

OFF LEASH DOG AREAS MASTER PLAN

June 30, 2018

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Executive Summary

Concept

The Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan assesses the current state of off-leash dog areas within the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation system using information gathered from internal staff, stakeholder groups, an online survey, and public engagement meetings to plan for the future of off-leash dog areas. The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department believes that by looking at the current state of off-leash dog areas and using the input from current users the parks department can create a baseline design for all of the off-leash dog areas to follow and standardize the minimum requirements of off-leash dog areas in parks under the jurisdiction of Parks & Recreation.

After meeting with stakeholders and conducting public engagement meetings throughout the county it is clear that there is a passionate support group for off-leash dog areas. It is also evident that there is room for improvement to site amenities, park rules, and the maintenance and operations of off-leash dog areas within the Ramsey County parks system.

Implementation

No specific timing has been identified for the implementation of the Off-Leash Dog Areas Master Plan within the Ramsey County parks system. Construction of upgraded site amenities and features could be built in a series of phases. Phasing would most likely begin with upgrading current sites and follow with the possible expansion of more off-leash dog areas.

Off-Leash Dog Areas Community Outreach and Equity Plan

As Parks & Recreation moves forward with the development of the Off-leash Dog Areas Master plan, the department will invest in developing programs and partnerships to provide better access to the off-leash areas for all Ramsey County residents. This will include efforts to increase the diversity of off-leash area users.

Maintaining off-leash dog areas that are free and open to the public is one way that Parks & Recreation offers opportunity for everyone. Programs should be developed in the future to encourage people of different ethnic groups to enjoy the off-leash areas, meet, and socialize. Parks & Recreation could organize “open house” days where people are invited into the off-leash areas for educational programming teaching people about the rules and etiquette for off-leash dog areas, and introducing them to the park with the help of volunteers. In marketing such a program, the county can reach out to various racial groups who have previously not felt comfortable coming to off-leash areas.

Planning Framework

Overview

The purpose of the Off-leash Dog Areas Master Plan is to assess the current state of Ramsey County off-leash dog areas and plan for future aspects of development. This would include the redevelopment of existing infrastructure as well as any new park that may be developed. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation will also be assessing the state of the volunteer program along with how maintenance is handled within the off-leash dog areas and laying out a plan for the future of the volunteer program as well as maintenance and operations.

Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space System

Regional Parks and trails are developed in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area to preserve green space for wildlife habitat and provide a wide range of natural resource related recreational opportunities such as walking and hiking. Many people enjoy these activities and desire the ability to exercise their dogs off-leash and for this reason areas have been set aside for patrons to enjoy natural spaces with their pets. Established in 1974 the Regional Parks and Open Space System is managed by the Metropolitan Council in partnership with cities, counties, and special park districts. The Metropolitan Council supports the regional system with planning, funding, and advocacy. Each implementing agency, such as Ramsey County, is responsible for the development of a master plan for its regional park and open space system.

Ramsey County currently operates off-leash dog areas within Battle Creek Regional Park, Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park, the Rice Creek North Regional Trail Corridor, and Woodview Open Space which are a part of the regional parks and open space system overseen by the Metropolitan Council.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation

Ramsey County is the most densely populated county in the State of Minnesota and the parks and open spaces held by Ramsey County Parks & Recreation represent the largest undeveloped land area in the county at nearly 8,000 acres. Within the system there are six regional parks, six regional trails, nine county parks, nine protected open spaces, five golf courses and numerous recreation facilities. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation works in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council, the National Park Service, Saint Paul Regional Water Services, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), its municipalities, and other government units to advance park, recreation, and leisure opportunities for all Ramsey County residents.

The vision of Ramsey County is "A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive," and the mission within the county is "A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life." The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department follows this mission by preserving, developing, maintaining, and managing a system of parks, open space, trail corridors, and special use areas as well as providing year round recreational programs, services, and facilities which are responsive to changing needs, compatible with the resource base, and most effectively provided at the county level.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation supports the county vision and mission through:

- **Trail Services:** Parks & Recreation coordinates the establishment of a Ramsey County-wide system trails plan that connects significant natural and cultural features and implement those segments of county or regional significance that are located on Ramsey County Park and Open Space land.

