

## 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

November 4, 2019

400 County Center, Supervisors' Chambers, Redwood City

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

**Work Group Members Absent:** Bonilla, Erridge

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

**Facilitator:** Brown

### Goals for this meeting:

1. Conclude discussion of location(s) and structure(s) for off-leash dog access for inclusion in recommendation to Parks Department
2. Begin development of evaluation criteria and policies that will be recommended for off-leash pilot(s)
3. Discuss the process for submitting the Work Group's recommendation to the Parks Department, the Parks Commission and 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 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 3-5 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 October Work Group Meeting

No changes were suggested by the work group to the October meeting notes.

### Written Public Comments

Peggy Jensen mentioned three written public comments were shared with the work group by email, and all three support off-leash dog access in Pillar Point Bluff and Quarry Park. There were three additional written comments shared at the start of the work group meeting. All written comments will be posted on the Parks Department Dog Work Group meeting webpage.

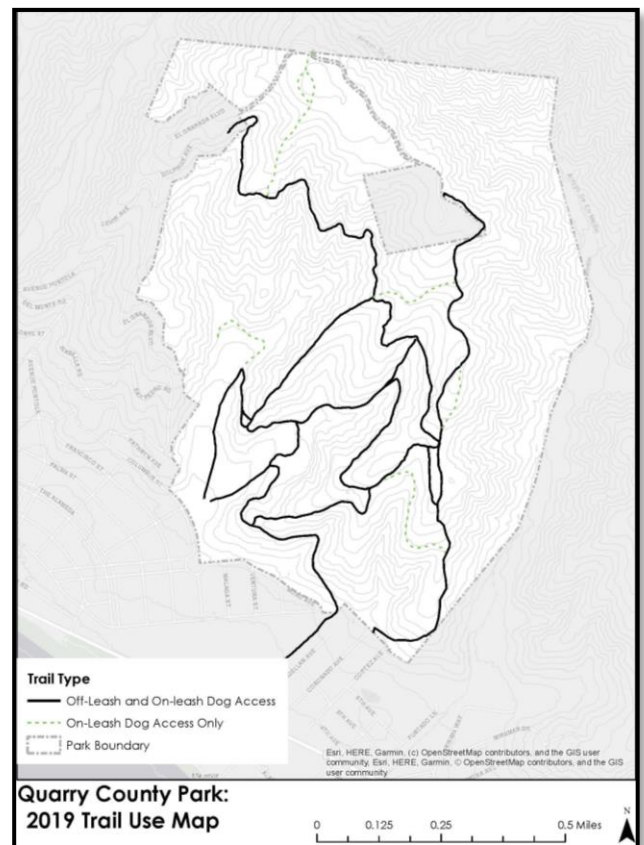
### Follow up from October meeting

At the October meeting, all Dog Work Group members appeared to support allowing dogs off-leash on a pilot basis in Quarry Park on designated multi-use trails. To make sure staff correctly understood that there was consensus on this proposal and to save time during the November meeting, the Department requested that work group members confirm the decision through a survey. Five members enthusiastically support the decision with 5 fingers in full support of the proposal (see the proposal language and map below). Three members indicated 4 fingers in moderate support of the proposal. Two members indicated 3 fingers in support of the project, confirming they would not undermine the proposal. One member did not participate.

#### Proposal: Quarry Park (refer to map)

- *On-leash dogs are allowed on all trails*
- *Off-leash dogs are allowed on designated multi-use trails*

*To protect children and sensitive species and habitat, dogs are not allowed in the playground or pond.*



## **Public Comment**

There were about 11 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 10 minutes was set aside for verbal public comment. 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 in writing, or if there is not sufficient time for everyone to address the work group verbally. In total, four people shared verbal comments during the public comment period. These comments addressed the following points:

- Expressed support for off-leash dog access
- Suggestion for zero tolerance policy for people who access the beach with dogs
- Expressed opposition to off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff due to ability to access beach/marine preserve and the negative environmental impact it would have, including impact to a federally protected species (harbor seal)
- Request for improved signage at Pillar Point Bluffs to help ensure compliance
- Request for improved signage at Quarry Park

## **Continue Discussion of Pillar Point Bluff as Off-leash Pilot Location**

Before the work group began the discussion, Peggy Jensen reminded the group of the Dog Management Policy that was developed by the Dog Management Committee and approved by the Board of Supervisors:

- It is the policy of San Mateo County Parks, in managing dog access to County Parks, to promote healthy, safe and varied experiences for all park users and to protect natural resources.

