



The Wag

Summer 2003

ACC Ticket Update

Animal Care and Control (ACC) officers (apparently under pressure from the Rec and Park Dept) have warned people that ticketing of off-leash dogs in city parks could begin July 1st. Capt. Vicky Guldbeck, head of the Field Division of ACC, spoke with *The Wag* to give us the facts about ACC tickets.

- Tickets will cost \$27 each. They will not be progressive (higher amounts for repeat offenses). If you have more than one dog off-leash, you can receive a separate ticket for each dog.
- Off-leash dog tickets, like other citations such as parking tickets, are governed by the City's criminal code. If you choose to contest a ticket, you write on the back that you are contesting it and mail it in. You will then be notified of a court date. After that, it's up to a judge. Just like a parking ticket.
- According to the criminal code, if you are cited for the same infraction three times in one year, your citation CAN be upgraded to a misdemeanor (note: it CAN, not it WILL). No upgrade will occur without the explicit approval of the ACC Director. Guldbeck stressed that she doesn't see this ever happening, except in the most extreme circumstances (like a very aggressive dog repeatedly found off-leash). ACC does not want people to be charged with misdemeanors for having an off-leash dog. If you get two tickets on one day for having two dogs off-leash, that counts as one incident (not two) with regard to a possible upgrades.
- If you don't pay a ticket, Guldbeck assumes the courts will issue a bench warrant, as they can with any other kind of citation. In the future, you may not be able to register your car until you pay any unpaid off-leash dog tickets (as with unpaid parking tickets). But, as of now, they are not connecting off-leash tickets and car registrations.
- Guldbeck stressed that there is virtually no way anyone's dog will be impounded because of an off-leash ticket, except in cases of extreme aggression by the dog or abuse of the dog by its owner. Nobody will go to jail over off-leash dogs. ACC is caught in the middle of a contentious issue and they're trying to be responsive to both sides. As she put it, they won't go to great lengths to make either side in the off-leash debate happy.

The threat of tickets is intimidating. But if you let it scare you out of your neighborhood park, then the anti-dog zealots will have won. Let SFDOG know if you get or if you see someone else get a ticket. Tell us the park, time of day, circumstances (kids in the park, dogs barking or digging), breed of dog, etc. We need your reports so we can compile accurate statistics about off-leash-dog tickets if they actually begin enforcement.



Stella explores the world of Alamo Square. ©2003, Matt Magaña, All rights reserved. rogue386@speakeasy.net

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City Update

By Sally Stephens

The dog policy that the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department adopted in May 2002 is now firmly in place. This policy requires dogs to be on-leash except when in an officially designated dog play areas (DPA). The current DPAs are in the following parks:

- Alta Plaza Park
- Bernal Heights
- Buena Vista Park
- Corona Heights Park
- Dolores Park
- Douglass Playground
- Eureka Valley Park
- Golden Gate Park (four DPAs)
- Lafayette Park
- Lake Merced
- McKinley Square
- McLaren Park
- Mountain Lake Park
- Potrero Hill Mini-Park
- St. Mary's Park
- Stern Grove
- Upper Noe Park

Several years ago, SFDOG published a “report card” on the state of the official dog play areas. Only four of the 17 then in place rated a grade of “C” or better (one “A-,” the rest were “C”s), nine had a grade of “D,” and three were outright failures. (You can download a copy of the report card from the SFDOG website: www.sfdog.org.) Clearly, these areas are neither adequate nor even especially desirable for off-leash recreation.

We plan to update the report card, taking into account any changes that have occurred over the last few years. If you would like to help “grade” the DPAs, please contact us by calling 415-339-7461 or e-mail us at info@sfdog.org.

Creating New Dog Play Areas

The official dog policy contains a procedure whereby new dog play areas can be established. Here's how it's supposed to work:

- Neighborhood meetings, organized by Rec and Park, make a recommendation.
- The Dog Advisory Committee (DAC), composed of representatives of organizations (including SFDOG) with a stake in dogs and parks, makes a recommendation.
- The Planning Subcommittee of the Rec and Park Commission makes a recommendation.
- The full Rec and Park Commission decides whether a park gets a new DPA.

Alamo Square

The first park to go through this process, Alamo Square, highlights the problems with the procedure. At each step of the way, votes were overwhelmingly (at least 2:1) in favor of making the entire western half of Alamo Square an off-leash area (known as Option 3). Yet, at each successive step, Rec and Park recommended a much smaller area than that of Option 3. Rec and Park bureaucrats apparently decided what they wanted, then refused to acknowledge anything that disagreed with their preconceived idea.