- **Open Space Preservation:** Parks & Recreation acquires, protects, and manages unique, fragile, and aesthetically attractive natural resources that contribute positively to the urban landscape, and perform critical natural functions.
- **Natural Interpretation:** Parks & Recreation promotes positive environmental values through an increased awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of natural resources and natural processes.
- **Outdoor Recreation Programming:** Parks & Recreation sponsors or co-sponsors recreation programs that encourage development of resource oriented outdoor recreation skills and promote wellness. We also organize special events that introduce people to recreation opportunities available within the system.
- **Special Recreation Services:** Parks & Recreation provides areas, facilities, and programs of significance countywide to meet specialized indoor and outdoor recreation needs of Ramsey County residents.
- **Park Services:** Parks & Recreation provides diverse and accessible areas and facilities primarily for self-directed Ramsey County oriented outdoor recreation that complements the natural features of each site.
- **Equitable Use:** Parks & Recreation is working to strengthen equitable use of regional parks and trails, county parks, open spaces, along with other recreation facilities across all ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, national origins, and abilities.

History

Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets (ROMP) first approached the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation Commission at a meeting on October 8, 1996 to request the establishment of one or more designated off-leash dog areas, citing several successful programs throughout the United States. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation staff at the time recommended the establishment of two off-leash dog areas based upon the expressed demand and the fact that owners were illegally allowing dogs off-leash throughout the Ramsey County parks system. Current ordinance allowed for the creation of off-leash areas.

After review of local and national responses to requests for off-leash dog areas the Parks & Recreation Commission endorsed a staff proposal on January 11, 1997 to establish two off-leash areas for a pilot program operating within the Ramsey County parks system beginning on June 27, 1997 and running through December 31, 1998.

Upon the completion of the pilot program the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department determined that the off-leash dog areas were successful and moved towards developing an administrative policy that would

- Identify the characteristics, amenities, and operation of Ramsey County off-leash areas.
- Define the number and general geographical location of the site(s) in the Ramsey County park system.
- Establish a process for reviewing and evaluating sites.

The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department passed a policy to govern the general rules, guidelines, site characteristics, support facilities, disabled access, use policies, and the review, evaluation and site selection of off-leash dog areas on April 13, 1999. This policy will be used in the evaluation and future direction of off-leash dog areas as set forth in this master plan. This policy can be found in Appendix A , "Off-leash Dog Area History."

Beginning on March 14, 2000 the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department began implementing the off-leash dog areas program as adopted by policy on April 13, 1999. Four sites were chosen by the Parks & Recreation Commission Liaison and department representatives

- Battle Creek Regional Park (Part of Pilot Program)
- Woodview Open Space (New Site)
- Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park (New Site)
- Rice Creek North Regional Trail Corridor (Part of Pilot Program)

Public Engagement Meetings:

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation held three public engagement events in which a short presentation was made followed by a group exercise to help develop an ideal dog park. The presentation material can be found in Appendix B. The main information that Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department hoped to gather was what the public saw as most important in a dog park and how those amenities or site features should be designed in the future. This would aid the county in both standardizing as much as possible the current off-leash dog areas, as well as inform the design of any future off-leash dog area areas.

The public engagement meetings were held on the following dates:

- Monday September 11 at Tamarack Nature Center
- Thursday September 21 at the Battle Creek Recreation Center
- Wednesday October 4 at the New Brighton Community Center

Public engagement meetings started with a short presentation approximately ten minutes long aimed at focusing attention on dog parks across the system and not just the park patrons felt the most attached to. The purpose was to focus the group not on the park that meant the most to them but rather on what makes an off-leash dog area good in their opinion. Parks & Recreation staff asked them what amenities were important, what site features they sought out and what would make a park stand out as a destination worth going to. After the presentation, the attendees were split into groups for a design charrette to both write down as well as sketch out an idealized dog park. All the meetings carried some common themes as shown in the breakdown below.

Tamarack Nature Center, Monday September 11th, 2017

The meeting at Tamarack Nature Center was the first of the three meetings to be held and was the only meeting that began without an introductory presentation. It was hard to get the attendees to talk about what would make a better dog park in general but staff did learn what could be altered at Otter Lake to make that site better. As a result the format of the meetings was changed to include the presentation. Comments from the public engagement meeting at Tamarack Nature Center can be found in appendix C. The main points from this meeting were

- The department needs a better maintenance agreement between the county and Volunteers/Guardians to help take care of day to day maintenance of the park
- Would like wood chips available to be spread by volunteers and/or county
- Would like to be able to fence off wetland areas or fill in the wetland
- Is it possible to add additional fencing so that the volunteers could rotate areas of use

- Patrons would like an easier way to contact the county about periodic maintenance as well as when/if there is a problem patron in the park.

Comments gathered from this meeting can be found in Appendix D.

