

DOG RESTRICTIONS: OVERVIEW

Dog management on Open Space and Mountain Park land has a long and controversial history with many thousands of visitors bringing their dogs along on Open Space excursions. Especially prized are unleashed, "voice and sight" opportunities. And, for women hiking alone, dogs offer a popular measure of protection.

Still, there are many who would like to limit dog access to particular areas because of environmental concerns or a general desire to avoid encounters with unpleasant, occasionally misbehaved, and sometimes (rarely) aggressive dogs. There are also more localized concerns such as "trailhead chaos" issues when lots of unleashed dogs are present. Finally, the OSMP Visitor Master Plan asks the CCG to consider creating additional "no dog" opportunities for visitors.

The big question is: How can we best provide highly valued dog access in ways which minimize adverse impacts on the environment and other visitors?

Among the issues that might be addressed in the following:

- Continue efforts to educate visitors with dogs about the importance of keeping their dogs under control and picking up dog waste.
- Strengthen vigorous but primarily persuasive (rather than punitive) enforcement efforts.
- Fine-tune of access restrictions so that they are only imposed when threats actually exist (as opposed to unnecessarily long, blanket restrictions). For example, don't close trails to dogs because of bear activity when bear activity is unlikely.
- Explore the possibility of offsetting additional dog restrictions by reducing restrictions and other areas.
- Require dogs to be leashed in the immediate vicinity of trailheads and access points.
- Provide the additional "no dog" opportunities suggested by the Visitor Master Plan.
- Try to provide dog access near the various neighborhoods so people don't have to drive to walk with their dogs.

More specific proposals will be made available for comment in the relatively near future. At this point, we are soliciting general comments on how best to handle dogs on Open Space.

<http://west-tsa-neighborhood-comments.blogspot.com/2010/06/dog-restrictions-overview.html>