D5DOG (www.d5fog.org), whose members use Alamo Square with their dogs, spearheaded the movement to get an official DPA in Alamo Square. They collected signatures of support in favor of Option 3 from close to 700 park users, neighbors, business owners (over 100 of these alone), local fire stations, recovery houses, grammar school, convalescent hospital, and a children's center in the area surrounding Alamo Square. D5DOG feels that gathering support from the entire spectrum of neighbors and park users was an important part of their campaign.

Alamo Square finally came before the full Rec and Park Commission on June 19th. From what we understand, just prior to the Commission meeting, they realized they had not filed a Negative Declaration for Alamo Square. This form states that there is no significant environmental impact caused by the proposed change in park usage. Apparently the form is standard and has to be completed for every decision made by the Commission. They could not vote on the Alamo Square DPA until the Negative Declaration is filed.

However, they did hear public comment. After allowing opponents of the DPA to speak, Commission Chair John (continued on next page – not insert)



Dogs enjoying Alamo Square. The brown grass on the western half of the park is not caused primarily by dogs, as those opposed to off-leash dogs would have you believe. Sprinklers on this side of the park have been broken for 3 months. Photo ©2003, Matt Magaña, All rights reserved. rogue386@speakeasy.net

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W. Murray hinted that the Commission favored making most, if not all, of Alamo Square's western side off-leash. He then asked if those in favor of the DPA still wanted to speak. The people who had come insisted on being heard (despite Murray's rather obvious annoyance). Once again, the public comment was overwhelmingly in support of Option 3.

The primary concern expressed by the Commissioners was how people who are afraid of dogs could access Alamo Square if the entire western half is off-leash. Some suggested keeping a small part of the northwest corner of Alamo Square on-leash. Then, people afraid of dogs coming to the park from the western side could enter the park at that corner, rather than being "forced" to walk a block along the sidewalk before getting to the on-leash half. It's not clear whether the Commission will support Option 3 or this modified version of it.

SFDOG applauds the efforts of D5DOG, for their pioneering efforts to create an official Dog Play Area in Alamo Square, and for their infinite patience in dealing with every obstacle Rec and Park threw at them. If you would like more information about D5DOG's campaign for an official DPA, check out their website (www.d5dog.org) or email kasie@d5dog.org.

Status of New Dog Play Areas

Alamo Square – On hold awaiting Rec and Park Commission filing Negative Declaration. Decision will be announced at full Commission meeting on Thursday, July 17, 2 pm, City Hall Room 416.

Crocker-Amazon – On hold awaiting Rec and Park Commission decision at the full Commission meeting on July 17.



Louie's life is good when he plays off-leash in Alamo Square. Photo ©2003, Matt Magaña, All rights reserved. rogue386@speakeasy.net

Douglass Playground – Passed Planning Subcommittee of Rec and Park Commission. Will go to the full Commission at their meeting on July 17.

Upper Noe Recreation Center – Sent back to drawing board from Planning Subcommittee of Rec and Park Commission (SFDOG supports this move, as the options considered for a DPA at this park were not acceptable).

Jefferson Square Park – Passed Dog Advisory Committee. Will be discussed at next meeting of Planning Subcommittee of Rec and Park Commission (exact date not available at press time).

Lafayette Park – Will be considered at Sept. meeting of Dog Advisory Committee (exact date not available at press time).

Eureka/Collingwood Park – Will be considered at Sept. meeting of Dog Advisory Committee.

As you can see, fourteen months after Rec and Park implemented its dog policy, no new Dog Play Areas have been added (although three – Alamo Square, Crocker-Amazon, and Douglass Playground – are close). The process is slow, with at most two parks considered each month at each stage in the process.

In addition, notification of meetings at all stages has been poor. Rec and Park often announces meeting locations and times less than 72 hours before the meeting is supposed to occur. Many people don't receive notices from Rec and Park in the mail until after the meeting has already taken place.

Finally, the process has come to resemble trench warfare, with anti-dog zealots fighting every step of the way. We need off-leash proponents to appear at every meeting at all stages in the process to keep the pressure on Rec and Park to increase official off-leash areas in our parks. If you show up to support someone else's park, they'll show up to support you when your park comes up. SFDOG will publish meeting dates and times on our website when we get that information.

Can we e-mail you the next Wag?

SFDOG would like to send the next issue of WAG to members via e-mail whenever possible. It will save us postage and reduce paper usage. Please let us know your current e-mail address (send it to membership@sfdog.org) if you want to receive WAG via e-mail. SFDOG does not share e-mail addresses with any commercial entities. If you do not have e-mail, we will continue to snail mail you the newsletter.

