and the community to promptly address actual or perceived problems, and to profile the benefits that a dog park can bring to the community. Under various headings below, we describe suggested guidelines that should be considered in establishing and managing an off-leash dog park. The specific recommendations are a reflection of conclusions from data analysis of our study of off-leash dog parks, as well as a reflection of repeated comments from interviewed managers and park users.

The topics discussed first involve the primary concerns expressed by community officials, namely safety to humans and other dogs, noise generated from a concentration of barking dogs, and sanitation problems from the build-up of feces. As it turns out, these concerns do not represent the issues deserving of the most attention, because problems in these areas appear to be relatively infrequent, at least in the dog parks that we visited.

Some community decision-makers and park managers mentioned a concern about possible disturbance of wildlife or native plants. Our study focused mainly on urban parks and disturbance of wildlife in these parks did not appear to be an issue. This topic could be addressed in a study that includes more parks established within natural reserves or nature areas.

Finally, in the way of general comments, we strongly encourage communities seriously considering establishing or modifying a dog park to retain a professional consultant knowledgeable in helping to prevent and resolve problems or concerns about off-leash parks.

## **Safety**

Park managers and community officials ranked the safety of people and dogs as a primary concern in dealing with dog parks. However, our study, as well as those conducted elsewhere, reveal that injuries to people and dogs from dog bites at legal off-leash areas are rare. One possible reason for the low risk of a dog bite may be that park users almost always do not bring dogs that are likely to bite other dogs or people. However, overly assertive, overly unruly, and undersocialized dogs can negatively impact the behavior and welfare of other dogs visiting the park. To help ensure that this does not become an issue, the following suggestions should be implemented:

1. Overtly aggressive, overly assertive, overly unruly, and undersocialized dogs should be discouraged from visiting the parks. Park users should be educated in the signs that dogs display when performing these behaviors. While not aggressive to the point of fighting with other dogs, a dog that displays these types of behaviors can cause other dogs to become excessively fearful.
2. Park users should be discouraged from bringing young puppies or fearful dogs to parks, as they may be made more fearful by highly assertive dogs, highly interactive dogs, or rough play. A fearful dog may snap or bite as a way of defending itself, and perhaps develop problems that can be seen outside of the confines of a dog park.
3. The park users must have their dog under voice control.
4. Children should always be closely supervised by a responsible adult.
5. Owners should carry their leash on them at all times.
6. One activity for a dog park club is to help monitor interactions between dogs and other dogs and between dogs and people. The best option for an organization is to obtain indemnification from potential liability from their local government. If a local government has this sort of expectation from a dog park user group, then the governmental entity should be required to indemnify the group and absorb any legal liability (and legal costs) that might ensue.

## **Noise**

This is another frequently mentioned concern of community officials. The noise level at parks invariably increased over baseline in the area of the highest concentration of activity during peak use. The degree that the surrounding community will notice this depends upon the degree to which the noise level potentially reflects an increase in ambient noise from such things as noise from increased automobile traffic. It should be kept in mind that sound level declines exponentially with distance from the source of the sound. Our research revealed no correlation approaching significance between the increase in noise level at dog parks during times of heavy use and ranking of park success. In park locations where noise from dogs may be an issue, we suggest the following:

1. Do not establish a dog park immediately adjacent to residential property lines.
2. If the dog park must be located immediately adjacent to residential property lines, create sound buffers with plants, fencing or earthen berms if needed.
3. If an established park shares a border with residential property lines, move the area of heaviest usage away from that boundary.

## **Sanitation**

This is the third most highly profiled concern of community officials and park managers. However, our study found no significant correlation between fecal counts and success. The absence of a correlation may indicate a rather low occurrence of residual fecal droppings in parks. The median was 1 fecal dropping per 100 square meters (120 square yards). Clearly almost all users of dog parks are conscientious about picking up after their dogs. We did find a correlation between the number of signs reminding users to pick up after their dogs and a lower fecal count. The posting of signs highlighting the rule of picking up feces appeared to be more important than the number of refuse cans available – as long as the cans were accessible and not overflowing. To help assure compliance with community expectations of a clean park, we suggest the following:

1. Plan and budget for an appropriate maintenance and cleaning schedule, done by the municipality or organization managing the dog park.
2. Place signs stating the rules at the entrance(s) to the park, as well as within the park, profiling the rule that owners must pick up the feces of their dogs. Be sure that the signs are well maintained.
3. Provide adequate disposable bags, or other means of removing feces, and refuse cans for feces cleanup.
4. Suggest that an active dog park club help monitor the sanitation of the park.

