

Staff Report  
To Support Dog Committee Policy Recommendations  
For Dog Management in San Mateo County Parks

**Committee Purpose**

In the spring of 2016, the San Mateo County Parks Commission established the Dog Management Committee with the following assignment: to advise the Parks Commission as it seeks to develop dog management policies for San Mateo County Parks.

**Committee Composition**

The Parks Commission selected Dog Management Committee members to represent the complex and diverse range of issues and interests the group would be asked to consider, as well as the County's geographic diversity:

- Mike Cooney, Commissioner and Committee Co-chair
- Neil Merrilees, Commissioner and Committee Co-chair
- Darrick Emil, San Mateo County Parks Ranger
- Nic Erridge, Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council
- Chris Johnson, Mid-Coast Community Council
- Rafael Avendano, Fair Oaks Community Council  
*Alternate: Aaron Gonzales, Youth*
- Jim Sullivan, Mountain Biker and Pacifica Resident
- Faye Brophy, Equestrian Trail Rider Action Committee *Alternate: Lyndal Erb*
- Jerry Hearn, Conservation Community  
*Alternate: Cindy Abbott*
- Christine Corwin, Coastside Dog Owners Group of San Mateo County

Mike Cooney resigned from the Committee in December because he ended his term on the Parks Commission. Rafael Avendano ended active participation when his term on the Fair Oaks Community Council ended in June 2017. The other members of the Committee were actively engaged throughout the process.

**Committee Process**

The Committee met once a month at the County Center in Redwood City. All meetings were open to the public and all meeting materials were made available to the public, both at the meeting and on the Committee's website: <http://parks.smcgov.org/dogs-at-SMC-parks>. A summary of Committee meetings can be found in Appendix A.

Patricia Brown, consultant, facilitated the work of the Committee in partnership with Parks Department staff, Parks Director Marlene Finley, Assistant Parks Director Sarah Birkeland, and Community Manager Carla Schoof. Brenda Bennett, followed by Lori Mrizek, provided additional support. Marlene Finley retired in December 2016.

The Committee's goal was to craft a set of policies for managing dog and dog owner use of county parks. Agreement on these policies was reached through a consensus process, with voting as a fallback if a consensus could not be achieved. The Committee achieved its goal, reaching consensus for all policies. This did not always come easily or automatically, but instead was achieved after much discussion and the respectful exchange of opinions and ideas. The Committee also realized that it would not be able to address every nuance and issue associated with dog management in the time allotted so it focused its efforts on providing a framework for the Department moving forward. Recommendations for next steps can be found at the end of this report.

## **The Committee's Approach to its Work/Policy Development**

### *Information gathering*

The initial meetings of the Committee focused on information gathering. The Committee heard from technical experts on dog behavior, water quality, and natural resources. The Committee also heard from fellow park management agencies and SMC park rangers. The Committee received information and examples of dog management approaches from other jurisdictions, including those of Boulder, CO, Santa Barbara, CA, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Marin County Parks, and East Bay Regional Park District.

### *Public and Committee input*

Public input played a critical role throughout the policy development process. In February, the Committee held three public meetings to provide information about the Committee's work to the community and to gather input regarding the specific issues and concerns the Committee should consider as it develops its recommended policies. The meetings were held in South San Francisco, Pacifica, and Belmont. Individual Committee members also shared information about the Committee's work with the Mid-Coast Community Council, North Fair Oaks Community Council, and the Pescadero Municipal Advisory Committee. The information provided to the Committee from the public at those meetings and through other means of communication, such as personal discussion and letters and emails, was taken very seriously and was consistently folded into the discussions that shaped the policies that follow.

A second round of community meetings was held in September to gather feedback on the Committee's draft policies. Those meetings were held in Redwood City, Burlingame and Pacifica. Public feedback was also solicited via the Parks Department's website using a survey mechanism. The survey sought feedback on the overarching policy statement and the 10 secondary policy statements. Survey participants were asked to indicate "support, disagree, no opinion, suggestions for improvement." Community members were informed of the survey through the Department website's Dog Management Committee page, email notification, and social media sites. The survey received 406 responses. A summary of the input received from these meetings is in Appendix B. As with the first round of information the public provided, the Committee carefully reviewed, considered, and discussed the input it received from the second round of meetings and online to determine whether any major changes to the draft policies were needed.

The Committee members themselves provided important feedback and engaged in a collaborative process to chart a course through the sometimes divergent opinions it was hearing from the public. Each Committee member brought a different perspective to the

discussion, and a number of refinements to policy resulted from the Committee's robust discussions.

### *Policy development*

Prior to beginning work on drafting policies to address issues that were identified, the Committee heard from Deputy County Manager Peggy Jensen who provided an overview of what policy is, and the steps needed to develop it. Her key points included the following:

Policies are guiding statements for departmental staff to follow and to build implementation plans from. The process for developing policy includes:

- a) Initiation by a request for change
- b) Research by those drafting the proposed policy looking for examples of similar policies, exploring how they have worked (or not worked) and considering how they addressed intended changes or had unintended consequences.
- c) Development of a draft policy statement that is then vetted both with the public and with those charged with implementing the policy
- d) Revision of draft policy based on input
- e) Presentation to the Parks Commission and finally the Board of Supervisors
- f) Adoption by governance body (or returned to drafters for modification)
- g) Assignment to the appropriate department to be implemented

In the private sector, policy development often includes a pilot/beta testing cycle so that the original policy can be tested and refined with real data. In contrast, public policy makers tend to work very hard to develop a full-blown policy and then present it for full implementation, omitting the beta testing approach. The Committee agreed that some kind of pilot approach should be considered following the development of the dog management policies. A pilot would permit implementation and assessment of the new policies with an allowance for adjustments as needed.

Ideally, policy stays at a high level and provides those charged with implementing the policy with the opportunity to use adaptive management strategies to ensure the best outcomes. The policies the Committee developed, described below, provide that high level guidance, beginning with an overarching statement of intent. Following the overarching statement, the Committee focused on more specific policies to guide various aspects of dog management. It is also important to note that the policies need to be read as a whole – while they address different facets of dog management, they also complement one another.