Battle Creek Community Center, Thursday September 21, 2017

The public engagement meeting at the Battle Creek Community Center began with a short presentation after which we broke into groups for a charrette exercise. In the group exercise participants were asked to draw out, list or in any way they could think to relate information to Ramsey County representatives what made a great dog park. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation is looking to not only improve the current state of its existing off-leash dog areas but also gather information on the creation of an ideal off-leash area if the opportunity to create one arose. All comments and charrette exercise documents can be found in Appendix D. The main points take from this meeting were:

- The off-leash dog area at Battle Creek is generally highly regarded as one of the best in the metropolitan area and is greatly appreciated by patrons for its size, and varying environments among a multitude of other reasons.
- Users of the park would like to see some of the tables in large open areas go away. People tend to congregate and socialize while losing track of what their dog is doing, which is against park rules, this causes issues such as dog fights. These could be replaced with smaller benches along trails and away from open areas providing the seating opportunity without the ability for large groups of people to congregate.
- Security of the parking lots is a concern, and patrons would like a camera or other security measure implemented.
- Overall maintenance is a concern and users would like an established rule or plan for how they interact with the county and how Parks & Recreation handles dog parks.
- There was also an expressed interest in some type of licensing fee or other donation method to use the dog park if those funds went directly into off-leash dog area maintenance and development.

New Brighton Community Center, Wednesday October 4th

The public engagement meeting at the New Brighton Community Center followed the same format as the meeting at the Battle Creek Community Center. The meeting began with the presentation on dog parks, participants were broken into groups, and the group reconvened for a question and answer session. Comments and charrette drawings can be found in appendix E. The major take aways from this meeting included:

- Rice Creek off-leash dog area is most likely the best maintained off-leash area in our system, a reflection of the volunteer based and correctly sized park.
- Shade is needed on site
- Overall satisfaction is extremely high at this off-leash area

Public Survey

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department representatives met with stakeholders, posted an online public survey, and held community engagement meetings to gather information and input for the creation of the Off-Leash Dog Areas Master Plan. Department representatives first met with various guardians and volunteers of established off-leash areas to gather information before formulating the online survey which can be seen in its entirety in Appendix B. After completing the online survey Ramsey County Parks & Recreation also held a series of three public engagement meetings aimed at gathering information on what park users would ideally like to see in an off-leash dog area.

Public Survey

The online survey that was conducted by the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department provided a lot of valuable information and with over 1,000 respondents the department feels confident in its findings moving forward with the Off-Leash Dog Areas Master Plan.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation asked many questions of its off-leash dog area user base as a part of the online survey gathering insight into that group of park users. Overall the satisfaction level with county off-leash dog areas was good with most respondents indicating that off-leash areas either meet current needs or are in outstanding condition. Through the survey staff has learned a lot about the dogs that are in off-leash areas as well, most dogs do not have any certified skill set, are licensed within their municipality at 62 percent, and are a diverse mix of species with the sporting group of dogs being most popular. When given a choice it was indicated that all other things being equal most people would prefer to exercise their dogs off-leash, showing that Parks & Recreation is providing a valuable resource to the community through its off-leash areas.

Ramsey County off-leash dog areas currently have very few amenities beyond the natural settings provided for them. All but one, Woodview off-leash area, are fully fenced, have benches or tables, paths, and parking lots. Two of our off-leash areas have separate small and large dog enclosures, which is a feature that ranks high on a lot of lists for off-leash area amenities. Rice Creek off-leash area is the only county facility that does not provide for shade through a natural means at this time. These are important to note as most of our off-leash areas have a lot of good qualities there are still areas that each could improve upon. The top features/amenities as voted in our online survey are as follows:

1. Size of Off-leash Dog Area
2. Paths
3. Shade Trees or Shade Structure
4. Dog Drinking Fountain or Hose Bib
5. Natural Water/Water Play Areas
6. Restrooms
7. Benches
8. Separate Small and Large Dog Areas
9. Location Within Walking Distance
10. People Drinking Fountain
11. Obstacle or Agility Course

A common theme of most concern at our off-leash dog areas is trash and animal waste pick up and maintenance. Currently Ramsey County relies heavily on volunteers to monitor and maintain trash and waste pick up within off-leash area boundaries. This is performed differently at each park depending on number of volunteers and time commitment to each park. Battle Creek is by far the largest off-leash area in the county requiring more effort than most, it also has the most dedicated following of volunteers in the county. At the Battle Creek off-leash dog area volunteers have placed trash receptacles within the boundaries and collect them for waste management. The

other off-leash areas in our system have trash receptacles placed at entrances and users are required to bring animal waste and trash back out of the park individually. There is a rule in place stating that owners are responsible for picking up after themselves and their dog, the county will look at ways to make this easier for park users to accomplish. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation is also looking at ways to change or expand the stewardship/volunteer program as only 4.68 percent of respondents said they currently participate. With the large numbers of people and dogs that use our off-leash areas this number is most likely too small to accomplish all of the tasks needed to keep up off-leash areas in the size that the county has provided.

