

## 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 possible off-leash dog access.

### Meeting Notes

August 5, 2019

400 County Center, Supervisors' Chambers, Redwood City

**Work Group Members Present:** Cervantes, Corwin, Merrilees, Sullivan, Del Carlo, O'Brien

**Workgroup Members Absent:** Bonilla, Brophy, Erridge, Hearn, Johnson

**Staff:** Alvarez, Dallman, Jensen, Ormshaw, Schoof

**Facilitator:** Brown

### Proposed goals for this meeting:

1. Update progress on on-leash pilots and status of survey implementation
2. Begin a process to develop an off-leash recommendation to the Parks Department
3. Agree on a timeline for completing the Work Group's assignment

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 developing a recommendation about possible off-leash 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 proposed 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 June 3<sup>rd</sup> Work Group Meeting**

There was some unresolved concern (related to the Work Group Goals that are printed on each agenda) about whether the Board of Supervisors asked for one or two sites to be included in the off-leash recommendation. This issue will be addressed again at the next meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There were about 38 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 that in order to allow time for the work group to accomplish the meeting goals, 20 minutes is set aside for verbal public comments at each meeting. Each speaker may address the work group for up to two minutes. It was also mentioned that there are written comment forms if attendees prefer to submit their input to the workgroup in writing, or if there is not sufficient time for everyone to address the work group verbally. In total, 22 speakers slips were submitted, and 10 people shared verbal public comments during the 20 minute public comment period.

Comments addressed the following points:

- Request for a more transparent and inclusive process for dog owner community
- Board of Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve expressed appreciation of new signage regarding dog access; they mentioned compliance is still a big concern, and that the bluff trail has several access points to the tide pools and Ross' Cove, which are protected areas where dogs are not allowed
- Various speakers expressed support for multiple off-leash trails and beaches, including on both the bayside and coastside
- Thank you to rangers for mowing grass at Quarry Park
- Suggest off-leash dog park on Wicklow side of Quarry Park parking lot
- Request for off-leash dog area, especially so people with illness or disabilities and elderly people can exercise their dogs
- Request for legal off-leash dog park that is within 10-15 minute drive of Montara
- Mentioned there were many dogs at the Pacifica Surf event over the weekend and the speaker did not see any problems

In addition to the verbal public comments, 23 written public comments were submitted during the meeting. These written comments will be shared with the work group members in advance of the September work group meeting.

### **Review of Proposed Meeting Agenda**

Staff suggested the following approach to develop a recommendation for the off-leash dog policies and pilot location:

1. Look at policies for on-leash access and see if there should be any additions or changes.
2. Consider structural options for off-leash access – open space, trails, enclosed areas
3. Consider potential locations for pilot location
4. Any addition to evaluation criteria for off leash pilot evaluation

There was consensus among the Work Group members in attendance to change the proposed process and focus the meeting agenda on possible locations for a recommended off-leash pilot before hearing an update on the on-leash pilot dog parks and before discussing off-leash dog access policies.

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

Work Group members were asked to share research regarding off-leash dog recreation opportunities in other jurisdictions. Locations mentioned included Santa Cruz County, Monterey County, Marin County, and East Bay Regional Park District.

Ellie Dallman distributed a spreadsheet outlining the types of off-leash dog recreation parks currently available within San Mateo County for informational purposes (see attached at the end of the meeting notes).

### **Brainstorm of Potential Off-Leash Dog Park Pilot Locations**

Work Group members then started brainstorming potential sites for the off-leash dog pilot. The Parks Department strongly suggested that any proposed site for an off-leash pilot be a location where dogs are already present on-leash, excluding the two on-leash pilot locations (Coyote Point and Junipero Serra Park). Some Work Group members were in agreement with this thinking, but others suggested alternative sites for consideration.

The Work Group generated the following list of 11 potential sites. Group members felt that it would be easier to develop guiding policies and evaluation criteria with specific locations in mind. *Note that parks that have an asterisk (\*) next to the name below allow on-leash dog access.*

- Devils Slide Trail\*
- Edgewood Park (0.6 mile segment of Edgewood Trail before entering park boundary)
- Flood Park
- Quarry Park\*
- Huddart Park (Meadow Picnic Area)
- Memorial Park
- Mirada Surf\*
- Pescadero Creek County Park
- Pillar Point Bluff\*
- Sam McDonald Park
- Sheep Camp Trail

Because of the effort required to provide background information for such a large number of park locations, staff will contact all Work Group Members before the next meeting on September 9th to ask members to prioritize the list of suggested off-leash locations above. Doing so will allow staff adequate time to assemble the information needed for the Work Group to develop a final recommendation to the Parks Department.