### 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.**

The Committee wanted to develop an overarching policy that would capture its intent to ensure that all park users would continue to be able to use and enjoy San Mateo County parks. In its

deliberations the Committee kept in mind that the Parks Department also has other policies, as well as a strategic plan, that guide Parks' management of its park resources and visitors. The dog management policies must be read in conjunction with these other policies and the strategic plan.

Secondary Policies:

***Education:*** Dog owner education is an essential component of effective management of dog access, including avoiding user conflicts and protecting natural resources.

- a) Provide clear signage stating the responsibilities of park users who bring dogs into the parks.
- b) Explore the use of other media to promote dog owner education around park usage.
- c) Assure that the messaging has a positive tone and clarifies the reasons behind dog user responsibilities.
- d) Foster partnerships with dog and neighborhood organizations to support the messaging around appropriate activities and behaviors for dogs and their owners in parks.

The Committee strongly believes that education is key to effective, fair, and efficient management of dogs in San Mateo County Parks. The Committee recognized that clear communication is essential to setting expectations regarding the use of parks, and that providing the “why” behind the rules could improve the likelihood that park visitors will act responsibly. The Committee also recognized that education efforts should not exclusively focus on dog owners, but also will need to address all park users so that a common understanding of trail etiquette can be cultivated. The Committee stressed the importance of education when staff resources are scarce, and that partnerships offer a way to leverage park resources and greatly extend the reach of any educational effort.

***Variety of experiences:*** Provide a variety of recreational opportunities, increasing park access for a wider range of San Mateo County residents and visitors.

- a) Consider designated off-leash areas. If off-leash areas are to be provided, guidelines specific to off-leash use must be developed.
- b) Consider dog walking opportunities in both front and back country locations.
- c) Continue to provide areas where dogs are prohibited.

Providing access to parks for people with dogs is one component of the broad spectrum of recreational opportunities the Parks Department seeks to make available to the public. The Committee supports expanding and diversifying the range of visitors to SMC parks, and recognized that additional dog opportunities may help achieve this aim. At the same time, the Committee recognized the need to continue to provide opportunities for park enjoyment without the presence of dogs, as this too represents a part of the spectrum of appropriate and desired uses of SMC parks. The Committee also discussed the importance of providing a diversity of experience for dogs and their owners in those locations where dog access is provided, including areas close to cities (front country) and those in more rural and/or remote locations (back country).

This policy is focused on the experience of the user, and, as with all dog management policies, must be understood within the context of the other policies. For example, in the implementation phase, the Parks Department would seek to meet the “variety of experiences” policy while also meeting the policies regarding natural resources management and minimization of conflicts. The Committee also recognized that if off-leash areas are to be provided, additional guidance for off-leash use must be developed. The Committee reiterated the expectation that all the policies would continue to apply in all off-leash areas.

***Avoidance of conflicts: Minimize conflicts with established uses within the park, such as equestrian use, and with adjacent land uses, such as agriculture.***

The Committee engaged in extensive discussion about the topic of avoiding or minimizing conflicts between the various users of park lands. The Committee identified education, signage, enforcement, and good trail design and planning as key ingredients to meeting this objective. Education, signage, and enforcement are all addressed through policies identified here; trail design and planning typically occur at the site-specific level and with public input. The Committee also discussed approaches other agencies have taken to managing conflict, including a certification process for dog owners to bring dogs into parks, particularly off leash. The Committee determined that such a program would be too costly and administratively burdensome for the Parks Department to implement, and thus did not include a recommendation for such a program.

The avoidance of conflict policy recognizes an aspect of the conflict conundrum, which is that the introduction of a new use to a park, whether it is dog access or something else, heightens the need to consider and address conflicts with uses that are already established within the park. Equestrian use is just one example and is noted here because San Mateo County has several parks in which equestrian use has an extensive history and volunteer horse patrols have long contributed significantly to park management, including at Wunderlich and Huddart parks. But this policy is intended to focus not only on equestrian or agriculture uses. Rather it is to remind park managers and planners of the need to consider the established and adjacent uses when making decisions about dog access, and to use the various tools and techniques available to land managers to minimize any potential conflicts.

In evaluating public comments on this policy, the Committee realized that the term “avoidance” was more prohibitive than intended. Instead, the Committee believes that conflicts should be minimized as much as possible, while considering the other policies, goals, and objectives that govern park management. Inherent in all park management is the need to balance the various uses of parks, and not all uses can always be accommodated everywhere. However, the Committee believes that the term “minimize,” as opposed to “avoid,” is a better reflection of the Committee’s intent.

***Pre-existing uses:* Where dog use occurred prior to a transfer or acquisition of park property, favor continuing that use, if consistent with other policies and objectives.**

As with the policy above regarding conflicts, this policy recognizes that it can be disruptive to park users to overturn established uses. Accordingly, this policy gives some weight to continuing dog use where it occurred prior to the County’s acquisition of a property. At the same time, that continued use should also meet the management policies that apply to dog access throughout the San Mateo County park system.

***Protection of Natural Resources:* Protection and enhancement of the County’s natural resources is one of two purposes stated in the mission of the Parks Department. Ensure that impacts to sensitive resources and disturbances to wildlife are avoided or minimized.**

- a) Dogs should not be permitted to harass wildlife or be allowed to dig in the ground.
- b) Dogs should not be allowed to enter sensitive habitat areas, such as watercourses, marshes and ponds, areas under restoration and areas that are inhabited by species of special concern.
- c) In areas where dogs are allowed, sensitive habitats should be clearly demarcated with signage or fencing, where appropriate.
- d) Unless otherwise provided for, dogs should be constrained to trails and fire roads at all times.
- e) Dog owners shall be required to bag their dog’s waste and deposit it in the receptacles provided for that purpose. Bagged dog waste left on the ground will be considered litter.
- f) Appropriate waste containers and bags should be located strategically at dog accessible park sites. Such containers should be easily serviceable on a regular basis by staff and/or volunteers in order to effectively to manage dog waste.

This policy reflects the Committee's acknowledgement that protection of natural resources is central to the work and mission of the Parks Department. It also reflects the notion that to sustain park access over the long term requires a sound and vigorous natural resource protection policy. The policy is supported by materials and a presentation the Committee received from Ramona Arechiga, Natural Resource Manager for San Mateo County Parks, about the effects that both dogs and people can have on parks' natural resources, as well as the dual role the Department plays in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation while safeguarding the rich biodiversity present in San Mateo County. The policy was also informed by the material provided by Brittany Bohlke from the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District regarding water quality considerations associated with dog waste.

