

Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park and Recreation District

Dogs in Parks

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

All across the country communities are working together to create opportunities for dog owners to enjoy public property with their dogs off leash while being respectful of other park users. Your support and participation is vital in our communities ultimate success of a comprehensive off leash program right here on Bainbridge.

With so much change in recent months many in the community have questions about how they can enjoy their parks with their furry friends. Please refer to the list of Frequently Asked Questions below.

1. Can I take my dog to the park?

- a. Yes, Bainbridge Island Park District parks are dog friendly. Dogs are allowed in any of the parks, just remember they must be on leash unless in a designated off leash area.

2. Where can I let my dog off leash in District parks?

- a. Currently the District has two locations for off leash use. Eagledale Park and Strawberry Hill Park.
- b. The Dog Advisory Committee is working with staff to find and create more off leash opportunities so stay tuned for more options in the near future.

3. Why is the leash rule important?

- a. Responsible dog owners demonstrate courtesy and consideration of their friends, neighbors, and fellow residents of Bainbridge Island by leashing their dog. Besides being considerate of others there are many great benefits of the leash rule. Using a leash provides protection of the dog, other dogs, park users, wildlife, and the environment.

4. Why is enforcement necessary?

- a. The Park District is attempting to establish a comprehensive off leash program. Comprehensive plans across the country include education, opportunity, and enforcement. All three are vital to a successful program.
- b. The DAC is working to identify possible locations to increase off leash opportunity and develop educational programs to share the successes and provide dog behavior and off leash etiquette information with park users.

5. How will enforcement be handled and what is the fine?

- a. The Kitsap Humane Society's Animal Control officers will spend time each week patrolling selected sites for animal control violations, including not picking up after your dog, aggressive dogs, or dogs out of control of their owners.
- b. After a 60 day educational campaign officers will exercise their discretion when determining whether to write a ticket. Remember to be polite and comply with the officers at all times.
- c. The fine, set and received by the City of Bainbridge Island, is \$300. The Park District nor Kitsap Humane Society receive any portion of the fine and there are no set quotas to fulfill. The goal of this program is to encourage Responsible Dog Ownership through an educational emphasis enforcement program.

6. How will the sites be chosen for patrols?

- a. High-volume use areas where a large portion of reported incidents have occurred will be patrolled for leash compliance. It is the District's responsibility to keep park users safe and targeting the high use areas will provide the most benefit to all park users.

7. Has the Bainbridge Park District considered alternative solutions for off leash opportunities?

- a. Until recently alternative solutions were not under consideration, however with the recent COBI ordinance language clarifications and approval of an enforcement contract with Kitsap Humane Societies Animal Control Department, the Board of Commissioners has directed the Dog Advisory Committee to research timed use and shared use of District properties.

8. How do I get involved?

- a. In April of 2014 the Board of Commissioners created the Dog Advisory Committee who is working with District staff to create a comprehensive off leash program that began with the planning, design, and construction of the Strawberry Hill Dog Park.
- b. The committee continues to work on off leash education and more opportunities to provide off leash areas for Island residents.
- c. You can also get involved by becoming an off leash steward by contacting the Park District at dan@biparks.org.

9. How can I help make Bainbridge Island's off leash programs successful

- a. Other agency programs have reported mixed results in their communities. The Park District is looking to learn from their experiences and look to implement similar solutions while avoiding the issues that have arose. You are a vital part of making our program a success. By understanding the issues that other

agencies have faced you can help make our program a great success.

- b. The issues that remain in those communities:
 - i. Dog waste issues have increased due to more concentrated use. Developing strong stewardship programs at off leash sites will be vital to our success.
 - ii. Owners continue to have issues fully controlling their dogs. Participating as a responsible dog owner is vital to our success. Being able to interpret when your dog is impacting, or impacted, by others is a vital component to creating a significant program on Bainbridge. Join a Citizen Canine class to learn more, coming in January.

10. With so much park property under District management why has it taken so long to provide more off leash opportunities?

- a. Not all park property is available for off leash use. Many District properties are too heavily used by many different users, have very sensitive wildlife and environmental concerns, are under conservation easements that prefer dogs to be on leash, are wildlife preserves, and many other types of concerns.
- b. Until recent progress has led to ordinance clarification and enforcement capability alternative solutions for off leash use were not possible.

11. Are there any classes available to help with training my dog?

- a. Yes, Kitsap Animal Rescue Education (KARE) offers training courses through the Park District on subjects such as understanding dog language to puppy training courses.
- b. The District offers, in partnership with KARE the “Citizen Canine” educational session where participants can learn about how to interpret dog behavior and off leash etiquette in public. For more information, visit the Park District website at biparks.org.

For further information on how to get involved or to get more answers to your questions contact dan@biparks.org