Current policy provides for four off-leash dog areas within the county park system, users are split roughly in half as to whether this number is enough or not. County policy also sets as a goal that residents be able to drive 20 minutes or less to any county run off-leash area. The survey results also indicate that the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation has met this goal as a vast majority of people drive 15 minutes or less to get to an off-leash area. The county also asked how far people would be willing to drive to get to an off-leash area and 74.74 percent of respondents indicated that they would drive up to 15 minutes.

Some important statistics that were gathered from the survey include:

- 91.8% of dogs in county off-leash dog areas do not have any certified skills or training
- 61.92% of dogs are licensed within their municipality
- 77.81% of respondents exercise their dog(s) off-leash in a dog park
- 75.2% of respondents prefer to exercise their dog(s) off-leash
- 74.78% of respondents currently use a Ramsey County off-leash dog area
- 4.68% of respondents currently participate in the volunteer/stewardship program
- 74.74% of respondents are willing to drive 15 minutes to reach an off-leash dog area

Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Area

- Of the respondents who use the Battle Creek off-leash dog area 9.5 percent visit daily, 31 percent visit weekly, and 59.5 percent visit the park monthly
- Among the most commented favorite part of Battle Creek off-leash dog area were the parks large size, variety of landscapes and topography, the vast trail system, access to water, and the fact that there are mature trees providing shade opportunities.
- Respondents were asked to rate their concerns for security of personal property, safety for themselves and their pet(s), site improvements, length of volunteer commitment to the park, trash and animal waste pickup and rules and regulations of the park. For these categories the level of concern was low at the Battle Creek off-leash dog area.
- Respondents felt that the top three items that needed to be addressed at the Battle Creek Off-leash dog area were security of personal property, site improvements, and safety for patrons and their pets.
- The clear majority of patrons drive to the Battle Creek off-leash dog area at 97.98 percent, and most people (58.69 percent) drive 15 minutes or less.

Otter Lake Off-Leash Dog Area

- Of the respondents who use the Otter Lake Off-leash dog area 12 percent visit daily, 35 percent visit weekly, and 53 percent visit the park monthly
- Among the most commented favorite part of the Otter Lake off-leash dog area were the parks variety of landscapes, separate small and large dog areas, mature trees and the shade they provide, proximity of the park to their home, trails, and the parks size. Many respondents also commented that they enjoyed being able to let their dog off-leash at the boat launch, which is against park rules and indicates that there is a need for better signage or education about park rules.
- Respondents were asked to rate their concerns for security of personal property, safety for themselves and their pet(s), site improvements, length of volunteer commitment to the park, trash and animal waste pickup, and rules and regulations of the park. For these categories the level of concern was low at the Otter Lake off-leash dog area.
- Respondents felt that the top three items that needed to be addressed at the Otter Lake off-leash dog area were site improvements, trash and animal waste pick-up, and safety concerns.
- The clear majority of patrons drive to Otter Lake Off-leash dog area at 98.61 percent , and most people (68.66 percent) drive 15 minutes or less.

Rice Creek Off-Leash Dog Area

- Of the respondents who use the Rice Creek off-leash dog area 10.5 percent visit Daily, 36 percent visit weekly, and 53.5 percent visit the park monthly
- Among the most commented favorite part of the Rice Creek off-leash dog area were the parks proximity to home, size, the park is very open and provides great vision of dogs, and the park is close to the Rice Creek Trail system so it is very accessible.
- Respondents were asked to rate their concerns for security of personal property, safety for themselves and their pet(s), site improvements, length of volunteer commitment to the park, trash and animal waste pickup, and rules and regulations of the park. For these categories the level of concern was low at the Rice Creek off-leash dog area.
- Respondents felt that the top three items which needed to be addressed at the Rice Creek off-leash dog area were site improvements, trash and animal waste pick-up, and safety concerns.
- The clear majority of patrons drive to Rice Creek Off-leash dog area at 96.79 percent, and most people (67.89 percent) drive 15 minutes or less.

Woodview Open Space Off-Leash Dog Area

- Of the respondents who use the Woodview off-leash dog area 6 percent visit Daily, 21.5 percent visit weekly, and 72.5 percent visit the park monthly
- Among the most commented favorite part of the Woodview lake off-leash dog area were the parks proximity

to home, and the separate small and large dog areas

- Respondents were asked to rate their concerns for security of personal property, safety for themselves and their pet(s), site improvements, length of volunteer commitment to the park, trash and animal waste pickup, and rules and regulations of the park. All categories received a low concern rating other than site improvements which respondents saw as a medium concern.
- Respondents felt that the top three items that needed to be addressed at the Woodview off-leash dog area were site improvements, safety concerns, and trash and animal waste pick-up.
- The clear majority of patrons drive to Woodview off-leash dog area at 96.15 percent, and most people (77.19 percent) drive 15 minutes or less.