***Considering New Areas for Dog Access: When considering new areas for dog access:***

- a) Look for opportunities adjacent to urban areas and neighborhoods where there is demand for dog walking;**
- b) Ensure adequate staffing, staff training and facilities can be provided to effectively manage the new use and address any increase in demand;**
- c) Consider adjacent uses and whether connecting trails that allow dogs can be continued;**
- d) 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;**
- e) Ensure that all other policies regarding managing dog access can be met.**

These policies capture a number of considerations important to the Committee, as well as feedback that was received from the public. The Committee recognized that to be successful, the introduction of dogs where they were not present before must be supported by adequate staffing and facilities. The public emphasized the importance of providing connections to existing trails that allow dogs. It was also suggested that conflicts between users could be minimized and access expanded by designating set days and times for dog use.

***Enforcement: Enforcement mechanisms should be adequate to deter behavior that is not compliant with dog ordinances intended to protect park users and resources. Consider a structure of warnings and/or fines for infractions, with escalating fines for repeat offenders.***



Committee members were made aware that current parks enforcement tools can be limited and ineffective, because they can require Parks Rangers to attend court proceedings for the violations they write. In addition, the volume of citations in the courts mean that many are thrown out. The Committee proposed following examples from other jurisdictions where a tracking database is used and an infraction system is in place, often with a set of escalating fines, to deter misbehavior. The Committee also discussed the importance of education as the first and most important step in ensuring park users follow the rules, with enforcement the secondary tool. This approach is consistent with current Ranger practice.

***Playgrounds and Play Areas: Dogs should not enter playgrounds or play areas where it is posted that no dogs are allowed.***

The Committee agreed that dogs and playgrounds sometimes do not mix well together. However, it also recognized that there are playgrounds or play areas that can become community gathering places where dogs may be included. To give the Department the flexibility to allow dogs under appropriate circumstances and where there is community support, the Committee suggested that signage determine the use.

***Leashes: Dogs must be leashed at all times, unless otherwise posted. All leashes must be no longer than 6 feet when encountering others on trails.***

The Committee decided that the default policy should be that dogs are leashed in San Mateo County parks, but also that there should be opportunities for the Parks Department to make off-leash opportunities available to the public. Current County Ordinance requires dogs to be leashed. 6.04.070.

There was also extensive discussion of what type of leash and what length should be recommended. In addition to considering the public input received on this policy, the Committee members brought their own diverse experiences with this issue to the discussion. All Committee members agreed that long leashes can pose a hazard to other park users, and also that the appropriate length of leash can depend on the dog, the owner, and the circumstances. Because it is not possible to write a policy that would anticipate and provide for every circumstance, and the Committee determined that this is an important issue connected to the safety and enjoyment of park users, a reasonable compromise was struck. The intent behind the leash length policy is to ensure that owners make sure their dogs are under control when encountering other park users. Note that County Ordinances already require dog owners to prevent their dog from physically harassing any person or from causing substantial injury to another domestic animal. 6.04.060.

***Number of Dogs per Person: Visitors may have no more than three (3) dogs per person.***



The Committee developed this policy largely on the recommendation of fellow land management agencies, as well as each member's own judgment, experience, and understanding of what number of dogs can reasonably be managed in a recreation setting. The Committee received many comments suggesting that two dogs per person would ensure a more manageable experience for all park users. It also received a number of comments, mostly from individuals interested in commercial dog walking, that 3 dogs per person is too few. Commercial uses of County parks raise a host of different issues the Committee was not intended or prepared to tackle. The Parks Department will be examining commercial use in its parks as part of a comprehensive review of its fee program. Commercial dog walking will be included in that effort.

### **Next Steps**

The Committee recommends that the Department develop one or more pilot projects to test and implement the dog management policies. A pilot project would allow for refinement of the policies. It would also facilitate the creation of dog management tools and best practices, such as educational materials and signage. Success criteria and monitoring are envisioned as a part of any pilot, and monitoring could be conducted with the assistance of partners and volunteers.

Several Dog Committee members have expressed an interest in continuing to work with the Department on a pilot project, and this work could continue through a small working group comprised of Parks staff and those Committee members who are available and interested.

Next steps for the Parks Department include preparing a members' memorandum to update the Board of Supervisors regarding the dog management policies, as well as working with County Counsel to review existing ordinances and develop new ones as appropriate to support the policies approved by the Commission. The ordinances will ultimately be presented to the Board of Supervisors for final approval.

# Appendix A

## Summary of Committee Meetings

### **The Committee's Approach to its Work**

The first committee meeting was held on September 19, 2016 at 455 County Center. Department Director Marlene Finley reviewed the charge to the Committee and proposed a timeline of one year of monthly meetings, with the intention of presenting policy recommendations to the Parks Commission in September 2017. She told the committee members the goal is for them to develop a set of high-level recommendations that consider factors such as criteria for decision-making, costs, educational efforts and enforcement.

#### October 2016:

- Hannah Ormshaw, Parks Department staff member, presented two maps for consideration:
  - San Mateo County Dog Recreation Opportunities relative to population density
  - Dog Recreation Opportunities in San Mateo County (including County parks and other jurisdictions)

#### November 2016

- Best Practices for Dog Parks and Trails (dog behavior) – Maria Eugren, Peninsula Humane Society made the following points:
- Service Dogs, Licensing and Lessons Learned – Lori Morton-Feazell, SMC Animal Control and Darrick Emil - Marlene distributed information about San Mateo County's Service Dog Requirements.
- Park Ranger and Committee member Darrick Emil distributed information about the Americans with Disabilities Act's revised requirements regarding service animals (2010).
- Water Quality Considerations – Brittani Bohlke, SMC Resource Conservation District She started her talk about dogs and water quality by making the point that fecal bacteria is a water pollutant and it is essential that members of the public understand the importance of picking up animal waste and discarding it properly.

