

SMC Parks Dog Pilot Project Work Group

Work Group Goals:

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

Meeting Notes

June 3, 2019

400 County Center, Supervisors' Chambers, Redwood City

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

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

Facilitator: Brown

Goals for this meeting:

- Confirm next steps with On-Leash Pilot sites
- Receive information about plans for communicating with stakeholders about the pilot program
- Discuss proposal to supplement evaluation criteria with input from a survey
- Set up the discussion of off-leash options

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 on-leash pilot sites to test the feasibility of dog access to SMC Parks, and development of a recommendation about possible off-leash dog access.

Pat reminded the group of their agreement to use consensus decision-making within the Work Group using the fist-five method (3 fingers means the member can live with the decision and will not undermine it; below 3 fingers means the member does not agree, and more than 3 fingers indicates the level of agreement). She mentioned that if the group cannot reach consensus, it can resolve the issue with a majority vote. She also referenced the process map which outlines the timeline for this work group, and reviewed the meeting agenda.

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

- Members prepare for meetings by reading meeting packet

- Speak respectfully during meetings
- Listen for understanding
- Allow the facilitator to guide the process

Review notes from the May 6th Work Group Meeting

Staff mentioned the number of off-leash dog contacts on the coastside reported at the May meeting was 172 (not 205) and that it would be changed in the May meeting notes.

There was a question about the work group's assignment (goals). The facilitator clarified that the overarching goals of the work group are included at the top of each meeting agenda and meeting notes: recommend and implement 1-2 on-leash pilot projects and develop a recommendation to the Parks Department about a possible off-leash pilot.

Public Comment

There were about 11 community members present at the meeting.

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:

- Request for a user survey as part of the evaluation criteria to determine success of the program
- Request that off-leash dog parks open before July 1 when fines begin
- Request for off-leash access at Pillar Point Bluffs and Quarry Park
- Request for more dog hiking opportunities in San Mateo County
- Thank you to staff for mowing the area on the left of the Quarry Park entrance

Review of Written Input Received

Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director, confirmed 4 written public comments were provided to the workgroup members in addition to the 4 written comments that were provided to the work group by email. She noted the comments would be posted online on the June 3, 2019 Dog Work Group meeting webpage.

Follow up from May meeting – information requests

As requested by the work group at the last meeting, staff provided a copy of the communications shared with the Board of Supervisors (*Member's Memo*) and the letter that was shared with city managers in neighboring jurisdictions and park directors (see both attached). The work group requested that any responses received by staff from the cities be shared with the work group.

Overview of Communication Plan

Ellie reviewed the Communication Plan for the On-Leash Dog Pilot program. The Department proposes to use a variety of communication methods including:

- Written communication, such as the Member's Memo and letters to adjacent cities as well as notification to reservation holders at the pilot parks
- Signage and kiosks at the pilot parks to let park users know on-leash dog access is allowed
- Social media, nextdoor.com, the Parks website and the Parks July e-newsletter

- Local newspapers to announce the on-leash dog pilot program

Ellie also shared a 'talking points' handout that outlines the message that will be shared through the SMC Parks On-Leash Dog Pilot communication plan. She also requested that the work group members help spread the word about the On-Leash Dog Pilot Program using these talking points:

- SMC Parks is expanding on-leash dog access!
- A six month on-leash pilot program will begin on June 15 at Coyote Point and Junipero Serra Park
- Evaluation of the pilot program will be conducted and reported back to the Board of Supervisors in early 2020.
- When visiting County Parks with your dog(s), please follow the following visitor guidelines:
 - Always keep dogs on-leash
 - Stay on designated trails
 - Scoop the poop
 - No more than 3 dogs per person
 - Keep leashes 6' or less when near others
 - Keep dogs out of playgrounds and other undesignated areas
 - Leave wildlife and vegetation undisturbed

Work group members were invited to a *meet and greet* public event on Friday, June 14, 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm at Junipero Serra Park. The event will be an opportunity for folks to visit Junipero Serra Park with their dogs and meet the Junipero Serra Rangers.