The public survey shows that people visit Ramsey County off-leash dog areas for many reasons but the top three are that they enjoy the designated open exercise area, like the parks environmental features, and they like the other dogs and people that use the park. A full copy of the Off-leash Dog Area Survey can be found on our website at: <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Parks%20and%20Recreation/OLDA%20Survey.pdf>

Current Dog Park Rules & Department Policy

The current department administrative policy was passed on April 13, 1999 after the pilot program had been deemed a success.

Current Policy:

The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department will endeavor to provide off-leash dog areas that serve multiple communities within the county. Off-leash dog areas will be separate from any current or planned recreational areas.

The following additional general guidelines will apply:

- Attempts will be made to locate an off-leash area within a twenty minute drive of any residence in the county. However, it is recognized that Ramsey County does not own parkland in the south and west portions of the city of Saint Paul. Accordingly, the city of Saint Paul will be encouraged to provide these regional facilities.
- County off-leash areas will be geographically located to compliment "close to home" municipal areas.
- Sites will be designated in areas that will have minimal impact to significant natural resources. Proposed sites will be evaluated by the county's Natural Resource Specialist for potential impact.
- Up to four sites will be established in the Ramsey County Park System.
- Sites must be consistent with municipal zoning and/or park master plans.

Size

Sites will be approximately ten acres, including buffer zones.

Buffer Zones

Where feasible, sites will include a 100' buffer zone around their perimeter to avoid conflict with other park users or adjacent land uses. Improvements within the buffer zone will be limited to perpendicular access trails. Off-leash dogs will be allowed in the buffer zone at the discretion of their owners.

Perimeter Markings

The boundary of each site will be delineated with carsonite type markings located at 100' intervals around the perimeter. Each carsonite marking will have a decal applied to both sides indicating the boundary of an off-leash dog area.

Fencing

Where a 100' buffer zone is feasible, fencing will not be installed. However, if a 100' buffer zone is not feasible due to specific site characteristics or proximity to other recreational use areas, a fence will be considered, subject to funding availability.

Signage

Rules signs will be posted at each entrance to the off-leash dog area. Directional signs may be placed at parking areas or trail entrances where necessary to direct users to the off-leash areas.

Water Access for Dog Use

Access to water for dog use will be a high priority in selecting off-leash sites. Where suitable water resources do not exist within an off-leash site, auxiliary water access sites may be considered in areas adjacent to off-leash sites. Water access for dogs at other park use areas (Such as swimming areas, boat access sites, etc.) will not be permitted.

Parking

A minimum of ten vehicular parking spaces will be provided at each off-leash area. In areas where multiple activities exist (such as trail use), additional parking will be provided where feasible.

Drinking Water (Potable)

Potable water will not be provided for the off-leash sites, unless currently provided.

Restroom Facilities

Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to off-leash areas. In most cases, these will be portable facilities.

Trash Receptacles

Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional trash receptacles may be placed in parking areas or where deemed necessary.

Picnic Tables/Benches

Picnic tables and/or benches will be provided in each off-leash area.

Disabled Access

Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. At least one site within the system will include an accessible trail from the parking lot to the interior of the site. At other sites where access is limited, the county will work with users to improve accessibility.

Use Policies:

The following use policies will apply:

- Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated
- Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off-leash area and in transition corridors.
- Owners must be in verbal control of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, biting, fighting or excessive barking.
- Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs
- Owners must have a visible leash at all times
- Owners must clean up and dispose of feces
- Dogs in heat are not allowed
- Owners must comply with all other park rules and regulations

Fees will not be charged for the use of the off-leash areas.

Review, Evaluation, and Site Selection

The implementation of this administrative policy will begin a process for reviewing, evaluating, and selecting sites. This Process will involve five steps:

1. County staff will identify candidate sites that meet the criteria outlined in this policy.
2. A planning team comprised of four off-leash dog area users and county staff will review candidate sites, including on-site visits.
3. County staff will identify expenses associated with establishing and maintaining each site. Staff and users will work together to explore possible funding sources for development and ongoing maintenance.
4. County staff will develop a timeline for establishing each site.
5. County staff and users will work to establish each site.

The Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department will monitor the criteria and sites established under this policy. It reserves the right to modify the policy and/or sites to maintain park resources, address public health and safety issues, or to meet changing use patterns.

