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Approved for Public Review and Feedback on August 21, 2017*Introductory Note:*

There are many approaches to writing policy and a great degree of flexibility, but a typical structure is to have a broad policy statement, followed by more specific guidance. The aim is to provide an organization-level document that describes acceptable methods, approaches, and/or behaviors.

The following policies are intended to guide the San Mateo County Parks Department in its management of park users who visit San Mateo County Parks with their dogs, and to guide decision-making regarding providing dog access to San Mateo County Parks. These policies are one set of many policies that guide the management of San Mateo County Parks.

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.

Secondary Policies: These secondary policies are grounded in materials the Committee has received from water quality and natural resource management experts, specialists in dog behavior, and other land management agencies who are managing dog access. They also reflect input the Committee has received from the public.

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. ***Avoidance of conflicts:*** Avoid 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 Play Areas:** 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 may have no more than three (3) dogs per person.