#### December 2016

- Protecting Sensitive Natural Resources – Ramona Arechiga, Natural Resource Manager Ramona provided the Committee with information about how dogs and people directly and indirectly impact natural resources. She noted that the Parks Department has a dual role in providing opportunities for outdoor recreation while safeguarding the rich biodiversity present in San Mateo County.
- Developing Policy Recommendations – Peggy Jensen, Dep. County Mgr. Peggy defined policy (a guiding statement to program staff by decision makers to help staff develop implementation plans) and gave the Committee an overview of the typical policy development process.
- Educational efforts in other jurisdictions – best practices
  - Information about the City of Boulder Voice Sight Program – provided to Jackie Speier's office 2014
  - Dogs on Open Space and Mountain Parks – Boulder 2016
  - Dog Waste in Santa Barbara
  - Marin County Open Space Guidelines
  - Marin County Parks Guidelines

- City of Boulder Voice Sight Brochure - video link:  
<https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/voice-and-sight>
- Signage – Alston Park – Napa County

During this period, the Committee initiated a plan to gather input from the community about issues and concerns that should be addressed by the Committee during its deliberations.

Brief reports were made by committee members at scheduled community meetings:

Date	Location	Host/Committee Member
12.14.16	MidCoast Community Council	Chris Johnson
1.26.17	North Fair Oaks Community Council	Rafael Avendano
1.10.17	Pescadero Municipal Advisory Council	Nic Erridge

January 2017

A panel of guests provided information about dog management policies and practices in other jurisdictions:

- Michael Newburn, Visitor Services Manager, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Dania Stoneham, Unit Manager, East Bay Regional Parks

January – March 2017

Committee discussed issues and interests of County residents, learned about best practices in dog management and identified key issues.

February 2017

The Committee invited community through three meetings where participants were asked for input about what issues should be addressed as the dog management policies were being developed.

Date and Time	Location
February 15, 7:00-8:30 PM	South San Francisco City Hall
February 22, 7:00-8:30 PM	San Pedro Valley Park
February 23, 7:00-8:30 PM	Twin Pines Community and Senior Center, Belmont

Throughout the Committee process, residents were encouraged to provide Input by email to the Parks Department website.

April 2017

After a review of suggestions received from the community, the Committee began to formulate policy recommendations using the following process:

- Review of relevant information gathered
- Discussion of various issues and interests present in the situation
- Drafting language
- Reviewing, revising and finally reaching consensus on draft language

### May 2017

The Committee, recognizing that additional time will be needed to craft the secondary policies that will provide specific guidance in a number of issue areas, extended its process timeline with the goal of submitting its report and recommendations to the Parks Commission in December 2017.

### May to August 2017

Committee developed and deliberated on a set of Draft Recommendations to guide the Parks Department's Management of dogs in San Mateo County parks. During this period, community input was accepted at committee meetings and through email communications to the Parks Department web site.

After completing the development of an overarching policy statement and secondary policy guidelines, the Committee designed a process for securing community input on the proposal.

In September 2017, the Committee gathered Community feedback on its Draft Recommendations using two approaches:

- A web-based survey on proposed policies – 406 responses
- Hosting three facilitated community meetings: Redwood City, Burlingame, Pacifica

### September and October 2017

The Committee reviewed the feedback that had been received and determined whether changes to proposed policy recommendations would be needed.

### November 2017

The Committee finalized its draft policy recommendations for presentation to the Parks Commission at the December 7, 2017 meeting.

Along with its final recommendations to the Parks Commission regarding dog management in County parks, the Committee included the following suggestions:

- Prior to implementing the policy guidelines, allow time for the Parks Department to review the guidelines and consider possible locations for implementing increased dog access.
- Suggest that the Parks Department convene an advisory committee to work with the Department on selecting sites and evaluating pilot locations where the new guidelines were being implemented.
- Establish timeframe for piloting the policy guidelines and then reporting back to the Parks Commission on the effectiveness of the implementation process.

# Appendix B

## From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017

- “I support Overarching Policy.”
- “I do not support odd/even days for dogs ok/no dog days, or horse ok, no horse days. Too hard to enforce and on a regional basis equestrian trails are quite uncommon. I strongly support no dogs in environmentally sensitive areas. I do support having a few off-leash areas in less environmentally sensitive, non-equestrian areas.”
- “It feels like in general, many dog policies and procedures and guidelines are highly reactive to a couple of isolated experiences involving the worst actions. Rather than punish everyone, and further restrict dogs...why not find solutions that curb and do not encourage bad actions...”
  - Idea #1: Dogs go through a training program to be approved for off-leash areas...this could be done through existing training program or through dog adoption centers.
  - Idea #2: Remind the community of the benefits pets, especially dogs (unclear?) the larger community...helping people exercise...helping people with mental health issues...giving children and families unconditional love...all which ripple back to form a healthier and more vibrant community at large.”
- “Create spaces for small dogs.”
- “A system to identify “problem dogs” and provide them training to socialize them better.”
- “Forced dog parks are insufficient...dog need wide open spaces.”
- “Most off leash parks don’t work because they are too small; too contentious.”
- “I would love to be able to walk my dog on leash on the Skyline/upper Alambique loop trail in Wunderlich Park. It is more like a fire road so plenty of room for everyone, or anywhere really.”

## From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “#1 concern is dog feces.”
- “We would love to have open spaces for off leash dog walking so that our four legged family members can get their exercise (run, play, etc.) at the same time as the two legged ones.”

### **Committee additions:**

- Since there were a number of questions about how many dogs live in SMC, the Committee asked that this data, provided to the group during its information

gathering efforts, should be made more visible and accessible on the Parks Website.

- While there was some feedback that alternating days and times for usage could be confusing, the Committee feels this may be a viable strategy to make the most of limited resources.
- While some community members felt the policies were developed because of a few experiences, Committee members agreed that their research and deliberations balanced the approach to articulating guidelines and they are not over-reactive as written.
- Some members of the public can get confused about which jurisdiction is responsible for specific parks and also about the name/location of specific parks (ex. Edgewood and Pulgas Ridge)
- Instead of these recommendations representing the need for higher standards for dog owners, the Committee understands the assignment by the Parks Commission resulted from the need for the Park Department to have policy guidelines for dog access.
- Some uses are now managed by master plans for specific parks.