Peggy Jensen thanked Laurel Finnegan and Priscilla Alvarez for their efforts to prepare the pilot parks for the July 15 pilot start date. In preparation for the on-leash dog access pilot program, additional fencing was installed at Junipero Serra Park for about \$27,000, and the wildlife monitoring camera traps would operate for the 6 month pilot at about \$3,000 per park.

Update on Ranger Contacts/Education and Data Collection

Laurel Finnegan then provided an update on the monitoring of dog access and ranger outreach since 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 306 contacts have been made by park rangers January 1, 2019 through May 2019:

- 116 contacts at Coyote Point Recreation Area
- 80 contacts at Pillar Point Bluff
- 43 contacts at Coyote Point Marina
- 30 contacts at Quarry Park
- 28 contacts at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- 6 contacts at Devil's Slide Trail
- 2 contacts at Mirada Surf

- 1 contact at an unidentified location

The top two contact types encountered by rangers to date include dogs off-leash (173 on coastside and 23 on bayside) and dogs in undesignated areas (32 on coastside and 169 on bayside). It was mentioned that most of the undesignated area dog contacts continue to be made in parks where dogs are only allowed in a designated area of the park (Coyote Point and Fitzgerald Marine Reserve). There were 36 contacts made where dogs were off trail (19 on coastside and 17 on bayside). There were no contacts on the coastside with leashes longer than six feet, and three contacts on the bayside.

The work group was also presented with a month by month comparison of the total number of contacts:

**Summary of Ranger Contacts
As of June 3, 2019**

	January	February	March	April	May
Coyote Point Marina	14	5	9	13	2
Coyote Point Recreation Area	26	19	30	28	13
Devil's Slide Trail	3	2	1	0	0
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve	15	6	5	2	0
Mirada Surf	1	0	0	0	1
Pillar Point Bluff	45	21	5	8	1
Quarry Park	2	15	2	11	0
Unidentified	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL INTERACTIONS BY MONTH:	106	69	52	62	17
TOTAL 2019 INTERACTIONS:	306				

	Dogs off trail	Person with more than 3 dogs	Dogs off-Leash	Leash longer than 6 feet	Dogs in undesignated area
Bayside	17	0	23	3	169
Coastside	19	2	173	0	32

Discuss Implementation of Visitor Survey to Gather Feedback During the On-Leash Dog Pilot

Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director, reviewed the draft of a visitor survey to be used during the on-leash dog pilot. The goal of the visitor survey is to get park visitor reactions to allowing dogs on-leash in the two pilot project parks. This information will be incorporated into the pilot project report that will be presented to the Board of Supervisors. The approach will be to randomly sample guests with and without dogs at the pilot project parks 3 times during the 6 month pilot period. Surveyors will be teams of 1 Dog Work Group member and 1 County staff person. Draft survey questions proposed included the following:

DRAFT Questions for visitors with dogs

1. Are you visiting _____ Park today because you could bring your dog(s) on-leash? [Y/N]
2. Have you visited _____ Park more frequently since dogs have been allowed? [Y/N]
3. How do you feel about dogs being allowed on-leash at _____ Park?
 - a. [Positive, Neutral, Negative]
4. Please share any questions or comments you have regarding dogs at _____ Park.
 - a. [Open ended]

DRAFT Questions for visitor without dogs

1. When you decided to visit _____ Park today, did you know that dogs are allowed on-leash in this park? [Y/N]
 - a. If no, would knowing dogs are allowed on-leash have affected your decision to come to _____? [Open ended]
2. How do you feel about dogs being allowed on-leash at _____ Park?
 - a. [Positive, Neutral, Negative]
3. Please share any questions or comments you have regarding dogs at _____ Park.
 - a. [Open ended]

The work group members did not have any suggestions during the meeting for the survey. Staff confirmed they may send any edits they have to Ellie Dallman following this meeting.

Share Proposed Outline of End of On-Leash Dog Pilot Report to Board of Supervisors

Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director, reviewed the draft outline for the report that will be presented to the Parks Commission and Board of Supervisors at the end of the On-Leash Dog Pilot Program in early 2020.

