

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

October 7, 2019

400 County Center, Supervisors' Chambers, Redwood City

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

Work Group Members Absent: None

Staff: Alvarez, Dallman, Finnegan, Jensen, Ormshaw,

Facilitator: Brown

Goals for this meeting:

1. Confirm selection of Quarry Park location and structure for off-leash dog access for inclusion in recommendation to Board of Supervisors
2. Receive information from the Parks Department regarding environmental and staffing topics related to Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluff locations
3. Continue discussion of Pillar Point Bluff as potential second location for an off-leash pilot
4. Discuss the process for submitting the Work Group's recommendation to the Parks Department, the Parks Commissions and the Board of Supervisors

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; less than 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 then 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 September Work Group Meeting

The following changes were suggested by the work group and will be incorporated into the meeting notes:

- Request for clarification of size and location of the enclosed off-leash option at Quarry Park
- Request that public comment regarding historical use of Quarry and Pillar Point Bluff as off-leash be included (note that the department policy does not allow off-leash dog access)

Written Public Comments

Peggy Jensen mentioned 49 written comments were submitted to the Parks Department and that all comments have been shared with the work group members and have been posted on the Parks Department Dog Work Group webpage. 39 comments expressed general support for off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff. There was 1 comment that did not support off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff. There were 37 comments in support of off-leash dog access at Quarry Park. 3 comments suggested restricted hours or days of the week for off-leash (i.e. weekdays off-leash and weekends on-leash).

Follow up from September meeting

At the September 9, 2019 meeting, work group members discussed its top two locations for off-leash dog access: Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluff. There was preliminary consensus among the group that Quarry Park would be suitable for off-leash, however there was not consensus among the group that Pillar Point Bluff would be suitable for off-leash dog access. In order to determine how the work group members wanted to proceed, following the meeting a survey was sent out asking work group members if they would like to:

- 1) move forward with Quarry Park as the off-leash dog access pilot park which would result in an earlier start date for the off-leash dog access pilot,
- 2) or if they prefer to hold 1 additional meeting to continue discussing off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff, which would result in a later start date for the off-leash dog access pilot.

There were 4 responses that preferred to move forward with option 1, six responses for option 2, and 1 work group member did not participate.

A brief update was provided regarding the on-leash dog access pilot parks.

- Junipero Serra Park: staff reported that a runner had been bitten by a dog off-leash. Staff reported the incident and filed the necessary paperwork with Peninsula Humane Society. Staff also mentioned they have seen an uptick in dogs off-leash at the park which has required more staff time to enforce the dog access policies.
- Coyote Point Recreation Area: staff mentioned there has been an increase in the number of dogs visiting the park. CuriOdyssey also reported they have seen a behavior change in golden eagles, and that their atypical behavior has required that 2 people be present to clean the cage rather than one (it was mentioned that eagles can see up to 2 miles away). Staff confirmed they have not seen any dogs on the trails near CuriOdyssey when they have been in the area.

Public Comment

There were about 6 community members present at the meeting. At this point in the agenda, members of the public were invited to address the work group and were asked to keep their comments brief and relevant. A total of 15 minutes was set aside for verbal public comments at this meeting. Each speaker had up to two minutes to address the work group. 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, 3 people shared verbal public comments during the public comment period.

Verbal public Comments addressed the following points:

- Request area for off-leash dog access at Quarry Park, and also asked for dedicated area for children and families to picnic without dogs
- Expressed concern regarding off-leash dog access at Quarry Park due to poison oak and wildlife
- Request for more off-leash dog access options

Parks Department Information related to Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluff as Off-Leash Pilot Location

Due to interest from the work group to know more about the natural resources at Quarry Park and Pillar Point Bluff, Hannah Ormshaw, Parks Department Natural Resource Manager, presented additional information regarding vegetation, streams and water bodies, sensitive habitat, reported species, and wildlife camera trapping. Hannah also mentioned it is the mission of the Parks Department to preserve natural and cultural resources as well as provide safe, accessible parks, recreation and learning opportunities for park users.

- Vegetation – Quarry Park is primarily eucalyptus. Pillar Point Bluff has more diverse vegetation communities throughout the park, including meadows, salt marsh, and coastal terrace prairie.
- Streams and water bodies – Quarry Park has primarily riverain/riparian areas which are inaccessible due to terrain, as well as 2 ponds. The Quarry Park watershed is not currently

considered impaired. Pillar Point Bluff is predominantly wetland and marine bodies, with wetlands taking up about 35% of the total park area. It is important to note the harbor adjacent to the park is considered an impaired watershed by the State Water Board which will implement a plan for restoring the impaired waters (TMDL per the US Clean Water Act).