### **Feedback on Education Policy**

- From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017
- "I support the Education Secondary Policies."
- "Encourage common sense and courteousness...if someone is uncomfortable around your dog, be polite. Also...if someone looks uncomfortable, talk to them."
- "When dogs owners pay their yearly or every 3-year registration...require them to pass a quiz on the guidelines and laws...maybe provide a discount if the pass with 90% accuracy."
- "An App showing all parks and dog resources in the area, including training opportunities to improve bad behaviors."
- "Make the signs fun and uplifting."
- "Encourage common sense and being a good person...maybe hire an artist to create public service style announcements to, for example, encourage someone to leash their dog if a young mother looks nervous around you or if someone asks you to leash your dog until they pass you on the walk."

### From Burlingame Meeting, September 8, 2017

- "Possible good neighbor certifications for dogs and/or owners who have been trained and are compliant."

### From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- "Agree with all!!"

- “Regarding c) Consider using “opportunity” instead of “responsibility”. Keep the language inclusive and positive, for instance: “Provide clear signage stating the opportunities of all park users where dogs [dog owners] are welcome.” Note that it is everyone’s “responsibility”.”

### **Committee additions: Education**

- Continued agreement that education is positive and when people understand the “why” of a rule, most are willing to comply.
- A discussion of how to use/design signage so it is effective – graphics can be useful
- Ranger input that word of mouth is more effective than signage
- Suggestion that educational messages can be added to nature videos in visitor centers.

### **Feedback re. Variety of Experiences**

#### From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017

- “I support the Variety of Experiences Secondary Policies.”
- “Please, there are so many trails – hear me, and so few that I can take my dogs on, and I walk daily.”
- Under 2b) Consider designated off leash areas: “Especially off-leash areas...my dogs need to be off-leash...it’s just not a walk it it’s not off-leash.”
- “My dogs to be properly cared for in terms of their wellbeing, including physical, mental, and emotional health need access to off-leash areas, especially large open spaces and trails. This is really the only way for them to be what they are...dogs. A dog needs to be free - free to sprint, smell, run, and explore. Dog parks under (unclear?) grass freeway just don’t cut it.”

#### From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “Agree with “c”! Too many off leash dogs leave behind feces – the owner doesn’t see the deposit. I do love dogs!”
- “I would like some leashed walking near Loma-Mar; La Honda, or Pescadero.”
- “Hiking with a dog both on and off leash is a valuable healthful form of recreation.”
- “I don’t think “c” is needed. It already exists.”
- “Consider “hiking” off leash areas.”
- “Dog Parks get boring for active dogs and owners.”
- “Item B. Consider off leash areas. Include hiking areas, not enclosed spaces. I like to hike with my dogs. They do not like to play at enclosed dog parks.”



- “There are plenty of parks where dogs are not allowed. We need many more parks and trails that allow dogs. If you don’t like dogs go to State parks.”
- “More off leash!!! The best times we’ve had with our kids as they were growing up was hiking or biking with our shelter dog in the East Bay Regional hills. We never went to State parks because dogs weren’t allowed. Now our dog is old but loves Surfer’s Beach, Pillar Point...”
- “I don’t want to interact with dogs when I go to the park or nature. I want peace and quiet. No dogs in parks.” --El Granada Resident
- “If you can regulate, dogs permitted with leash just in parking lot areas in SPV Park.”

**Committee additions: Variety of experiences**

- Discussion of the limited usefulness of small, fenced dog parks for off leash experience.
- Feeling that large areas for off leash use are better than small ones, but expect it will be difficult to find appropriate areas.
- Consider that on the coast people do have their “favorite spots” for off leash walking
- Consider establishing expectations for users of “off leash” areas – maybe require Boulder type education process/Ethics for Dog Owners.
- Add the idea of expectations to the policy recommendation re. consideration of off-leash areas

**Feedback re. Avoidance of Conflicts, Pre-existing uses, Protection of Natural Resources**

From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017

**Avoidance of Conflicts**

- “I support Avoidance of Conflicts Secondary Policy.”
- “I disagree with #3, Avoidance of Conflicts Secondary Policy.”
- “Conflicts, such as dog/horse/bike, are more equitably shared by splitting days of the week, alternating days out of phase with nearby parks. So if Park A allows dogs M, W, F, S, then Park B would allow them T, Th, S. This has proven fair and effective in many parks across the country.”
- “There are many equitable ways to share coveted resources between horses and dogs. With the changing needs of the demographics and with dog ownership being much more common and realistic for most people compared to horse ownership, we should revisit and reevaluate how we share our open spaces. Our space utilization needs to evolve with our society and not reflect the needs of

a past society that now excludes the needs of the many. As much as I personally enjoy seeing a horse on the trail, I know many people who find them terrifying for their size and unpredictability. Proposed solution: Horses get even days and dogs get odd days.”

### Pre-existing uses

- “I support the Pre-existing uses Secondary Policy.”
- “I disagree with this...land use must evolve as the community evolves.”

### Protection of Natural Resources

- “I support the Protection of Natural Resources Secondary Policies.”
- Under 5f) re: Appropriate waste containers...”The more receptacles, the better.”
- “Natural habitats” in urban areas are already unrecognizably influenced by human activity and it would be silly to sacrifice societal function by over-restricting dog access in a vain attempt to protect urbanized wildlife. If it’s not already a designated bird watching area, like Shoreline Park, then there is little dogs can do to disturb it more than cities and freeways, screaming children, horses, and chatty hikers.”
- “In such a dense urban area, recreation should be given priority over conservation. We need people connecting with nature...getting off their screens...choosing conservation over recreation in the Bay Area is penny-wise and pound-foolish...it’s failing to see the larger ‘forest through the trees’ ”...
- “I have three dogs...I pick up a lot of dog poop...I even go out of my way to pick up a lot of other people’s dog’s poop. But I get it...dog poop is a problem. In Paris, dog poop is DNA’d and \$200+ fines are mailed. All dogs, registered in Paris, have their (unclear?). So when authorities find dog poop...they get a fine. Another implementation I have read about is a “carrot” approach to the same problem. In this case, placing dog poop in the container, gives you some sort of feedback, like 10 minutes of cell phone charging.”
- “Horses and people in the County Parks have gotten along together well for many decades. Including up to the present time. Horses and dog interaction can be very serious. The horse will run like the wind if scarred by a dog, or kick the dog into the next zip code! I recommend some parks to be reserved just for horses, with no Dogs. I recommend the County Parks of Huddart, Wunderlich, Edgewood, and Pescadero. They are heavily travelled and used by horses. Other county parks can be used by dogs on a pilot basis.”
- “Preserve Edgewood as a Natural Preserve.”