Current Rules As Posted at Off-Leash Areas:

1. Dogs must be leashed before entering and when leaving the park.
2. Owners are legally and financially responsible for the actions of their dogs.
3. All dogs must be licensed and vaccinated.
4. No female dogs in heat or puppies under four months old are allowed.
5. Owners must clean up after their dogs using plastic bags and provided trash containers.
6. Dogs must be in sight and under verbal control at all times. No digging holes.
7. No aggressive dogs allowed. Aggressive dogs must be leashed and removed from the park immediately by their owners.
8. Children under 12 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult, and should be educated about safe behavior around dogs (no running, screaming, food, etc.).

Current Maintenance Program/Guardians

Current maintenance by Ramsey County for the dog parks is minimal:

- Fence repair
- Removing trees fallen over trails, or dangerously hanging branches
- Habitat restoration
- Trail maintenance and erosion control
- Trash Removal

There is trash removal outside the fence of each off-leash dog area, and in the case of Battle Creek, volunteers disperse garbage cans throughout the park, and bring them out to be emptied on Thursdays.

There are a few maintenance costs associated with the off-leash dog areas as well:

- 2 year round portable toilets – \$1,200
- 2 half year portable toilets – \$600
- Garbage disposal – \$11,800

Mulch will often be brought in to help during the muddy spring months, which is typically dropped near the park entrance and dispersed by volunteers.

Existing Off-Leash Dog Areas

Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Area Inventory & Analysis

History

The off-leash dog area at Battle Creek Regional Park was a part of the initial pilot program of off-leash areas in Ramsey County running from the summer of 1997 to December 31, 1998. The area was initially approximately four acres located near the intersection of Lower Afton Road and McKnight Road South. A mowed corridor between the parking lot and the off-leash area provided a transition area. A mowed perimeter trail and signage defined the limits of the off-leash area as no fences were initially installed.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation accepted the current policy regarding off-leash dog areas on April 13, 1999 and the off-leash area at Battle Creek was chosen as a permanent site in March of 2000. Due to the publicity and popularity of the site during the pilot phase the off-leash area saw considerable use. It was decided that a number of actions would take place as a part of the permanent installation of the off-leash area including:

- Extending the border North to provide access to a pond.
- Relocating existing boundary markings to accurately reflect off-leash border
- Relocated trails away from ponds to reduce erosion
- Maintaining existing trails
- Install fencing along McKnight Road South
- Install a gate at the McKnight Road South entrance
- Increase the size of the off-leash area by 5-15 acres for a total of 10-20 acres

As part of future development additional fencing was installed around the entire off-leash area and the site expanded by at least 24 acres. No policy action is recorded for this development but the total size of the off-leash area is approximately 44 acres today. Benches and tables and additional signage has also been implemented within the off-leash area.

Site Amenities

- Two parking lots one along Upper Afton Road with space for 98 vehicles, and another along Lower Afton Road with space for 66 vehicles.
- Security cameras in both parking lots
- Fully Fenced area encompassing approximately 44 acres
- Miles of natural surface trails meandering through a variety of environments including woods, ponds, wetlands, and open spaces.
- Three entrance gates
- Rules signs at all entrances
- Tables and benches throughout
- Well shaded by a natural tree canopy
- Considered by many to be the best off-leash dog area in the entire metro area

Planning Considerations

Currently the off-leash dog area at Battle Creek Regional Park has entirely natural surface trails which do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities act, as part of redevelopment access into and through the off-leash area should be considered for everyone regardless of ability.

Security of personal belongings left in vehicles has been raised as a concern. Security cameras have been installed in both the Upper Afton Road and Lower Afton Road parking lots. Ramsey County has and will continue to encourage everyone visiting the park to not leave any valuables left unattended whether they are in a locked vehicle or not.

There is no potable water source near the off-leash dog area and future plans should incorporate either drinking water or a wash station as part of a trailhead facility at one or both of the parking lots.

Additional trails and activities are planned to be developed in spaces adjacent to the off-leash area. The off-leash portion of the park should continue to be kept separate from other recreational activities so that conflicts do not arise.

Natural Resources

Natural resources within the parks are impacted by invasive vegetation and by the dogs and people using these areas. The numerous barriers attributed to the use of off-leash dog areas makes the restoration of natural resources a priority below the greater park system. To reestablish or maintain natural resources within these areas would include the partitioning off of off-leash sections for alternate use, term closures for an unknown amount of time, or permanent closures of specific sensitive areas within the current boundaries.

