

Dog Task Force Committee Meeting Notes
March 1, 2004
Downtown Library, Large Conference Room, 12:15PM

Committee Members Present:

Sue McGregor - Capital Kennel
Karla Hart - Fish and Game
Sue Schrader - Public
Bob Grochow - Parks and Recreation
Kim Kiefer - Parks and Recreation

Committee Members Absent:

Kathy Buss - Public
Kathy Hocker - Discovery Southeast
Ron Marvin - Forest Service
Mike Eberhart - State Parks
James King - Trailmix
Chava Lee - Humane Society

I. Public Comment:

Ron Berg - He has been going to a few of the committee meetings. He supports penalty for those who allow their dogs to chase animals. He is concerned about the wildlife subcommittees recommendations for the Mendenhall Wetlands Game Refuge being closed all year instead of during certain seasons. Hunters can take out their dogs but I can't take out mine. Most of the land is owned by the state but the city owns some in Fish Creek. He is in favor of closing during some sensitive times of year but have these areas where there is complete closer doesn't make sense.

Sue McGregor said the trails subcommittee didn't say they agreed with the wildlife subcommittee recommendations.

Karla Hart - The wildlife subcommittee perspective is to advocate for what is the best for wildlife and didn't mean that is what would be recommended by the dog task force.

Kim Kiefer - All subcommittees were tasked with coming up with their own ideas for their subcommittees and then would submit these ideas to the task force.

Marty Messick asked for the following to be submitted into the notes:

I would like to put in a request for the inclusion of tracking as an acceptable activity for the Mendenhall Refuge and to be added to the list prepared by the Wildlife Subcommittee.

Tracking is a recognized dog sport with the American Kennel Club and other national organizations. It involves walking to "set" or "lay" a track for the dog to follow. The dog then follows the track of their handler's scent. The dogs are tied out while the track is set. The tracks run 450 yards for dogs training for the TD (tracking dog) title with the AKC (American Kennel Club), and up to 1000 yards for dogs training for a TDX (Tracking Dog Excellent). Dogs are in a harness and on a 20 to 40 foot lead.

Juneau has titled dogs with both their TD and TDX titles. Also, a half-dozen dogs are going to be certified this year which allows them to participate in an AKC tracking event.

Tracking training requires a large amount of relatively flat ground with vegetative growth on it - in other words, it cannot be a gravel pit or a playing field. The training needs to simulate the conditions that will be present at a trial.

And since our dogs are on leash for tracking, the dogs are much less intrusive than someone training a retriever who is chasing after a dummy thrown for it to chase.

Those involved with tracking can be required to register somewhere to have use of the wetlands for these activities.

Randy Mullen - Likes the wildlife subcommittee's approach. There are over 100 trails and the subcommittee is just asking that a few be restricted.

Skiff Lobaugh asked that the following comments be submitted:

Let me start off by saying this is the busiest time of year for me and I am sorry I have not been able to make these meetings as often as I would like. I would also like to thank the individuals who have worked hard on these committees to try and solve a potential problem area before it is a problem. However, I do have some comments I would like to make regarding the documents I received via-email today.

Comments and concerns regarding the Trails Subcommittee

- *Outer point trail and the Rainforest trail are basically the same thing. There is no reason to have different rules for these trails except if you are concerned with appeasing the tourist industry. I have counted the percentage users of these trails and my observations are that over 90% of the individuals utilizing these two trails are walking dogs (Rainforest is in the high eighty percentile and the Outer Point trail is in the mid-ninety percentile). Both these trails are in perfect location to have low impact on wild life since it is a closed location that has dog walking allowed on two sides, the third side is the beach and the fourth side is the highway. It is absolutely short sighted to have the Rainforest trail closed to dogs when the Bluff trail that intersects it will allow dogs and the Outer Point Trail that is literally yards away open to dogs.*
- *It is funny that this subcommittee came up with a recommendation that was the main reason for all of the opposition at the Trail Work group last fall that caused this process to create a working group in the first place. It makes me wonder if there is not some predetermined outcome that is being pushed.*
- *Dredge Lake Trail is another one I have concerns about. I have walked this one several times for counting purposes and I have noticed over 70% usage by dog walkers.*