Peggy also reminded the group of the secondary policies developed by the dog management committee:

1. Education – Dog owner education is an essential component of effective management of dog access, including avoiding user conflicts and protecting natural resources.
2. Variety of experiences – Provide a variety of recreational opportunities, increasing park access for a wider range of San Mateo County residents and visitors.
3. Avoidance of conflicts – Minimize conflicts with established uses within the park, such as equestrian use, and with adjacent land uses, such as agriculture.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
  7. 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.
  8. Playgrounds and Playfields: Dogs should not enter playgrounds or play areas where it is posted that no dogs are allowed.
  9. 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.
  10. Number of dogs per person – visitors must have no more than three dogs per person.

Peggy also reviewed the primary areas of concern raised by work group members at the last meeting regarding off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff. Peggy also reviewed potential mitigation options to address each area of concern.

Summary of work group member concerns: off-leash dog access at Pillar Point Bluff

- Ability for off-leash dogs to access beach (beach area includes protected marine preserve which is habitat for harbor seals)
  - *Proposed Mitigation:* require dogs to be on-leash on Ross' Cove Trail adjacent to the beach; add signage; fencing is not an option since it would further undermine the eroding bluff
- Impacts of off-leash dog access to sensitive habitat (specifically to the marsh area between Airport Road & bluff tops and any other sensitive areas within the park)
  - *Proposed Mitigation:* require dogs to be on-leash in lower areas adjacent to marsh (along Pillar Point Bluff Trail shown on Parks map)
- Impact on ranger workload (both off-leash pilot locations under consideration are located in the same ranger district)
  - *Proposed Mitigation:* implement one off-leash pilot park only

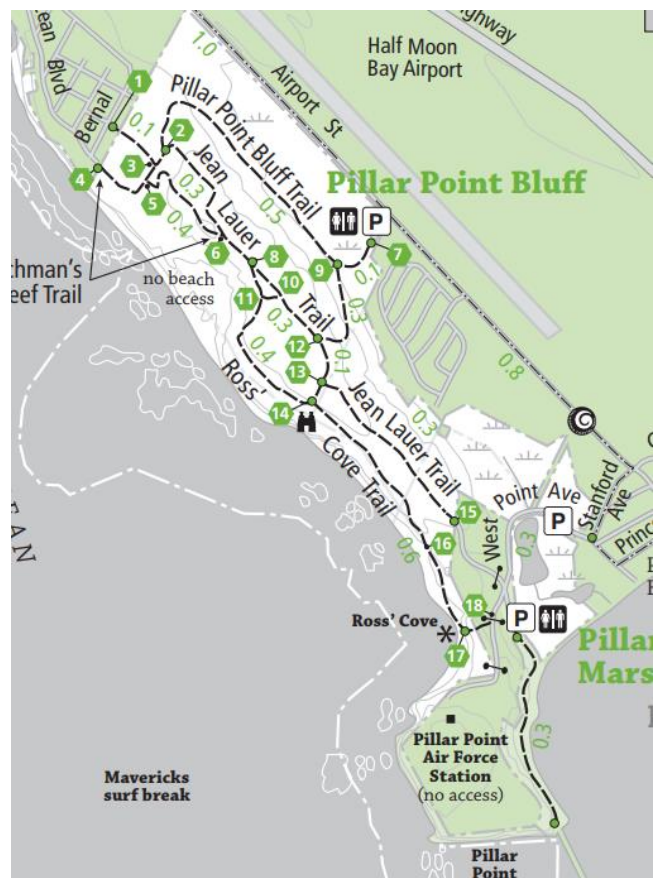
In addition to the proposed mitigations mentioned above, a work group member recommended increasing fines for dog owners/handlers that enter the area where dogs are prohibited along the beach area that includes the marine preserve.

### **Continue Discussion of Pillar Point Bluff as Off-Leash Dog Access Pilot Location**

The facilitator suggested an approach to the work group that would end in a decision: ask for a work group member to put forward a proposal to start the discussion; clarify suggestion as needed through discussion; check for consensus on proposal; if no consensus, ask for mitigation suggestions from those not supporting and amend the proposal; check for consensus on amended proposal; if no consensus, call for a vote (a majority of work group members supporting means proposal will be included in the work group's recommendation to the Parks Department).

A work group member provided the proposal for Pillar Point Bluff shown in bold lettering below (see map for reference). Since there was no consensus on the proposal listed below, discussion continued. To address concerns that off-leash dogs could access the beach via social trails, one addition was made to the initial proposal (shown in italics below). The facilitator checked for consensus on the amended proposal. Since there was no consensus among the group on the amended proposal, the facilitator asked for a vote from the work group members on the amended proposal: 7 members voted in favor, 2 members were opposed, and 2 members were absent. Since a majority voted in favor of the amended proposal for Pillar Point Bluff, it will be included in the recommendation from the work group to the Parks Department.

