

Dog Task Force Committee Meeting Notes
February 2, 2004
Downtown Library, Large Conference Room, 12:15PM

Committee Members Present:

Sue McGregor - Capital Kennel
James King - Trailmix
Karla Hart - Fish and Game
Chava Lee - Humane Society
Sue Schrader - Public
Bob Grochow - Parks and Recreation

Committee Members Absent:

Kim Kiefer - Parks and Recreation
Kathy Buss - Public
Kathy Hocker - Discovery Southeast
Ron Marvin - Forest Service
Mike Eberhart - State Parks

I. Public Comment - None

II. Subcommittee Reports

- A. Parks/Off Leash Areas – Sue McGregor handed out a report from there last meeting which lists the various trails that were discussed - they are about 1/2 to 3/4 complete with their project. Criteria that they tried to identify from each trail was which agency had authority over the identified trail, seasonality (dead fish, bears, other users), and then recommendations - whether to leave "as is", leash free, dog free or a combination.

Various trails from the subcommittee report were discussed.

Kim Kiefer to get back with committee on definition of boundaries of the watershed.

- B. Education – Chava Lee mentioned this group came up with a general idea of what they plan to do:

Write series of articles using the new dog walking advocacy group "Grateful Dogs" template on good manners for dogs. Originating article will be of general nature with following articles being more specific. PSA's will be done with highlights and posters each week. Trying to get the Empire to put space in newspaper to do series. After specifics come up from other subcommittees they can put together specifics of information. Already going into schools. Doing internal changes with staff to talk to people who have fear of dogs. School programs focusing on dog awareness. Teaching them not to do inappropriate

behavior towards dogs. Would like to have volunteers who would like to go into schools.

Sue Shrader would like to give public a list of resources where they can go to get help.

Chava Lee – would like to get to the point of establishing a program that if people take class they wouldn't have to pay ticket.

Sue McGregor – The Capital Kennel Club is thinking of extending classes to 8 to deal with trail etiquette and practice skills on trails before they get out of classes.

C. Wildlife/Sensitive Habitat – Karla Hart stated with Kathy Hockers great preparation of the trail matrix identifying where is there a unique habitat that is really critical the following areas were mentioned: Mendenhall Refuge, both airport and Fish Creek side; Amalga Meadows because we are looking at new trails where special consideration needs to be taken; Eagle beach tidal flats that are really important because of the water fowl. Those were the areas discussed for further consideration. Kathy came up with recommendations of hiking with dogs in wildlife country.

Trail Dog

-Hiking With Your Dog in Wildlife Country-

Hiking with dogs can be a real pleasure. Their joy in exploring the world is infectious, as they run, romp, and sleuth along trails of intriguing scent. They are reassuring companions—steady hiking buddies who never complain about the rain or the length of the trail.

When we hike with dogs in Juneau, we move through a rich world of wildlife—and unfortunately, dogs are not always the best influence on these wild animals and their habitats. Dogs can carry diseases that are transmissible to some wild animals. They sometimes frighten, chase, or even kill wildlife. Over time, repeated visits by dogs can cause wild animals to leave an area. This can be particularly hard on wild animals who depend on limited habitat resources.

As dog owners, we're responsible for the actions of our four-legged companions, and we can take steps to make outings with our dogs a little easier on our wild neighbors.

Be Aware

As you hike, be aware of wildlife. Keep an eye ahead for wild animals, and observe their behavior as it relates to you and your dog. Do ducks on a pond start to vocalize and move around in a nervous way as you approach? Does a porcupine run to the nearest spruce and begin a frantic ascent? Is there an agitated parent bird hovering nearby, indicating a threatened nest? Watch for wildlife sign along your favorite trails, and manage your dog accordingly—perhaps by keeping her leashed in areas that are frequented by wildlife.

Your dog can help you become more wildlife-aware. For every wild animal you see, she's probably aware of ten others in the vicinity. Watch her movements, and try to learn how she responds when a wild animal is nearby. Then you'll be ready to respond more quickly by calling her to you—and she just might point you toward some great wildlife viewing experiences!

Be Respectful

Be respectful of wildlife and their habitats. This means more than just not letting your dog chase or kill wildlife, although that's important, too. Chasing can seem fun for the dog, but it's deadly serious to

wildlife. Just because an animal escapes doesn't mean it hasn't been harmed by the chase. Throughout the pursuit, the frightened wild critter burns much-needed stores of energy. When it's over, the animal is depleted. At the walk's end, your dog can come home, munch a bowl of kibble and stretch out in warmth and comfort. The wild animal has to scramble to find more food, and must face the cold night alone.

Keep your dog leashed, or at least within sight, while you're hiking. This way, you'll be able to head off problems before they start. When you see a wild animal while walking with your dog off-leash, call her to you and put her on a leash until you've passed the animal or it has moved out of range. Learn your dog's "chase zone" (the distance within which she'll likely take off after a critter) and keep at least that far away from wildlife.

Be respectful of habitats, especially ones that are restricted or limited, such as narrow river corridors, wetlands, and meadows. Encourage your dog to stay out of these sensitive habitats, and avoid throwing sticks or fetch toys into them—toss them along the trail instead—or better yet, on a sandy beach, in a sports field, or in your backyard.