The land cover within the Battle Creek off-leash dog area consists of cultivated conifers, mixed woods with scattered open fields, oak woods, and several wetlands, which are state and federally protected resources. Invasive vegetation has degraded most of the natural areas within the park. Most wooded areas contain invasive buckthorn and open fields consist of brome grass and other invasive herbaceous vegetation. In addition to the invasive species, the park use has a negative impact on the natural resources. The foot traffic by dogs and humans through heavily used areas has caused erosion and aids in the spread of invasive species. Wetlands are heavily impacted where use is concentrated. Wetland shoreline edges are eroding and consist of mostly bare soil with minimal vegetation. The dog use along the wetland edge causes exposed soil to enter the water, negatively impacting the use for aquatic life and dog use within the water disturbs the overall wetland habitat. The constant presence of dogs within the off-leash area also disturbs the habitat for upland wildlife as well.

Restoration within the off-leash dog area is difficult because of the consistent heavy use and apprehension for herbicide use on invasive vegetation. Restoration of eroding areas would require long term to permanent closure to regain and maintain vegetated cover. Removal of buckthorn would require areas to be partitioned off so that herbicide stump treatment could be applied. Past restoration within the off-leash dog area has been limited and consisted of some cutting and stacking of buckthorn on site with no herbicide stump treatment, which results in re-sprouting of cut stumps. To preserve wetlands, access to these areas should be permanently closed to regain plant growth and for continued protection of wetland habitat.

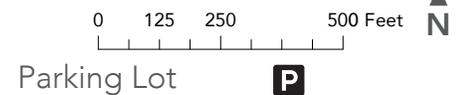
Battle Creek Regional Park Off-leash Dog Area Features:

1. Both parking lots at the Battle Creek off-leash dog area have been equipped with security cameras.
2. Erosion issues persist along many of the wetland ponds present within the off-leash area, fencing may be required to limit access and restore these features.
3. Miles of trails exist within the off-leash area traversing a variety of environments.
4. Multiple entrances to the site exist, however only one has a double gated entrance
5. There is an abundance of duplicative and excessive signs at the two busiest entrances
6. Certain sections of trails become quite wet during certain season and after rain events, it must be remembered that the area is a low lying wetland complex.
7. Large open spaces allow plenty of room to exercise dogs
8. Battle Creek is one of the most accessible off-leash areas by public transportation with quite a few bus lines stopping nearby.



Legend

Park Border		Park Paved Trail	
Park Entrance		Park Turf Trail	
Feature Point		Off Leash Area Trail	
Metro Tranist Stop		Regional Trail	



Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park Off-Leash Dog Area Inventory & Analysis

History

The off-leash dog area at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park was identified as a new site after the acceptance of the county policy on off-leash dog areas was passed in March of 2000 because it could serve residents in the northeastern part of the county, the site is a large open space that was not established for other types of recreational use, and there was existing parking available. It was decided that a number of actions would take place as a part of the permanent installation of the off-leash area including:

- Main site access would be from the boat launch parking lot on Otter Lake
- The area along Otter Lake Road may need to be fenced in

As part of future development fencing was installed around the entire off-leash area.

Site Amenities

- Parking lot off of Otter Lake Road for 44 vehicles and 3 trailer stalls
- Fully Fenced area encompassing approximately 10 Acres
- Natural surface trails meandering through a variety of environments including woods, wetlands, and open spaces.
- One entrance gate
- Rules sign at main entrance
- Tables and benches throughout
- Well shaded by a natural tree canopy
- Separate small and large dog areas

Planning Considerations

Currently the off-leash dog area at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park has entirely natural surface trails which do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities act, as part of redevelopment access into and through the off-leash area should be considered for everyone regardless of ability. As a part of path redevelopment an additional access gate should be considered at the southwest corner of the off-leash area. There is a planned multi use trail along Otter Lake Road and this access would provide easy entrance for trail users and neighborhood residents.

Security of personal belongings left in vehicles has been raised as a concern. A security camera should be considered in the parking lot. Ramsey County has and will continue to encourage everyone visiting the park to not leave any valuables left unattended whether they are in a locked vehicle or not.

Additional trails and activities are planned to be developed in spaces adjacent to the off-leash area. The off-leash portion of the park should continue to be kept separate from other recreational activities to prevent conflicts.