### Natural Resources - From Burlingame Meeting, September 8, 2017

- “Keep Edgewood as a preserve.”
- “Preserve wildflowers and natural environment.”

- “Edgewood Park is also our only Natural Preserve: flora and fauna need to be protected.”

From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “Worried rangers have so much they are doing...how will they regulate dog waste and dogs on trail.”
- “As humans (and horses) are far more destructive to habitat, I am unclear where the “data” comes from on this area. I would like to see an acknowledgement of how little of an impacts on the environment especially when well trained.”
- “Most people have common sense when overseeing their dogs...”
- “I think humans are worse...like fireworks.”
- “Do dogs really harm wildlife? Research?”
- “Dogs should not be allowed in Quarry Park – leashed or unleashed – because it disturbs the wildlife. We used to see deer and other animals in Quarry Park 20 years ago but no more.”--El Granada Resident
- “Allow dogs in Quarry Park only if there is a fenced off-leash area at entrance to the park.” –El Granada Resident
- “No barking or frightening wildlife or other users of park.”
- “Provide dog waste cans throughout trails, not just at beginning and end of trails.”
- “Agree to everything on this list of Protection of Natural Resources!”

**Committee additions: Pre-existing uses and Protection of Natural Resources**

- Discussion of idea of land use evolving
- Recognition of more dogs and more people in the County now
- Continued commitment to preserving natural resources as a high priority for the parks
- Discussion of the idea that some park managers may use restoration as an excuse to restrict/exclude those seeking to use parks for recreation
- No mention of climate change in these proposed policies – be aware of the opportunity to engage those concerned about the environment as “Friends of the parks”

**Feedback re. Considering New Areas for Dog Access**

From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017

- “I support Considering New Areas for Dog Access Secondary Policies. I propose a new sub-policy: f) New dog areas should be established as temporary pilot programs and evaluated before becoming permanent.”

- “Suggestion for off-leash areas: specific trails, alternating days, specific parks, designated zones/areas within a park.”

From Burlingame Meeting, September 8, 2017

- “In dire need of off-leash options. It is not natural for a dog to be constantly on a leash. My dog’s greatest joy in life is running free, interacting and playing with other dogs. PLEASE convert leash requirements to off leash, respecting even if designated areas or alternating days.”
- “If off leash policies are to be considered please be transparent and list guidelines for those policies such that it’s clear to all what is and is not allowed for off leash. Off leash areas are needed for the overall experience for dog owners.”
- “Waste bags and garbage bins are essential for compliance. A local dog friendly park I take my dog to has no trash cans so people are forced to drop their bags, not pick up, or bring bags back home. Another park has rigid off leash hours that restrict dog owners to coming during typical work hours which is unfair.”
- “Need more off-leash areas as well as off-leash fenced-in area. I live in San Mateo but am speaking to general off-leash areas period.”

From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “Open more parks to dogs along the bay so people don’t have to drive to the coast.”
- “Provide wide trails that allow all users of the park to pass. For example Pillar Point Bluffs have very wide trails that allow bikes, runners and dogs to move without conflicts.”
- “Please allow off leash areas at PP Bluffs as most dogs are off leash.”
- “Leave just one (at least) beach, and one (at least) park dog free for those that fear dogs.”
- “Want dog access in San Pedro.”
- “See off leash areas: Recognize off leash hiking with a dog is a valuable form of recreation.”

### **Committee additions: New Areas**

- There may be opportunities in shared jurisdictions: San Bruno Mountain
- Possible to look at Edgewood Park west of Highway 280

### **Feedback re. Enforcement**

From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017

- “I support the Enforcement Secondary Policy.”

### From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “Key to enforcement is dog owners enforcing the rules themselves...dog owners should be encouraged to make sure everyone follows the rules and clean up after others.”
- “Enforcement of not picking up dog feces #1 problem. More park staff to pick up feces.”
- “Consider the use of “education” as Neil mentioned when discussing this. “Education” is a better word than “warning”.”
- “Use large fines every time the dog owner does not follow the posted rules as a deterrent. No exceptions.”
- “Once in maybe complicated to regulate more work with rangers.”

### **Committee additions: Enforcement**

- Recognition of impact on Park Staff

### **Feedback re. Playgrounds and Play Areas, Leashes, Number of Dogs per Person**

### From Redwood City Meeting, September 7, 2017

- “I support the Playgrounds and Play Areas, Leashes, and Number of Dogs per Person Secondary Policies.”
- #8: “Makes sense.”

### Leashes/# of Dogs per Person

- “Rules that punish everyone for the actions of a handful of bad actors are fundamentally unjust, as is the case with laws like the 6 ft. leash law. The language could be adjusted to say dogs must be under voice command, or on a leash, or must be leashed if someone on the trail requests it.”
- “6-foot leashes would be an excessively punitive requirement harming the vast majority of responsible dog owners with little benefit. A reasonable compromise would be to require dogs be ‘under voice control OR on a leash, and a leash must be carried at all times and used if directly requested by another park attendee.’ Excessive restrictions will lead to undesirably uses when there is no difference between a park and a trail.”
- “I walk my dog on a 6’ leash sometimes and on a twenty-foot leash sometimes. They are fundamentally different experiences for both of us. She is under my control with both leashes.”
- “A 6’ leash is too far (per Bari Halperin, a pro-dog person); 3’ is better for control; use a service dog model; calm, respectful, not goofy.”

From Burlingame Meeting, September 8, 2017

- “Conflicting policies about leash requirement, and anything that may be off-leash.”

