

## 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

February 4, 2019

400 County Center, Board Chambers, Redwood City

**Work Group Members Present:** Cervantes, Corwin, Erridge, Merrilees, Sullivan, Brophy, Hearn, Johnson

**Workgroup Members Absent:** Bonilla, Del Carlo, O'Brien

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

**Facilitator:** Brown

### Goals for this meeting:

- 1) Continue to review potential pilot locations
- 2) Consider Dog Management Committee criteria for selection of dog access locations
- 3) Narrow options for on-leash pilot sites
- 4) Discuss opportunities for public input to this Work Group
- 5) Identify process for providing written communications from the public to Work Group members

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.

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 16 community members present.

Pat explained that at this point in the agenda they were invited to address the work group and they were asked to keep their comments brief and relevant.

Comments addressed the following points:

- Request to have pilot parks on both sides of the hill (the bay side and coastside)
- Suggestion to look at neighboring jurisdictions' policies regarding dog access in parks, including Santa Clara County
- Request for an evening meeting to allow more people to attend and provide input
- Safety is a concern for dog owner, dog, horse and horse rider, and that line of site and width of trail are important if there will be trails where dogs and horses both have access
- Dogs and their owners need opportunities for off-leash exercise

Work group members received materials, including a postcard outreach flyer that rangers are using to educate park goers regarding the San Mateo County dog policies that are in place.

### **Summary of Progress at January Meeting**

Peggy Jensen, Acting Parks Director, then reviewed what was accomplished at the January 2019 Dog Work Group meeting: it was agreed that sites not appropriate to pilot dog access include Woodside Store, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Wunderlich Park. She noted that since Sawyer Camp and Crystal Springs trails are County trails via an easement and MOU with SF Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), they would not be considered for the pilot because SFPUC does not allow dogs.

Even though some parks are not appropriate for dog access, the Work Group was reminded that its purpose is to increase dog access in County parks and identifying potentially successful pilot sites is the first step.

### **Update on Education and Data Collection**

Laurel Finnegan, Visitor Services Ranger, then provided an update on first month 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 (FMR)
- 6) Bay Trail (Coyote Point Park)

A total of 96 education contacts have been made by park rangers during the first month, with over half at Pillar Point Bluff and almost 1/3 at Coyote Point. The top two violation types encountered by rangers include dogs off-leash and dogs in undesignated areas. Approximately 81% of the dogs in undesignated areas occurred on the bayside, and 19% were on the coastside. About 91% of the dogs off-leash occurred on the coastside, with 9% occurring on the bayside.

### **Park Locations that Meet Dog Management Committee Recommended Criteria**

Then, Peggy Jensen reminded the group of the Dog Management Committee's recommended overarching policy: 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.

- Provide a variety of visitor experiences and locations
- Protect natural and cultural resources and avoid impacts on sensitive habitat and wildlife
- Avoid visitor use conflicts and conflicts with adjacent land uses such as agriculture
- Clearly indicate where dogs are allowed with signage, and select areas that are well designed and where rules can be enforced

Based on this overarching policy and guiding considerations, 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

**Coyote Point Recreation Area** is a bayfront park in San Mateo near the Bay Trail which currently allows dog access. It is a high use park with trails, beach, picnic areas, lawns, fields, 2 fenced playgrounds and 1 unenclosed tot lot. The rangers mentioned it is a challenge to restrict Bay Trail users from accessing Coyote Point with their dogs.

**Flood Park** is located on Bay Road in Menlo Park. It has high use of reservation areas, sports fields and walking paths. Redevelopment planning is underway and construction will require multi-year closure (in the period following the Dog Access Pilot).

**Junipero Serra Park** is located on Crystal Springs Road in San Bruno and is adjacent to San Bruno City Park which allows dogs. The neighborhood residents use the park hiking trails, play fields, lawns, picnic areas and reservation sites. There are also 2 unfenced playgrounds.

**Memorial Park** is located on Pescadero Creek Road in Loma Mar. It has seasonal high use campgrounds and day areas that attract many out-of-county visitors. Park features include camping areas, trails, outdoor theater, store, natural resource museum, and Pescadero Creek (local water source). This park is also home to an endangered small seabird, Marbled Murrelets. Improvements are planned for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024.

**Old Haul Road** in Pescadero Creek Park is located in Loma Mar adjacent to Memorial Park. It has trails that link to County and State Parks. Park features include redwood groves, mountain creeks, hiking trails, 2 trail camps for backpackers and Old Haul Road, a wide road with good line of site. Trails are used by hikers, bikers and equestrians. This park is also home to an endangered small seabird, Marbled Murrelets.

Carla Schoof, Parks Communication Manager, reviewed the Parks website information regarding the Dog Pilot Program, the Dog Work Group, and the Dog Management Committee. She also highlighted that the public may send input by email to [parksandrecreation@smcgov.org](mailto:parksandrecreation@smcgov.org).

### **Discussion**

Since the time needed for public comment was longer than expected, the Work Group did not have time to discuss the options for piloting dog access and agreed to postpone the discussion to the next meeting. Pat asked for any burning questions from the work group and reminded the group that they have been asked to provide guidance to Parks regarding 1 or 2 pilot sites for on-leash dog access.

### **Confirm Work Group Timeline and Meeting Schedule**

Pat briefly reviewed the process timeline for the Work Group and noted that the next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 2pm**. The Work Group agreed to extend the next meeting to two hours to allow additional time for discussion. The location and meeting agenda will be provided to the Work Group and posted for the public on the Parks Department website.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.