### **Summary of Written Comments Shared with the Work Group In Preparation for this Meeting**

Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director, mentioned that the Work Group members received 21 written comments in advance of this meeting (also posted on the Work Group webpage). She

mentioned 14 comments supported increasing off-leash access for dogs in county parks. Two comments mentioned they are supportive of the ordinance as it stands, allowing on-leash only in county parks. Other comments suggested allowing off-leash dog access during certain times of the day. Another comment suggested balancing access by allowing off-leash access for dogs during weekdays only.

#### **Update regarding On-Leash Dog Access Pilots started June 15<sup>th</sup>**

Staff provided an update on the on-leash dog pilot park locations, Coyote Point and Junipero Serra Park (JSP), which were initiated June 15, 2019. Ranger Alvarez mentioned fencing was installed around each playground to keep dogs and children separated. She also mentioned now that dogs are allowed, rangers no longer have to turn away visitors arriving with their dogs. Neighbors have been supportive of allowing on-leash dog access in JSP, except for two individuals who shared concerns of allowing dog access in the park.

At Coyote Point Recreation Area, Ranger O'Brien noted that staff has seen more dogs in the park and in reservation areas, and they no longer turn people away who arrive to the gate with their dogs. Signage around CuriOdyssey was installed to address concerns about potential impact on wild life living in enclosures, and so far there have been no issues. Staff mentioned they will add signage around playgrounds specifying dogs are not allowed in playgrounds.

#### **Report on Implementation of User Survey to gather feedback during On-Leash Pilot**

Ellie Dallman reported that the first of six visitor survey days was completed. Eight visitors were surveyed at Junipero Serra Park. Due to the lower number of visitors at Junipero Serra Park, staff is considering administering surveys at the gatehouse in an effort to collect more survey responses. Also staff mentioned they will add two questions to the survey: (1) zip code to understand where park visitors are coming from, and (2) a question asking visitors how they receive information about San Mateo County Parks. The purpose of the survey is to gauge visitors' awareness of on-leash dog access, acceptance and favorability of dogs allowed on-leash at the location, and impact of pilot program on visitation of the park.

#### **Ranger Contacts, Education and Data Collection**

Ellie Dallman handed out the summary sheet outlining ranger contacts through July 10, 2019 (see below). Staff will continue to gather information on dog contacts to share with the Dog Work Group and Board of Supervisors.

## Summary of Ranger Contacts As of July 10, 2019

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
Coyote Point Marina	14	5	9	13	2	1	0
Coyote Point Recreation Area	26	19	30	28	13	5	5
Devil's Slide Trail	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve	15	6	5	2	2	5	2
Mirada Surf	1	0	0	0	4	0	0
Pillar Point Bluff	45	21	5	8	1	3	0
Junipero Serra	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	0
Quarry Park	2	16	2	11	4	7	0
<b>TOTAL INTERACTIONS BY MONTH:</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL 2019 INTERACTIONS:</b>	<b>345</b>						

	Dogs off trail	Person with more than 3 dogs	Dogs off-Leash	Leash longer than 6 feet	Dogs in undesignated area	Total Number of Violations
Bayside	17	1	29	3	174	224
Coastside	23	10	195	0	37	265

### Review of SMC Dog Management Committee Policy Recommendations

The facilitator reviewed the overarching policy developed by the Dog Management Committee: it is the policy of the San Mateo County Parks Department, in managing dog access to County parks, to promote healthy, safe and varied experience for all park users and to protect natural resources.

The secondary policies and new areas for consideration were also reviewed:

- **Education** – dog owner education is an essential component of effective management of dog access, including avoiding user conflicts and protecting natural resources
- **Variety of experiences** – minimize conflicts with established uses within the park, such as equestrian use, and with adjacent land uses such as agriculture.
- **Protection of natural resources** – protection and enhancement of the County's natural resources is one of the two purposes stated in the mission of the Parks Department. Ensure that impacts to sensitive resources and disturbances to wildlife are avoided or minimized.
- Playgrounds and play areas – dogs should not enter playgrounds or play areas
- **New area considerations**
  - o Look for opportunities adjacent to urban areas and neighborhoods where there is demand for dog walking
  - o Ensure adequate staffing, staff training, and facilities can be provided to effectively manage the new use and address any increase in demand
  - o Consider adjacent uses and whether connecting trails that allow dogs can be continued
  - o Consider opportunities for dog access that are restricted by time of day or day of the week as needed or appropriate to balance park uses and provide a variety of park experiences
  - o Ensure that all other policies regarding managing dog access can be met

### **Proposed Timeline to develop recommendation to Parks Department and submit it to the Parks Commission and Board of Supervisors**

The facilitator reviewed the timeline recommended by the Parks Department, and mentioned that it would be updated since the August meeting agenda was changed by the Work Group.