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Status of Yee-Leno Ordinance

Last year, then-Supervisors Leland Yee and Mark Leno crafted an ordinance, with SFDOG's help, that would essentially overturn Rec and Park's dog policy. Under the Yee-Leno Ordinance, dogs would be allowed off-leash in parks (with some exceptions) as long as they were under voice control. Off-leash recreation would be the default condition in parks, unlike the Rec and Park policy's default requiring dogs to be on-leash. Park neighbors and users could petition to restrict dogs to on-leash in their park, but only if they actively pursued that option.

Opponents of the Yee-Leno ordinance succeeded in sending it to the San Francisco City Planning Department. The Planning Department ruled that the ordinance required an Environmental Impact Review (EIR), since they say it represents a radical change in the existing use of the parks. Since there is no money available to fund such a Review, the ordinance has languished in legal limbo.

SFDOG continues to insist that no EIR is required, since the Yee-Leno ordinance merely legalizes the existing established use of the parks – dogs have been playing off-leash in city parks for decades. In fact, we argue, the Rec and Park Dept's dog policy should have been required to obtain an Environmental Impact Review before it was implemented (it wasn't) since it does represent a "radical change" in the existing use of the parks. For example, what will be the impact on air quality of all those dog owners driving their dogs across town to the nearest official DPA, or the impact on a park when a concentration of dogs and guardians must gather in a small area rather than scattered throughout the park?

Unfortunately for the ordinance, both Yee and Leno were elected to the State Assembly. Supervisor Tony Hall initially offered to "carry" their ordinance forward, but then reneged on his commitment. At this point, no Supervisor has shown a willingness to take the lead on this issue and the ordinance is stuck in the Planning Department. It appears that dog owners and guardians may have to wait until next year, when there is a new mayor, to pursue the ordinance further.

Are your dues due?

There is a date on your WAG address label, following your name. That shows when you last paid dues to SFDOG. If this date is *earlier than August 2002*, you owe membership dues for SFDOG. Please send a check for your \$10 annual dues, made out to SFDOG (no cash please) to: SFDOG, P.O. Box 31071, San Francisco, CA 94131. Thank you!

Have you changed your address?

Go to www.sfdog.org, click on "Renew your membership" link and choose "Change my Info" from the drop-down menu. Insert the changed or added information and click "Submit." If you're not online, send any changes to SFDOG, P.O. Box 31071, San Francisco, CA 94131.

San Francisco Dog Owners Group
P.O. Box 31071
San Francisco, CA 94131

Address Correction Requested

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GGNRA Update

By Sally Stephens

The decision whether or not to begin the formal rulemaking process to address off-leash recreation in the GGNRA is now in the hands of National Park Service (NPS) Director Frances P. Mainella.

When her decision is announced, it will be the culmination of the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) process begun in January 2002. Public comments, a public opinion telephone survey of people in the four counties surrounding the GGNRA, and recommendations from local GGNRA officials have all been forwarded to Mainella.

Over the last few months, while we quietly waited for Mainella's decision, the Park Service has received repeated complaints of negative interactions with dogs on the beaches of the GGNRA. The NPS is not receiving any positive letters from dog advocates to balance the negative letters. We have heard that the complaints are creating an adverse climate for any decision in our favor. Our concern is that the NPS may attempt to reach a perceived compromise by deciding to create separate, segregated areas for off-leash dogs. It has been suggested to us that compensating letters will be well received if they recount favorable experiences with dogs on the beach.

So brush off that computer, typewriter, or good old-fashioned pen and paper, and send letters to Mainella covering at least one of the following points:

- Recount a specific favorable experience involving off-leash dog recreational use of the GGNRA. For example, let them know that you saw a family having a picnic on the beach while their kids played fetch with their dog. Don't make up a story, but let the NPS know that off-leash dog walking generally works out without confrontations.
- Explain that fenced-off, segregated areas simply do not work well in practice, and defeat the opportunity for true open-space recreational use such as taking a long walk on the beach. Segregated areas defeat the sense of community or shared use that is vital to the GGNRA.
- Comment that the simplest solution would be to simply go back to the long-standing Pet Policy that had worked so well in the past. This policy, arrived at following a series of public hearings in 1979, was the product of careful analysis and the balancing of all factors in the issue of off-leash recreation.

We thank all of you who sent your comments to the NPS in the earlier stages of the ANPR process. We need to call on you once again if we are to return off-leash recreation to its traditional, long-established place in the GGNRA. We must

counter the negative comments being sent to the NPS or all our work on the ANPR will have been in vain.