- Sensitive habitats – Quarry Park has sensitive habitat that would support red legged frog at the ponds, and also has over-wintering habitat for the burrowing owl in an area of the park. Pillar Point Bluff is directly adjacent and connected to a protected marine preserve that is habitat for harbor seals. Pillar Point Bluff also has suitable habitat for red legged frog and San Francisco Garter snake and other sensitive plant species.
- Known protected species occurrences – red legged frog and monarch butterfly have reported presence in Quarry Park. There are a variety of reported species and wildlife in and around Pillar Point Bluff.
- Wildlife camera trapping – a contractor completed wildlife camera trapping to inventory mammal and ground bird species in Quarry Park in 2017, which identified 15 mammals and 14 bird species.

Hannah noted that staff will need to conduct additional surveys of reptiles and amphibians, as well as a more comprehensive trailside vegetation survey at Pillar Point Bluff.

Hannah also reviewed the potential impacts of off-leash dog access on natural resources:

- Vegetation impacts include trampling, digging, weed seed spread, weed introduction, phytophthora introduction.
- Protected species impacts include indirect and direct stress (non-visual), harassment/harm, habitat degradation, and trampling.
- Other wildlife impacts include indirect and direct stress on wildlife (non-visual), harassment/harm, and habitat degradation.
- Water quality impacts include increased bacteria inputs from dog waste and increased sediment inputs.
- Erosion impacts include increased bluff erosion and increased trail erosion. There is also potential for further erosion of social trails

Parks Staffing Resources

Peggy Jensen noted that the coastside district is the largest county park district, spanning 22 miles from San Pedro Valley to Tunitas Creek Beach. Also there are a number of large active projects currently underway. Parks under county management in the coastside district include (* designates those parks with a project currently underway):

1. San Pedro Valley
2. Sanchez Adobe*
3. Devil's Slide Trail
4. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
5. Moss Beach Park*
6. Pillar Point Bluff

7. Quarry Park*
8. Mirada East/West
9. Tunitas Creek Beach*
10. Cowell Purisima Trail

Patrolling the district includes opening and closing the parks, patrolling a couple hours a day. When patrolling the beach, it easily takes up half a day for 1 ranger. Allowing dogs on and off-leash in County parks creates additional work load for the rangers, especially if there are multiple pilots in the same district, which means they will have less time to do other things such as maintenance.

Confirm Work Group Recommendation for Quarry Park: Structure and Location

The facilitator asked work group members to use fist-to-five to check for consensus on the structure for the off-leash pilot work group recommendation for Quarry Park. Some work group members expressed concern regarding sensitive habitat and requested that off-leash dog access be limited to non-sensitive habitat areas. There was a suggestion to add signage bringing attention to the sensitive areas in the park. There was consensus among the group (9 fives, and 2 threes) to allow off-leash dog access on multi-use trails except for sensitive habitat areas that support burrowing owl and red legged frog.

Further Work Group Discussion Regarding Pillar Point Bluff Location for Off-Leash Pilot

The work group continued discussing Pillar Point Bluff as a second potential off-leash dog access pilot. Concerns were raised regarding the challenge around staffing if there are two off-leash pilot locations in one park district. A concern was also raised that dogs would use social trails to access marine preserve and beach area where dogs are not allowed, and that off-leash dog access would impact sensitive areas of the park. A suggestion was made to limit hours or days for off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff. There was no consensus among the group regarding Pillar Point Bluff as a recommended location for an off-leash dog access pilot.

Timeline to Develop Work Group Recommendation to Parks Department

Proposed next steps for the off-leash pilot program include the following:

- November 4 – Confirm Quarry Park location and structure for off-leash access, continue to discuss Pillar Point Bluff, and if time allows, begin to develop policies and evaluation criteria for off-leash pilot locations
- December 2 – Complete development of Work Group Recommendation to the Parks Department regarding Off-leash Pilot
- February 2020 – Report to Parks Commission
- March 2020 – Report to Board of Supervisors
- April 2020 – Report back to Work Group on Board of Supervisors' discussion and next steps

Thanks to All and Adjourn – 4:00pm