## **Location**

Our research indirectly points out the important role that the location of a park can have in its perceived success. In some instances, good use may be made of areas that are not in high demand for human-only use. As an extreme, one park was located underneath a freeway. In other instances, a location previously used by transients was upgraded as a community resource by the presence of off-leash dog use. The establishment of a well-maintained and responsibly-used dog park may actually improve the value of some neighborhoods. Another benefit for a well-located park, according to park managers, is that the availability of an off-leash park reduced the tendency for people to allow their dogs off-leash in areas where it is not legal.

Park size is important. We found a correlation between the size of the park and ranking of park success, with larger parks being ranked as more successful. Even for parks less than 3 acres, the larger the better. If everything else is equal, choose the larger of 2 possible locations. As observed by our study investigators, and verified by the manager interviews, it was not uncommon for users to allow their dogs off-leash when coming to or leaving a dog park, even though there were rules against allowing dogs off-leash away from the park. Locating a park close to convenient parking spaces for cars may reduce or eliminate this problem. The following are specific suggestions regarding location:

1. The size of the park should be as large as feasible. However, the municipality or organization managing the park needs to be able to adequately maintain the space.
2. Utilize alternate or nontraditional locations, if needed, to help decrease the chance for conflict with other community users.

1. Locate the park so that it is not directly adjacent to residential property lines, to help decrease the chance of actual and perceived problems between park users and the neighbors. However, the park should be close enough to a residential area that dog owners will take their dogs to the park and not allow them off-leash elsewhere.
2. Provide adequate parking for the dog park users, as most users (95%) drive to them. In addition, locate the off-leash area close to the parking lot as possible to discourage owners letting their dogs off-leash between the dog park and parking.
3. If applicable requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must be taken into consideration.

## **Maintenance**

If asked about the three things that influence how well an off-leash dog park works, one could answer maintenance, maintenance, and maintenance. This is a factor that proved to significantly correlate with ranking of park success, regardless of park size or whether dog-exclusive or multiple-use. The bottom line is that before establishing on an off-leash park, the community must plan ahead and commit resources for maintenance. The monetary costs and time for maintenance should be budgeted and taken into consideration prior to approval of the park. The factors that are part of maintenance include, but are not limited to, are: frequency of emptying refuse cans; re-supplying disposable plastic pick up bags; replacing or fixing broken, bent, or weathered signs displaying rules; filling holes dug by dogs; irrigation and maintenance of vegetation and turf; repairing fencing. Maintenance also includes cleaning restrooms and other park user amenities, such as benches. One perspective is that, as in reducing the occurrence of graffiti in urban areas by promptly removing graffiti, promptly removing fecal droppings encourages people to follow the rules about cleanliness. The following are our recommendations:

1. Plan and budget for appropriate maintenance and a cleaning schedule, which includes adequate sanitation procedures, filling of holes that are dug by dogs, proper maintenance of the substrate, and proper maintenance of fencing and amenities.
2. It is suggested that an active dog park club help advise the municipality as to the needed resources to maintain the park, and to help monitor their condition. However, do not rely on the club to handle the required maintenance.

## **Substrate**

While the substrate within a park is undoubtedly important and correlates with park success, this is often the most difficult topic for which to make specific recommendations. All substrate types, whether turf, ground tree bark, decomposed granite, or heavily compacted base rock, may be appropriate for some parks or some areas in parks. It is important to choose an appropriate substrate for the location and resources available for adequate maintenance. Some thought must also be given for what is best for the dogs. The following are some guidelines:

- 1. Turf.** This is a favorable substrate if the location is appropriate and the municipality is able to undertake fairly intensive maintenance. If turf is planted, it must be adequately maintained to help prevent degeneration into dirt or mud, which includes irrigation, mowing, and weeding. Some parks are closed periodically for reseeded/resodding the grass. Feces may be hard to detect in turf, especially if it is long.