Please send your letter to Mainella, and, for further impact, send copies to Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, and GGNRA Superintendent Brian O'Neill. Also send a copy (blind copy if you send an e-mail) to SFDOG. Note that e-mails to Mainella may not be read. You can e-mail your letter to us at SFDOG and we will fax it to her.

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On the beach. Photo courtesy SFDOG Photo Project, 2002

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Events Calendar

Thursday, July 17

Rec and Park Commission meeting, 2 pm, City Hall, Room 416. Agenda includes new Dog Play Areas at Upper Douglass, Crocker Amazon, and Alamo Square.

Saturday, July 19

Canine Wine and Dine, 6:30 pm -10 pm, Presidio Officer's Club, San Francisco. Benefit for Second Chance Rescue. For more information call 415-721-1721 or e-mail info@secondchancerescue.com

Sunday, July 20

Ancient and Unusual Dogs from Around the World: Africa, Europe, North and South America, 11 am - 5 pm, Exploratorium, Palace of Fine Arts, Skylight area. Meet unusual dogs from all over the world. The Bay Team Agility Club will run an agility course at noon, 2pm, 4pm.

Tuesday, July 22

Dog Advisory Committee meeting, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Hall of Flowers, 9th Ave and Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park. No new DPAs will be discussed. Agenda will focus on "housekeeping" of the committee, e.g., the Committee's lack of by-laws, problems with public notification of meetings, etc.

Tuesday, August 12

Dog Advisory Committee meeting to discuss professional dog walkers. Public comment will be accepted at the meeting. Details to be announced later.

Saturday, August 23

Canine Good Citizen tests in Alamo Square. Co-sponsored by D5DOG, the SPCA, and ACC. SF dog licenses will be available the day of the test. D5DOG is also sponsoring five informal practice sessions for the test on Sundays

starting on July 20th, from 10 am - 11 am. For more information, e-mail kasie@d5dog.org or www.d5dog.org.

Sunday, August 24

9th Annual Mutt Strut Dog Walk-a-Thon. 9 am - 1 pm, Coyote Point Park, San Mateo. Benefit for Peninsula Humane Society/SPCA. The only day of the year dogs are allowed at Coyote Point.

Sunday, September 7

Canine Good Citizen tests in Dolores Park. Co-sponsored by Dolores Park Dogs (DPD). Besides the CGC test, DPD will offer SF dog licenses and the SF Veterinary Medicine Association will hold one of their Rabies vaccine clinic. For more information, e-mail dogs@doloresparkdogs.org

Monday, September 8

SFDOG General Meeting. 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm Fort Mason, Room C-210. Details of the program to be announced.

Sunday, September 14

Doggone Fun Run, 9 am -1 pm, Lindley Meadow, Golden Gate Park. Fundraiser for PAWS and Pets Unlimited. SFDOG will have a booth at the event.

Sunday, October 5

Castro Street Fair, 11 am - 6 pm, San Francisco. SFDOG will share a booth at the fair with Dolores Park Dogs.

Saturday, October 11

SFDOG Picnic in Golden Gate Park. Details to be announced.

Sunday, October 26

ACC Pet Pride Day, Sharon Meadows, Golden Gate Park. Details to be announced.

See our website: www.sfdog.org/features/events.htm for information about on-going park clean-ups.

Volunteers Needed

Are you sick of the constant attacks on off-leash recreation? Do you want to help make San Francisco a dog-friendly city once again? SFDOG needs people to help in the following areas:

- Attend meetings of the neighborhood association where you live (time: at most one night a month).
- Attend public meetings held by the Captain at your local police precinct (time: at most one night a month).

NOTE: Anti-dog zealots attend these meetings and often misrepresent the conditions at local parks. SFDOG needs to know what is said about dogs (if anything) at these meetings. Plus, it's a nice way to get to know the people in your neighborhood. SFDOG can tell you when and where the meetings are held.

- Keep SFDOG informed of happenings at the parks you and your dog frequent, especially if you get or see someone else get an off-leash-dog ticket (time: will vary, depending on circumstances).
- Help administer Canine Good Citizen tests sponsored by SFDOG. The tests require certified examiners, but they also need people to help coordinate the tests (time: at most one afternoon a month).
- Help SFDOG "grade" all the dog play areas in the city (time: at most half a day here and there).
- Help SFDOG and the SPCA with programs that teach kids and others about dogs (time: up to you).

If you can help in any of these areas, or have additional ideas for programs, please contact SFDOG at info@sfdog.org or call 415-339-7461. We'll get back to you with details about how you can help.