DRAFT Outline: On-Leash Dog Pilot Report

- I. Recommendation to Board of Supervisors
- II. Background
 - a. Summary of Dog Management Committee
 - b. Summary of Board Action in October 2018
 - c. Summary of Dog Work Group process and recommended actions
- III. Evaluation Criteria
 - a. Coyote Point Recreation Area
 - i. Environmental Impacts (vegetation, wildlife, water quality)
 - ii. Visitor Interactions and Visitor Survey Results
 - iii. Parks Resources
 - iv. Parks Use
 - b. Junipero Serra Park
 - i. Environmental Impacts (vegetation, wildlife, water quality)
 - ii. Visitor Interactions and Visitor Survey Results
 - iii. Parks Resources
 - iv. Parks Use
- IV. Discussion
- V. Fiscal Impact

Discuss Approach to Identifying a Proposed Off-Leash Dog Recreation Area

Peggy Jensen reviewed the Dog Work Group Process map shared with the work group in January 2019 when the group first met, which shows that the group would 'draft and finalize recommendation for 1 off-leash pilot site based on policy' August through September 2019 before bringing an off-leash pilot site recommendation to the Parks Commission and Board of Supervisors for consideration.

To begin discussion around off-leash dog access policies, Ellie Dallman reviewed the Off-Leash Research handout provided to the work group at the April 2019 work group meeting. Depending on the jurisdiction, off-leash dog access is allowed in a variety of forms:

Types of Off-Leash Dog Recreation Areas

- Enclosed or fenced off-leash area
 - o Generally closed 1 day of the week for maintenance purposes)
 - o Examples include Santa Clara County, Santa Cruz County, and Sonoma County
- Designated open off-leash area such as fire roads or a designated portion of the park
 - o For example, Marin County Parks allow dogs off-leash on fire protection roads; Sonoma County allows off-leash access on a small section of beach at low tide; Midpeninsula Regional Open Space has a designated unfenced 17.5 acre open area inside one preserve for off-leash access
- Entire park open to off-leash access
 - o For example GGNRA and City of Boulder Open Space allow off-leash access and both require dogs to be under 'voice and sight control'; East Bay Regional Open Space allows dogs off-leash in open space and developed areas of parklands that are separated from developed areas by at least 100 yards or by a fence.

The work group began discussing the off-leash dog recreation information and the following comments were made:

- It is helpful to have information from other jurisdictions that allow off-leash dog access
- It was mentioned that many people hike at Quarry Park with their dogs, and that Quarry Park would be a good location to test enclosed off-leash dog recreation
- Suggestion to consider Flood Park for enclosed off-leash dog recreation
- Suggestion to consider off-leash pilot park at a park that already allows on-leash dog access


Staff confirmed they would come back to the next meeting with more information regarding existing off-leash dog recreation opportunities in San Mateo County.

Next Steps

Staff confirmed that the 6 month on-leash dog access pilot projects would begin on June 15, 2019, and that a report back on the 6 month on-leash pilot would be presented to the Board of Supervisors in early 2020. At the next Dog Work Group meeting scheduled for August 5, 2019, the work group will continue discussion regarding an off-leash dog recreation policy recommendation.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Members Memorandum

Date: May 23, 2019
To: Honorable Members, Board of Supervisors
From: Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director 
Subject: Dog Management Pilot Program: Two On-Leash Pilot Park Sites Confirmed

The purpose of this memo is to provide your Board an update on the status of the dog management pilot program, including the selection of two park locations for the 6-month on-leash dog access pilot starting June 15, 2019: Coyote Point Recreation Area and Junipero Serra Park.

Background

In spring of 2016, the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission (“Commission”) formed the Dog Management Committee (“Committee”), which was tasked with advising the Commission on the development of new dog management policies for the Parks Department (“Department”). The Committee was comprised of representatives from the Commission, Department, Midcoast Community Council, Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council, North Fair Oaks Community Council, and dog-owner, environmentalist, equestrian, and cyclist communities. The Department also implemented an extensive communication and community engagement process to support the Committee’s work and gather further public input.