From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “3 dogs per person is good, but what if a group of people, each with multiple dogs, meet up? Then there’s a huge pack.” -El Granada resident
- “The policy needs to address commercial dog walking explicitly. Particularly off-leash.”
- “Are you kidding 3 dogs per person? What about the wildlife and the other people that are using the park.”
- “I’ve also seen professional dog walkers with 5 have no problem. A policy re: professional dog care people.”
- “Agree” (with policy as stated)
- “Leashes/yes definitely!!”
- “Agree to 6ft.”
- “Number of dogs – would prefer 1 and max 2. 3 is trouble – I have seen it!”
- “Agree” (with policy as stated)
- “Do not like meeting dogs off leash.”
- “Dogs should only be off leash when in an enclosed area.”
- “Dogs ok in parks but must be on leash.”
- “Agree with 6 ft. max leash length but must be at a controllable distance in a timely way.”
- “If they must be off leash, it should be enclosed area for health of dogs.”
- “Provide space for them to be dogs.”
- “There should not be a limit of three dogs on a walk at one time, because if your pack of dogs are under control or not under control really doesn’t have to do with size, but with the owner or handler. We sometimes foster for Muttville, a senior dog rescue group, and might have up to 5 dogs, but have never had any issues...it depends on the owner/handler to know what he/she can handle...just like being in charge of a group of kids.”

Playgrounds and Play areas -

From San Pedro Valley Meeting, September 14, 2017

- “No dogs in playgrounds.”
- “Agree” (with policy as stated)

- “Agree” (with policy as stated)

**Committee additions: Playgrounds, leashes, # of dogs**

- Committee had not additions re. playgrounds
- Committee feels that the Leash and # of dogs guidelines represent their best effort at finding a middle ground among issues.
- Leash policy recommendation may need some additional clarification



# San Mateo County Dog Management

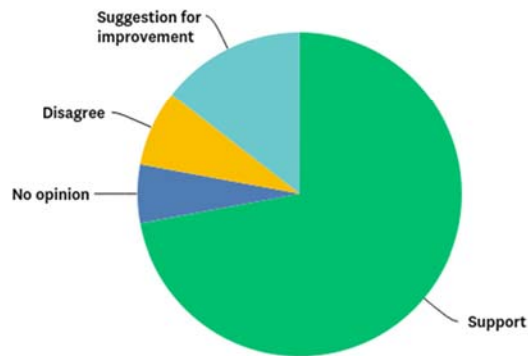
## Survey Results

Results: August 30 – September 14, 2017

406 Responses

Q2 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.

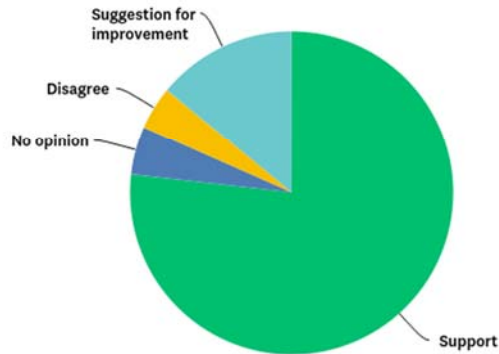
Answered: 394 Skipped: 2



**Q2:108 Comments**

Q3 Secondary Policy - Education: Dog owner education is an essential component of effective management of dog access, including avoiding user conflicts and protecting natural resources. a) Provide clear signage stating the responsibilities of park users who bring dogs into the parks. b) Explore the use of other media to promote dog owner education around park usage. c) Assure that the messaging has a positive tone and clarifies the reasons behind dog user responsibilities. d) Foster partnerships with dog and neighborhood organizations to support the messaging around appropriate activities and behaviors for dogs and their owners in parks.

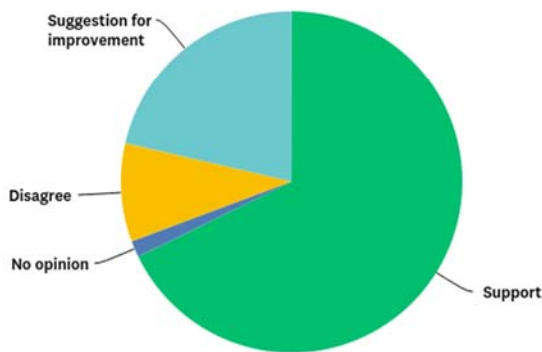
Answered: 392 Skipped: 4



### Q3: 95 Comments

Q4 Secondary Policy - Variety of Experiences: Provide a variety of recreational opportunities, increasing park access for a wider range of San Mateo County residents and visitors. a) Consider dog walking opportunities in both front and back country locations. b) Consider designated off leash areas. c) Continue to provide areas where dogs are prohibited.

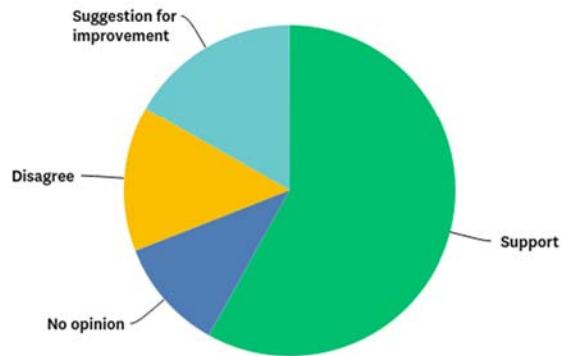
Answered: 388 Skipped: 8



### Q4: 163 Comments

Q5 Secondary Policy - Avoidance of conflicts: Avoid conflicts with established uses within the park, such as equestrian use, and with adjacent land uses, such as agriculture.

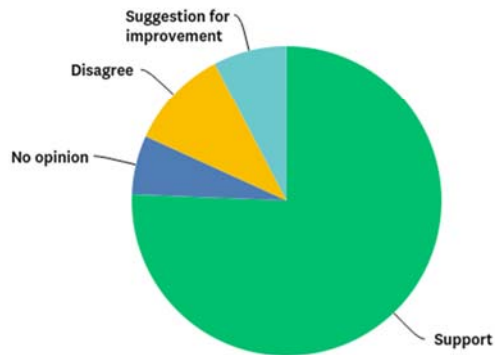
Answered: 394 Skipped: 2



**Q5: 137 Comments**

Q6 Secondary Policy - Pre-existing uses: Where dog use occurred prior to a transfer or acquisition of park property, favor continuing that use, if consistent with other policies and objectives.