Sometimes respecting wildlife means leaving your dog at home or choosing a different trail. Think hard before you bring your dog along on a hike through a particularly sensitive area, or at a sensitive time of year such as nesting season or migration.

Training for "Good Wildlife Manners"

A key to good wildlife "manners" is being in control of your dog. If she's not under control, you probably shouldn't have her off-leash anyway—that's not safe for her, for other trail users, or for you. But it can be intimidating and frustrating to try to control a dog distracted by the millions of scents, sounds, and sights of the great outdoors. Here are some training tips:

- To teach your dog to "come" immediately when called, practice the "come" command FREQUENTLY, starting in a neutral environment and working up to more distracting situations. Provide frequent, excellent rewards.
- If you walk with your dog off-leash, practice "come" as you hike. Carry good-tasting dog treats or a favorite toy, and periodically call your dog as you walk along. When she comes to you, snap a leash on her collar while you hand her the toy or treat, feed her a couple more treats, then release her again. She'll learn that the leash isn't something to be avoided, since it comes with treats and will probably come off again soon.
- To teach your dog to pay more attention to you and to stay close, always praise and/or reward her for coming to you (even if you didn't call her). If she tends to range out of sight, practice playing "hide and seek" in a safe area: when she's not paying attention, duck behind a tree or rock. When she comes back to find you, give her a big reward!
- To help stop your dog from chasing wildlife, teach her an alternate behavior for expressing her drive to chase. Get her hooked on fetching a toy or sticks. When you're hiking in wildlife country and she notices an animal, try to call her before she starts to chase, and reward her with a rousing game of fetch. If your timing is good and you're consistent, her chasing instincts will become displaced, and she'll start coming to you for her toy when she sees an animal.
- To teach a "leave it" command, put a favorite toy or a treat in front of your dog's nose and say "leave it." If she lunges for it, cover it and say "leave it" again. As soon as she backs off and gives you her attention, give her a different toy or treat. Repeat frequently, until she automatically "leaves it" when told to.

Sue Mc Gregor said Fish Creek area has been trashed by people. There are fish guts and human waste. We are encouraging people to fish there without boats. Area at flats is part group feels is the critical area.

Schrader mentioned there is a commercial jet ski operation going out from the boat launch in North Douglas and going into the refuge? She has also heard Fish & Game is putting together new comp plans. Karla Hart will look into this.

James King asked if Mt Roberts Trail could be addressed at the sensitive habitat subcommittee? There has been an increase of marmot and ptarmigan since tram has been built. This increase is probably because locals do not use the trail when tourists are around. Karla Hart said a lot of areas down south having blinds for viewing.

King asked if all of Fish Creek was in a sensitive area. Maybe dogs could be in part of the area. Possibly a good separation would be the creek?

Karla mention that there is some public perception that this group is anti dogs. Both she and Sue McGregor have talked to individuals who thought this. Possibly someone could go on radio and try to educate people.

James King explained that the Trails Working Group has representatives from the agencies, the public and the tourism industry. They are discussing the idea of creating an area for wildlife viewing that could be used by commercial groups as well as the public.

Chava Lee mentioned the Humane Society was looking at maybe creating a resource for funds by renting out dogs.

Pubic comment

Perry Shipman – He appreciates everybody trying to do the best job they can and he would like to give his perspective. Most areas have been traditionally off leash. He has been walking forever and at all places. Each of you represents a special interest. You all say we care about dogs. Each represents a certain interest and why certain areas should not have dogs. Then you go over to Trails Working Group meeting and more trails are taken away. Now I hear Mr. King's point made about Mt Roberts. My fear is we say tomorrow look at this trail. If we keep dogs off here we would have more animals on this trail. Just saw all ponds go away because of toads. Can't go to wetlands because of geese. Everything I moved here for 30 years ago is being taken away. Each person chips at a different corner. Not sure if my words have any value but now cynical about whole project. I feel like I'm being penalized because some people are bad citizens.

Chava Lee – I know at the Humane Society one thing I have to personally watched for is not to be continually swayed about all the negative calls that I get there. There are positive things that we don't hear. That's why its so important to give it their best shot on education because we don't have enough money or staff for enforcement. It has made me think about my actions and interactions with

others in this group. My hope is that we can educate so that the people who are responsible dog owners are leading the pack.

Because we have a couple of bad eggs we are all going to be restricted. I'm afraid that we can't educate the small handful of bad owners.

Enforcement is for those who aren't being educated.

Perry and his wife have formalized the way he and his wife walk trails. They always pull dogs over when he sees others running etc. Pulls over to educate and set an example. How do we target people who are doing 90% of problems?

Schrader – There is a whole universe of trails. Need to prioritize trails on which trails need restriction.

III. Upcoming Meetings:

Sensitive Habitat/Wildlife Subcommittee, Monday, February 9, 12:15pm,
Downtown Library

Parks/Off Leash Subcommittee meeting, Tuesday, Feb 10, 5pm, Valley Library

Trails Working Group, Wednesday, February 11, 12:05pm, Downtown Library

March 1, 2004, Downtown Library, Large conference room, next Dog Task
Committee meeting

IV. Adjournment 1:45pm