- August – determine expectations of dog owners in off-leash areas – policies (*at the direction of the Work Group, this was not completed during the August meeting and will be moved to a future meeting*).
- September – select what kind of off-leash opportunity is recommended; select location for off-leash pilot to parks dept.
- October – suggest evaluation criteria for off-leash pilot and finalize recommendation.
  - Report to parks commission – public meeting
  - Report to BOS – public meeting
- November – report back to work group on BOS discussion and next steps

Reminder that the **next meeting will be on Monday, September 9, 2019 at 2:00 pm** since the first Monday in September is a holiday.

4:00 PM      **Thanks to All and Adjourn**

## San Mateo County Dog Pilot Work Group 2019 Roster

### Members

**Barbara Bonilla**, SMC Parks Commission

**Faye Brophy**, Equestrian Trails and Recreation Advisory Council\*

**Joel Cervantes**, District 2, Ranger III (Huddart, Wunderlich, Edgewood, Flood, Friendship)

**Christine Corwin**, Coastside Dog Owners Group of San Mateo County\*

**Matthew Del Carlo**, District 4, Ranger IV (San Pedro Valley, Devil's Slide, Sanchez Adobe, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Moss Beach Park, Pillar Point Bluff, Quarry, Mirada Surf, Tunitas)

**Nic Erridge**, Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council\*

**Jerry Hearn**, Conservation community\*

**Chris Johnson**, Coastside resident\*

**Neil Merrilees**, SMC Parks Commission\*

**Kevin O'Brien**, District 1, Ranger III (Coyote Point and Crystal Springs Trail)

**Jim Sullivan**, Pacifica Open Space Council and Mountain Biker\*

*\*Served on Dog Management Committee*

### Parks Department Staff

**Peggy Jensen**, Acting Parks Director

**Ellie Dallman**, On Special Assignment

**Laurel Finnegan**, Ranger IV

**Priscilla Alvarez**, Ranger IV

**Carla Schoof**, Public Information/Communication

**Hannah Ormshaw**, Natural Resource Manager

### Facilitator

**Pat Brown**

**Off-Leash Dog Recreation Opportunities Within San Mateo County**

Agency	Type of Off-Leash Dog Access			Additional Information
	Fenced Area	Designated Area	Entire Park	
Atherton				
Belmont	X			Off-leash dog access allowed at Cipriana Dog Park.
Brisbane	X			
Burlingame	X	X		No more than 2 dogs per owner; off-leash allowed at Washington Outfield and Cuernavaca Outfield Monday-Friday 7:30am-2pm however they are closed in June, July, and August. Off-leash also allowed at Cuernavaca Park from 6am-7:30am.
CA State Parks				
Colma	X			Bark Park is an off-leash enclosed dog run for small to medium size dogs.
Daly City	X			Mission Hills Park and Palisades Park have a designated dog area.
East Palo Alto				
Foster City	X	X		Foster City Dog Park has 2 fenced areas, one for big dogs (over 26 pounds) and one for small dogs. Additionally, there are 5 parks that allow dogs off-leash in designated areas of the park between 5am to 8am.
Half Moon Bay	X			Coastside Dog Park allows off-leash dog access.
Harbor District				
Hillsborough				
Menlo Park	X			There are 2 off-leash areas for dogs, one is a dedicated dog park and the other is a fenced ball field that allows dogs off-leash between 8am-10am on weekdays.
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MPROSD)		X		There is a 17.5 acre open area within a preserve that is marked as an off-leash area for dogs.
Millbrae				
Pacifica	X		X	Sanchez Dog Park has an enclosed off-leash dog area. Esplanad Beach is a small beach where dogs are allowed off-leash.
Portola Valley				
Redwood City	X	X		Main Street Dog Agility Park and Shore Dogs Park are an encoled off-leash dog parks. Stulsaft Park has a limited off-leash trail for dogs (off-leash area is closed during summer)
San Bruno	X			Commodore Park has an enclosed off-leash dog exercise area.
San Carlos	X			City Hall Dog Park and Heather Dog Exercise Area have an enclosed off-leash area for dogs; City Hall Dog Park closed daily for maintenance 9:30am-10:30am, and Sundays and holidays.



**Off-Leash Dog Recreation Opportunities Within San Mateo County**

San Mateo	X	X		There are 2 play areas; 1 for large and another for small dogs at the same site, each 3 acres in size. Off-leash dog access is allowed in designated areas generally in ball fields between 6am-8am.
South San Francisco	X			There is an enclosed off-leash area at Centennial Way Dog Park.
Woodside				