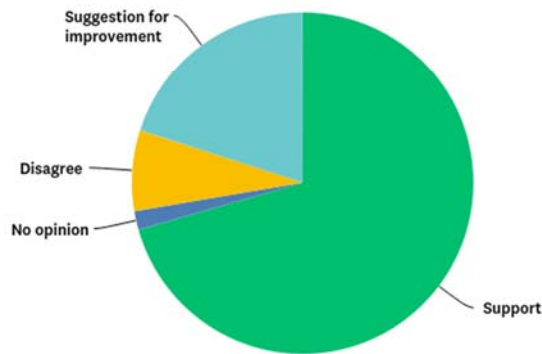
Answered: 390 Skipped: 6



**Q6: 82 Comments**

Q7 Secondary Policy - Protection of Natural Resources: Protection and enhancement of the County's natural resources is one of two purposes stated in the mission of the Parks Department. Ensure that impacts to sensitive resources and disturbances to wildlife are avoided or minimized. a) Dogs should not be permitted to harass wildlife or be allowed to dig in the ground.b) Dogs should not be allowed to enter sensitive habitat areas, such as watercourses, marshes and ponds, areas under restoration and areas that are inhabited by species of special concern.c) In areas where dogs are allowed, sensitive habitats should be clearly demarcated with signage or fencing, where appropriate.d) Unless otherwise provided for, dogs should be constrained to trails and fire roads at all times.e) Dog owners shall be required to bag their dog's waste and deposit it in the receptacles provided for that purpose. Bagged dog waste left on the ground will be considered litter.f) Appropriate waste containers and bags should be located strategically at dog accessible park sites. Such containers should be easily serviceable on a regular basis by staff and/or volunteers in order to effectively to manage dog waste.

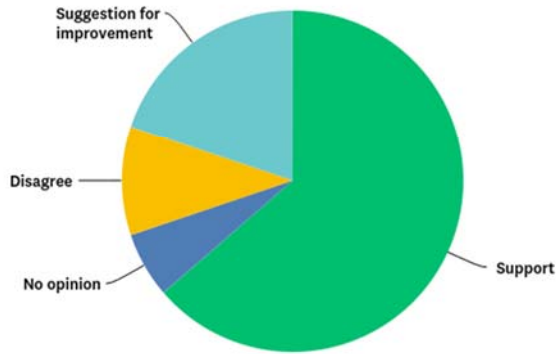
Answered: 394 Skipped: 2



Q7: 144 Comments

Q8 Secondary Policy - Considering New Areas for Dog Access: When considering new areas for dog access:a) Look for opportunities adjacent to urban areas and neighborhoods where there is demand for dog walking;b) Ensure adequate staffing, staff training and facilities can be provided to effectively manage the new use and address any increase in demand;c) Consider adjacent uses and whether connecting trails that allow dogs can be continued;d) 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; e) Ensure that all other policies regarding managing dog access can be met.

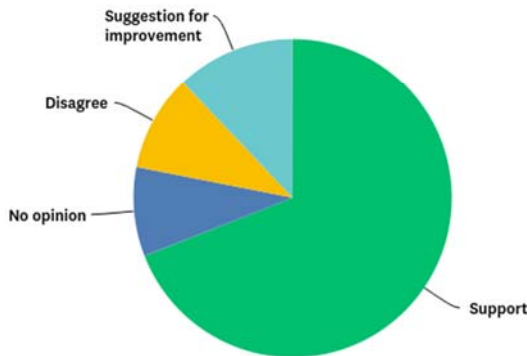
Answered: 388 Skipped: 8



**Q8: 139 Comments**

Q9 Secondary Policy - Enforcement: Enforcement mechanisms should be adequate to deter behavior that is not compliant with dog ordinances intended to protect park users and resources. Consider a structure of warnings and/or fines for infractions, with escalating fines for repeat offenders.

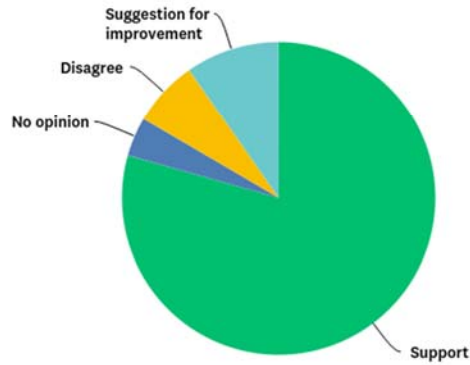
Answered: 388 Skipped: 8



**Q9: 114 Comments**

Q10 Secondary Policy - Playgrounds and Play Areas: Dogs should not enter playgrounds or play areas where it is posted that no dogs are allowed.

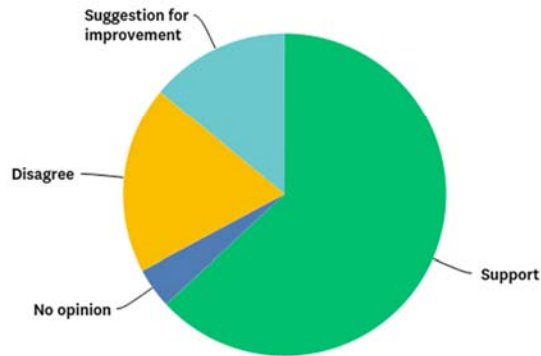
Answered: 393 Skipped: 3



**Q10: 75 Comments**

Q11 Secondary Policy - Leashes: Dogs must be leashed at all times, unless otherwise posted. All leashes must be no longer than 6 feet when encountering others on trails.

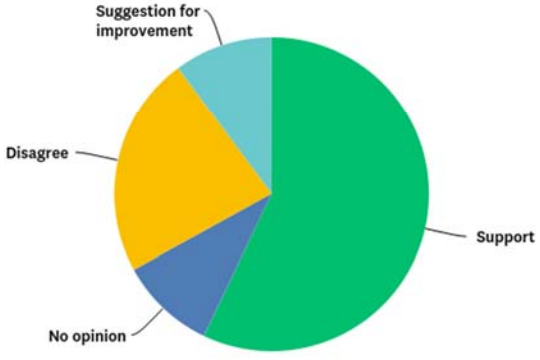
Answered: 393 Skipped: 3



**Q11: 134 Comments**

Q12 Secondary Policy - Number of Dogs per Person: Visitors may have no more than three (3) dogs per person.

Answered: 394 Skipped: 2



144 Comments