- **Off-leash dog access is allowed on official San Mateo County Parks trails along the bluff except for the following:**
  - **Dogs must be on-leash along the entire length of 'Pillar Point Bluff' trail or on the trail to the parking lot on Airport Street (from point 2 to 9, 9 to 7, and 9 to 12, as shown on the map)**
  - **No dogs allowed after point 17 shown on the map nor on the beach**
  - **All marsh areas are off limits to dogs**
  - *Dogs must be on-leash between points 4 and 5, and between points 1 and 3*



During the discussion there were some additional requests made by work group members. There was a request to have a full environmental study completed before the off-leash pilot is

implemented to identify any native or protected plants and wildlife at Pillar Point Bluff. A work group member also recommended that the Parks Department be allocated the necessary resources required to implement the off-leash dog access pilot program.

### Discussion Regarding Evaluation Criteria for Off-Leash Dog Access

Staff reviewed the on-leash evaluation criteria categories (see the on-leash evaluation criteria below). The following suggestions were made for incorporation to the off-leash evaluation criteria document:

- ✓ Vegetation section should reference native, non-native and species of concern
- ✓ Wildlife section should expand definition of how info is collected: by cameras and any other type of wildlife surveys needed; the word ‘chasing’ should be changed to ‘harassing’
- ✓ Water quality section should also mention ‘...and any other requirements per the Regional Water Quality Control Board.’

### On-Leash Dog Access Pilot Project Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Methodology/Method for Tracking	Baseline	Frequency	Lead
<b>Environmental Impacts</b>				
Vegetation	Staff will survey trails before, during and after pilot period for presence of native and non-native vegetation in pilot parks. Visual observations will be recorded in digital collector forms.	Visual assessment pre pilot.	Before pilot, and every 2 weeks during pilot.	Natural Resources
Wildlife	Staff will monitor change in presence, behavior, location, and timing of wildlife as recorded by the wildlife cameras. Any visual observation of dogs chasing wildlife will also be recorded.	Wildlife camera data collected before initiation of the pilot.	Ongoing monitoring before pilot and during pilot.	Natural Resources
Water Quality	Number of unattended dog waste observed by staff, including measurement of number of bagged waste and unbagged waste. Will be tracked by Ranger field forms and in digital collector form.	Visual assesment, including pre-pilot data observation.	Ongoing monitoring.	Natural Resources; Ranger staff
<b>Visitor Interactions</b>				
Visitor interactions	Staff will gather information regarding visitor interactions with dogs through field forms. Courtesy notices, incident reports, citations and public written comment will also be included. At Coyote Point, additional information will be gathered through cameras and documentation from animal keepers regarding impact of dogs on museum animals.	Field forms collected during first 6 months of dog access (Jan. 2019 - Jun. 2019) for Coyote Point. Assume baseline of zero for Junipero Serra Park.	Ongoing monitoring.	Ranger Staff
<b>Parks Resources</b>				
Staff Workload	Number of staff time hours required to implement pilots, including evaluation criteria monitoring as well as interactions between rangers and dogs and dog owners. The number of ranger contacts will also inform this measurement.	Field forms collected during first 6 months of dog access (Jan. 2019 - Jun. 2019) for Coyote Point. Assume baseline of zero for Junipero Serra Park.	Total will be reported at end of pilot.	Fiscal Staff; Ranger Staff
Signage and other infrastructure	Measured by cost of improvements and infrastructure required for dog access, including signage and waste stations, incinuing initial costs and any ongoing costs such as maintenance.	Assume baseline of zero.	Total will be reported at end of pilot.	Fiscal Staff
<b>Park Use</b>				
Park visitor numbers	Measured by change in number of park visitors using existing visitor counters, comparing pre and during pilot numbers. Data will be collected by automated trail counters.	Compare count data from corresponding month for 2018.	Ongoing monitoring before pilot and during pilot.	Visitor Services

### **Timeline to Develop Work Group Recommendation to Parks Department**

Proposed next steps finalizing and submitting the off-leash dog access pilot recommendation include the following:

- December 2 – Complete development of work group recommendation to the Parks Department for Off-leash Pilot, including evaluation criteria and policies
- February 2020 – Parks Department to present recommendations to Parks Commission
- March 2020 – Parks Department to present recommendations to Board of Supervisors
- April 2020 – Report back to work group on Board of Supervisors' discussion and next steps

**The meeting was adjourned at 4pm.**

## **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 Coordinator

### Facilitator

**Pat Brown**