

**REPORT TO PARKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2019**

SUBJECT Dog Management Policy Framework

ISSUE SUMMARY

A policy framework for Regional Parks is proposed that provides guidelines and a standardized system-wide approach for determining dog management policies at the regional park and trail level.

BACKGROUND

The number of visits to Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Parks has increased from 6.3 million in 2014 to 7.6 million in 2018. Up to 30% of park visitors recreate with their dogs. While this is an enjoyable activity for many park visitors, recreating with dogs can result in conflicts between park users, and potential impacts from dogs on wildlife or the natural environment.

Dogs are regulated within the regional park system by *CRD Parks Regulation Bylaw No. 1, 2018 (Parks Regulation Bylaw)*. This bylaw requires dogs to be under control at all times, which offers the opportunity for a dog to be on-leash or off-leash but always being in clear line of sight of the owner and returning when called. The *Parks Regulation Bylaw* also lists a number of designated beaches where dogs are allowed between September 15 and June 1 each year and some specific designated regional parks where dogs are required to be on-leash, including the Galloping Goose, Lochside and E&N regional trails.

Since 2017, in response to concerns regarding dogs in regional parks, staff have implemented a number of operational initiatives designed to reduce conflicts, including increased signage, expanding the visitor education program, and enhanced data collection and bylaw enforcement. In addition, in recognition that setting dog management policy on a park-by-park level is important to do, but can be challenging, the need for a clear regional parks policy framework to guide how dog management decisions are made was identified.

Accordingly, staff have developed a Dog Management Policy Framework (policy framework) (see Appendix A) to provide a systematic, consistent process for determining dog management policy in individual parks.

The policy framework includes a number of principles, three dog management categories, and a set of considerations. It provides a matrix that identifies baseline dog management categories based on park/trail classification and park zoning (where zones are in place). The matrix is supported by four decision considerations that cover visitor experience, visitor safety, environmental protection and cultural heritage values. An alternative from the baseline dog management category may be considered, depending on the results of a professional assessment of potential impacts and degree of public support.

The policy framework is designed to be utilized during park or trail management planning processes, but can be applied to other types of planning processes, as well.

Implementation of the policy framework is forward-looking. It does not automatically apply retroactively to parks or trails. Over time, the policy framework will be used to bring about consistency and structure to decisions regarding dog management within the regional park system.

The policy framework does not replace the *Parks Regulation Bylaw*, although the bylaw may need to be amended from time to time to reflect new directions as an outcome of the implementation of this policy framework.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Parks & Environment Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Dog Management Policy Framework be approved for use by Regional Parks.

Alternative 2

The Parks & Environment Committee refers the Dog Management Policy Framework back to staff with direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

The policy framework provides a transparent process for identifying the most appropriate dog management approach within regional parks, and the recognition that opportunities for recreating with dogs will be provided in the system and better dog walking experiences are desirable. Through its implementation, the public will be involved in decision-making around dog management through park and trail management planning processes.

Environmental & Climate Implications

The CRD has an obligation to protect cultural and natural values in the regional parks system. The policy framework will give the CRD the tools it needs to establish a good dog management policy to help ensure adequate and ongoing protection of cultural values and environmental values, such as species, habitats and ecosystems within the regional park system.

Financial Implications

There are no direct budget implications associated with the policy framework. Any budget implications will be associated with individual park and trail management plans as they are developed.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Determining a policy framework for management of dogs within Regional Parks is identified as Corporate Priority 6(f) in the 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan.

CONCLUSION

Determining a policy framework for the management of dogs within regional parks is identified as Corporate Priority 6(f) in the 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan. Staff have developed and seek approval for a policy framework based on a system-wide approach that can be used in conjunction with planning processes to determine dog management on a park-by-park basis. The framework is forward-looking and provides a matrix to support decisions that identifies baseline conditions for each type of park or trail with the possibility that a different approach for dog management may be considered based on public input and an assessment of potential impacts. Over time, the policy framework will be used to bring about consistency and structure to decisions regarding dog management within the regional park system.

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks & Environment Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Dog Management Policy Framework be approved for use by Regional Parks.

Submitted by:	Jeff Leahy, RPF, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Dog Management Policy Framework