After meeting over the course of approximately 15 months, the Committee developed an overarching policy: “It is the policy of the [San Mateo County] 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.” The Committee also developed secondary policies for the Department to use as guiding principles in assessing which locations are appropriate for dog recreation. The secondary policies focus on education; providing a variety of experiences; avoiding conflicts; protecting preexisting uses and natural resources; managing access to playgrounds and play areas; considering new areas for dogs; enforcement; and requirements concerning leash length and the number of dogs allowed per person.

At the same meeting, the Commission identified recommended next steps, to be implemented in sequential order. The first step was to amend the County ordinance sections that govern dog recreation within County parks and recreation areas to ensure

consistency with existing management practices (completed in fall 2018). The second step entails developing and implementing a dog management pilot program to inform possible further revisions to the ordinance and/or Department dog-management policies and practices, which is currently underway.

Prior to the Board's approval of the dog management policies in 2018, County policy prohibited dog access in all County parks and recreation areas. The newly established ordinance allows dogs on-leash within designated and signed areas in the following parks: Quarry Park, Mirada Surf, Bay Trail through Coyote Point, Coastal Trail along Devil's Slide, Pillar Point Bluff and Dardenelle Trail.

Discussion

A. Initiation of the Dog Pilot Project Work group

In January 2019, the Department held its first meeting with the San Mateo County Parks Dog Pilot Project Work Group ("Work Group"), composed of community members who served on the Dog Management Committee, two park commissioners and park staff. Work Group meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. Meeting agendas and notes are posted on the Department's website, and public comment is accepted during meetings and through email. The goals of the Work Group are to:

- a) recommend to the Department one or two park sites where on-leash dog access can be piloted and evaluated, based on the work of the Dog Management Committee, and
- b) provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding off-leash dog access policies and a possible park site where off-leash dog access can be piloted and evaluated.

B. On-Leash Dog Access Pilot Site Implementation

Based on the guidelines established by the Dog Management Committee, the Dog Work Group confirmed two locations to pilot on-leash dog access for 6 months starting June 15, 2019: Coyote Point Recreation Area and Junipero Serra Park.

In preparation for June 15, staff will install informational signs stating regulations and marking areas where dogs are not allowed. Fencing will also be installed around playgrounds and other areas where dogs are not allowed. In response to concerns raised by CuriOdyssey Science Playground and Zoo regarding on-leash dog access at Coyote Point, the Department will install additional signage and fencing to limit dog access on trails directly adjacent to CuriOdyssey to minimize potential impact. The attached map highlights the trails surrounding CuriOdyssey where dogs will not be allowed.

Park visitors, area residents, neighboring cities and agencies as well as picnic reservation holders will receive information about the on-leash dog access pilot projects at Coyote Point and Junipero Serra Park. Information regarding the project will also be posted on the Department's social media accounts, monthly newsletter, and website. Additionally, a 'meet and greet' event will be held at Junipero Serra Park on Friday,

June 14, 2019, from 5:30pm to 7:00pm, to encourage area residents and all park users to meet rangers, learn about the rules, and help park users feel welcome to visit Junipero Serra and Coyote Point with their dogs. The Board and their dogs are welcome to join the June 14th gathering.

After piloting on-leash dog access for 6 months at Coyote Point and Junipero Serra Park, the Department will report back to the Board in early 2020. The report will include information regarding the following evaluation criteria categories approved by the Work Group: environmental impacts including vegetation, wildlife and water quality; visitor interactions; Parks resources; and park use.

C. Off-Leash Dog Access Next Steps

Next month, the Work Group will begin discussing off-leash dog access in San Mateo County parks. With input from the Work Group, the Department will develop and present a recommendation to your Board regarding off-leash dog access policies, including a possible park site where off-leash dog access can be piloted and evaluated, later this year.

Fiscal Impact:

A summary of costs related to staff time, infrastructure and materials required to initiate and run the on-leash dog access pilots will be included in the Department's report back to the board in early 2020. Materials and infrastructure will include fencing of playground areas, educational and regulatory signage, wildlife cameras, and printed materials.