1. **Bark or wood chips.** This substrate is easily maintained. It needs to be replenished periodically, but does afford adequate drainage. Care should be taken when selecting a wood product so that dogs do not get splinters. Wood chips that are used for playgrounds are a good choice. Feces may be difficult to detect on the wood chips, but are easily removed. To some people wood chips are not very aesthetically pleasing.
2. **Decomposed granite.** As with wood chips this is relatively easily maintained. It needs to be replenished periodically. If deep enough and graded well, it allows adequate drainage. Feces are easily detected and removed from this substrate. Maintenance of holes dug by dogs needs to be addressed, because if there is not an adequate depth dogs may dig down to dirt, resulting in muddy holes.
3. **Sand.** This is the natural substrate in parks at the waterfront or on the beach. There is no worry about refilling holes dug by dogs, unless they are extremely large. It affords adequate drainage, and feces are easily detected and removed from this substrate. However, it is difficult for municipalities to maintain and keep clean, often requiring specialized equipment. Sand may become too hot for dogs' feet during warm weather.
4. **Heavily compacted base rock.** This may be the only option available, depending on the location. If used there are precautions to observe. First, pavement may get very hot if in direct sunlight. Secondly, users should be made aware that a dog might develop abrasions on the pads of their feet if they are not accustomed to spending a fair amount of time on this substrate. It is very low maintenance, and feces are easily detected and removed from this substrate. To help decrease odors, an enzyme-based disinfectant/deodorant can be sprayed on this substrate.
5. **Multiple different substrates used together.** Turf, bark, and concrete/asphalt trails may be used in different locations within a park. This offers dogs the opportunity to encounter and choose different types of footing. Trails encourage park users to walk with their dogs, therefore decreasing the density of dogs in one particular area. This also allows the human users the option to exercise themselves more easily.

## Rules

We found that invariably all parks had rules. However, there was a wide disparity in how visible the rules were. The rules must be highly visible, so that everyone is well informed as to what is expected. We found a significant correlation between the number of signs posting fecal cleanup rules and the fecal count per 100 square meters (120 square yards). Short versions of the rules emphasizing clean-up should be posted in locations throughout the park, as well as at the entrance(s). This is an area where an active dog club may be very helpful by helping self-patrol the area. Park managers mentioned that “self-policing” and peer-pressure by park users helps the other users be more aware of the stated rules.

A charged issue about rules is placing a limit on the number of dogs allowed per user. The main concern is with regard to dogwalkers who may bring in as many as 15 dogs at a time. Our observations, reinforced by comments from users of the park, suggest that dogwalkers, and others with more than 3 dogs, are less conscientious about picking up fecal droppings or monitoring interactions with other dogs or people. In light of these observations it seems that limiting the number of off-leash dogs to 3 per adult user is not unreasonable. Here are our suggestions regarding rules:

1. Post rules in several visible locations; keep the signs well-maintained.
2. Rules should profile user responsibility, especially regarding clean-up.
3. Limit the number of dogs per adult allowed in the park. We suggest no more than 3 per adult user.
4. The park users must have their dog under voice control.
5. Do not allow dogs that are aggressive to other dogs or people into the park.
6. Unsupervised children under the age of 14 should not be allowed into the park for safety reasons.
7. Enforce leash laws in areas surrounding the dog park to decrease the number of dogs illegally off-leash going to and from the park.

### **Dog Park Clubs**

The parks visited in our research had a range of dog park club involvement characterized as: none, currently inactive; moderately active with little financial or club newsletter involvement; quite active with a newsletter, and/or dues and meetings; and very active, involved with park management, self-policing by users and with dues, a newsletter and meetings. Clearly, an active dog park club is important to the success of a park and the more active the better. We suggest the following on this topic:

1. Suggest that an active dog park club participate in the planning of a dog park.
2. Suggest meetings of dog park club officials and the park management to review success and address any problems, or when serious problems arise.
3. Suggest that the dog park club sponsor an on-line and/or paper newsletter, and potentially an e-mail listserve, and charge reasonable dues.
4. Encourage the dog park club sponsor fundraiser with park users and periodically contribute proceeds to non-dog related functions, such as science and biology teaching in schools, to help increase harmony with the surrounding community.