

Dog Advisory Committee (DAC)

Purpose of DAC

The Parks Board created the Dog Action Committee in April 2014. Volunteers from the public serve on the committee, which has the following tasks:

1. Create Strawberry Hill Dog Park (completed July 2014).
2. Monitor maintenance of Strawberry Hill Dog Park and Eagle Dale Dog park.
3. Implement Dog Education programs to educate users on [what to expect at a dog park](#) and offer [free dog training classes](#), reduce conflict with other users, and reduce spread of disease through dog waste.
4. Research and make recommendations to the Park Board on further dog parks and off leash sites on Bainbridge Island.
5. Advise on enforcement of current leash restrictions in parks.

Focus

After careful consideration and research, the Parks Board directed the committee specifically not to look at the following issues until directed to do so:

Off leash hours on current trails
Shared use areas (i.e. off leash dogs in areas used by other users)
Certification programs to allow some dogs off leash

The rationale:

1. Off leash hours do not solve the issue of user conflict. Many of the places proposed for designated hours are heavily used by multiple users. The hours for off leash dogs would effectively prevent other uses from using the area at during that time. Dogs are currently welcome in parks so long as the dogs are on leash.
2. Designated hours would have the worst impact on wildlife, worse than having an area available to dogs all day. Studies¹ show that animals can be caught by surprise and are most vulnerable when dogs appear intermittently.

¹ “The Effects of Dogs on Wildlife Communities” Benjamin E. Lenth, Richard L. Knight, Mark E. Brennanb Natural Areas Journal 28(3):218-227. 2008. “Wildlife that are sensitive to recreational disturbance are generally most sensitive to unpredictable spatial patterns of disturbance (MacArthur et al. 1982, Knight and Cole 1995), whereas predictable spatial activities, such as activity restricted to trails, allows wildlife to habituate to the disturbance (Whittaker and Knight 1999). The spatial behavior of off-leash dogs is unpredictable, and when dogs wander off-trail they are likely to elicit flushing responses from deer, even if they do not give chase (Miller et al. 2001).” (pg 20).

3. Several communities across the country have been experimenting with shared hours. The results have been mixed, with reports of user conflict, difficulty of enforcement of regular on-leash times, and some confusion by users.

Until the Park Board directs the committee to consider alternative solutions, the DAC is currently focusing efforts on creating spaces specifically designed for dogs to be off leash in designated off leash areas.

A History of Bainbridge Island Dog Parks as of 2014

Timeline

1991	City of Bainbridge Island incorporates, affecting regulations for dogs.
1991-2014	Population increases to 23,000+ residents and an estimated 6,000 dogs.
1999	Eagledale Dog Park opens.
Nov 2010	The Dog Advisory Working Group (DAWG) volunteer committee files its report “Dog Issues and Opportunities in our Parks,” including recommendations for off-leash sites.
April 2012	The Dog Owner Education Committee produced the document “Dog Owner Awareness and Education Program.”
2012-2014	Parks Board actively pursues a dog park option at Vincent Road. After encountering sudden obstacles in May 2014, the Parks Board decides to table the Vincent Road project and focus on faster solutions. (Both Parks and City Boards are open to revisiting Vincent Road options if funds can be secured. To donate, contact Dan Hamlin dan@biparks.org)
April 2014	Parks Board creates the volunteer Dog Advisory Committee (DAC), charged with designing Strawberry Hill Dog Park and recommending other dog park sites
July 2014	Strawberry Hill Dog Park opens. Located in the center of the Island in a unique forest setting, the park is designed for dogs to socialize and play off-leash
Oct 2014	Park Board approves by motion a statement on Off-leash Dogs

Ongoing Projects

- Add amenities to the Strawberry Hill Dog Park (benches, water fountain, etc.)
 - Build additional off-leash dog park sites in different parts of the Island
 - Implement education programs about responsible dog ownership
 - Enforce dog leash laws, and scooping poop laws
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