CC: Mike Callagy, County Manager
San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission
San Mateo County Dog Pilot Project Work Group
Laurel Finnegan, San Mateo County Parks Ranger IV
Priscilla Alvarez, San Mateo County Parks Ranger IV

EXAMPLE

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PARKS DEPARTMENT

455 County Center, 4th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063-1646
650-363-4020
www.SMCoParks.org

May 23, 2019

Sheila Canzian, Director
Parks and Recreation
2001 Pacific Blvd.
San Mateo, CA 94403

RE: San Mateo County Parks Dog Management Pilot Program: Two On-Leash Pilot Park Sites Confirmed

Dear Ms. Canzian,

I am writing to inform you that starting June 15, 2019, the San Mateo County Parks Department will begin piloting on-leash dog access at Junipero Serra Park and Coyote Point Recreation Area for 6 months. I would also appreciate your sharing this information with your City Council, and anyone else that might be interested.

In spring of 2016, the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission (“Commission”) formed the Dog Management Committee (“Committee”), which was tasked with advising the Commission on the development of new dog management policies for the Parks Department (“Department”). The Committee was comprised of representatives from the Commission, Department, Midcoast Community Council, Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council, North Fair Oaks Community Council, and dog-owner, environmentalist, equestrian, and cyclist communities. The Department also implemented an extensive communication and community engagement process to support the Committee’s work and gather further public input.

After meeting over the course of approximately 15 months, the Committee developed an overarching policy: “It is the policy of the [San Mateo County] 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.” The Committee also developed secondary policies for the Department to use as guiding principles in assessing which locations are appropriate for dog recreation. The secondary policies focus on education; providing a variety of experiences; avoiding conflicts; protecting preexisting uses and natural resources; managing access to playgrounds and play areas; considering new areas for dogs; enforcement; and requirements concerning leash length and the number of dogs allowed per person.

At the same meeting, the Commission identified recommended next steps, to be implemented in sequential order. The first step was to amend the County ordinance sections that govern dog recreation within County parks and recreation areas to ensure consistency with existing management practices (completed in fall 2018). The second step entails developing and implementing a dog management pilot program to inform possible further revisions to the ordinance and/or Department dog-management policies and practices, which is currently underway.

In January 2019, the Department held its first monthly public meeting with the San Mateo County Parks Dog Pilot Project Work Group (“Work Group”), composed of community members who had served on the Dog Management Committee as well as two park commissioners and park staff. Based on the dog management policies approved by the Board, the goals of the Work Group are to:

- a) recommend to the Department one or two park sites where on-leash dog access can be piloted and evaluated, based on the work of the Dog Management Committee, and
- b) provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding off-leash dog access policies and a possible park site where off-leash dog access can be piloted and evaluated.

Using the guidelines developed by the Dog Management Committee, the Dog Work Group selected two locations to pilot on-leash dog access for 6 months beginning June 15, 2019: Coyote Point Recreation Area and Junipero Serra Park.

In response to concerns raised by CuriOdyssey Science Playground and Zoo regarding on-leash dog access at Coyote Point, the Department will install additional signage and fencing to limit dog access on trails directly adjacent to CuriOdyssey to minimize potential impact. The attached map highlights the trails surrounding CuriOdyssey where dogs will not be allowed.

The Department will employ various communication methods to inform park visitors of the regulations for on-leash dog access, including park signage, social media, and park ranger interactions. More information regarding pilot projects will be posted on the San Mateo County Parks website: www.SMCoParks.org. Additionally, a ‘meet and greet’ event will be held at Junipero Serra Park on Friday, June 14, 2019, from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm, to encourage area residents and all park users to meet rangers, learn about the rules, and help park users feel welcome to visit Junipero Serra and Coyote Point with their dogs. You and your dogs are welcome to join the June 14th gathering.

After piloting on-leash dog access for 6 months, the Department will report back to the Board of Supervisors with information regarding the following evaluation criteria categories approved by the Work Group to determine next steps: environmental impacts, visitor interactions, Parks resources, and park use.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Elizabeth Dallman at edallman@smcgov.org or 650-599-1016.

Sincerely,



Peggy Jensen
Interim Director,
San Mateo County Parks