Comments on the Wildlife Subcommittee document:

- *First you need to remember that CONTROLLED DOGS are not a problem. I have read the reports regarding dogs just being in the area cause problems with and I find many flaws in the studies and have seen studies that state humans have a much greater impact and disturbance factor than dogs.*

- *Mendenhall Wetlands (including the Dike Trail). This area would be impossible to consider off-limits to dogs. I would also argue that the main disturbance for the wildlife in this area is the airport traffic, Egan Drive, the proposed second channel crossing, etc. This is where the main impacts to wildlife are coming from. Another problem is that dog owners own many of the North Douglas homes and Mendenhall Peninsula homes. Many walk their dogs in the Mendenhall via access from their homes. It would be impossible to enforce the Mendenhall ban so in essence you will be discriminating against non-land owners.*
- *By restricting dog walkers you will force many of them to create their own trails into the back areas of Juneau increasing the conflicts with wildlife. Keeping dogs on trails limits their exposure to areas that are already disturbing wildlife with the presence of people.*

In short, I do not think these two documents do enough to provide for dog walkers. They are the largest user group and as such should be given some priorities.

Chava Lee - One of the things they have noticed at the shelter are the favorable comments people are making on the "Grateful Dogs". If you restrict dog walkers on trails some will make their own trails. People do the most damage. If you try to make people establish their own trails you will be compounding the problem because there is a large population of dog walkers.

Perry Shipman - The Grateful Dogs are hosting a bi-weekly column in the Empire on canine education and what is good citizenship.

Sue Schrader - She has heard raving comments about the dog parks in Anchorage. Did the trails subcommittee look at dog parks? She would like to see the trailheads be targeted because she has seen many people drive up to the Yacht Club area and let their dogs do their thing and then the dogs get back in the car and they take off without picking up after their dog.

Chava Lee - Enforcement probably won't work for these people.

Sue McGregor - She is relieved to hear that the report by the wildlife subcommittee is only a recommendation and that they don't expect that's how the outcome will be.

Karla Hart - Its not feasible to close the Dike Trail but if our role is to say what's best for wildlife its our role to take an advocacy approach for wildlife. I don't see us as doing that but will push trying to keep dogs on the trail.

Sue - Where's proof that we are having an impact?

Karla Hart - It is impossible to prove because it is linked with so many areas. The status quo will continue until there are no birds coming back. Hunting is sacred and it would take the legislature to change to no hunting in the refuge.

Chava Lee - Since humans domesticated dogs we took responsibility as their care givers and takers. It is important to get dogs exercise as their provider. Dogs provide huge enhancement to all of our lives.

Karla Hart - Education is great but enforcement is important for those who choose not to follow regulations. The state only has law regarding dogs killing wildlife but no interim measure. Possibly the city could provide intermediate step.

Jill Gorse - She has been walking the wetlands for 30 years. She is involved with people who do a lot of dog training and has tracked for 7 years and never come across a nest of any kind. She feels like its turning into Seattle. Tour ships that dump sewage is offensive to me. She too does not like to go on filthy trails. She would actually become ticket person if allowed. It would be devastating to her lifestyle if those trails were closed.

Betty Saguin - She wishes everyone belonged to the Kennel Club and had good etiquette built into their repertoire. She wants the Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei Trail to remain as is.

JoAnne Craig- She was unable to attend meeting but asked the following be submitted.

Please don't take all the trails away in a particular region. I notice Amalga and Eagle Beach are on the possible no-dogs list. For people who live out the road this sounds a bit harsh. Dogs need to run and we shouldn't have to drive into town to have them romp and play like animals ought to be able to do. Why is it that it seems to be OK for humans to take over miles of area, but suddenly its to much impact for dogs to run on a trail? Wildlife hang out in other areas besides on our trail system and I think there's enough room around Juneau for wildlife and dogs. At the very least, don't destroy all the fun in one area of town. Spread the bad news around.

IV. Adjournment 1:25pm