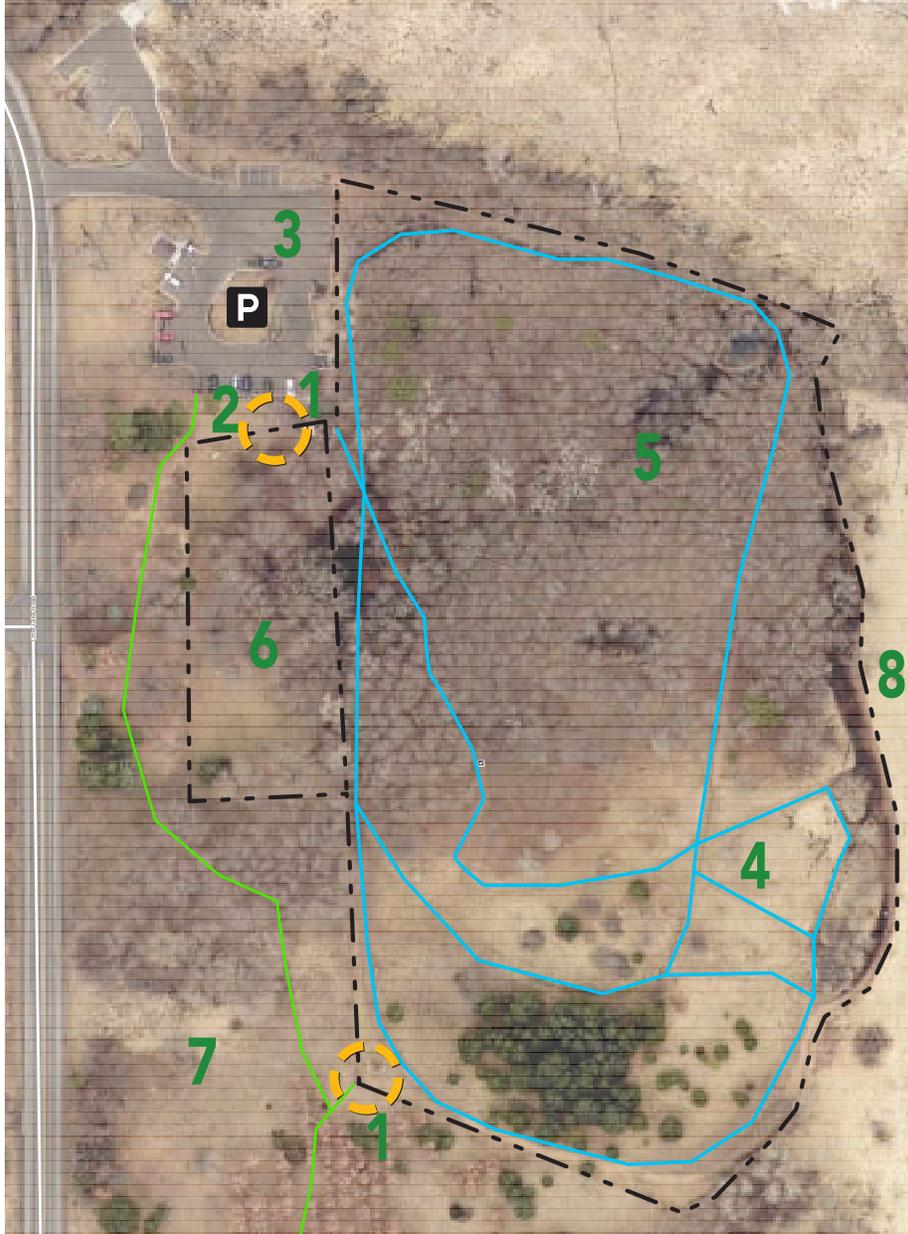
Potable water and a restroom are located on the west side of the parking lot. Water could be brought up closer to the off-leash area entrance for the installation of a drinking/washing station.

Natural Resources

Natural resources within the off-leash dog areas are impacted by invasive vegetation and by the dogs and people using these areas. The numerous barriers attributed to the use of off-leash dog areas makes the restoration of natural resources a priority below the greater park system. To reestablish or maintain natural resources within these areas would include the partitioning off of off-leash area sections for alternate use, term closures for an unknown amount of time or permanent closures of specific sensitive areas within the current boundaries.

The land cover within the Otter Lake off-leash dog area consists of cultivated conifers, mixed woods, an open field area and several wetlands, which are state and federally protected resources. Invasive vegetation exists within the park. Most wooded areas contain invasive buckthorn and the open field consists of brome grass and other invasive herbaceous vegetation. Restoration has included the removal of buckthorn through the woodland areas. Park use has caused the loss of vegetation and erosion within the woodlands and on heavy use trail areas within the open field area. Wetlands are located mainly within the wooded area and are ephemeral features with saturated soils. Wetlands are heavily impacted where use is concentrated. Wetland shoreline edges are eroding and consist of mostly bare soil with minimal vegetation which negatively impacts aquatic wildlife. The constant presence of dogs within the park also disturbs the habitat for upland wildlife.

Restoration within the off-leash dog area is difficult because of the consistent heavy use and apprehension for herbicide use on invasive vegetation. Restoration of eroding areas would require long term to permanent closure of sections to regain and maintain vegetated cover. Past restoration within the off-leash dog area has been limited and consisted of some cutting and stacking of buckthorn on site. To preserve wetlands, access to these areas should be permanently closed to regain plant growth and for continued protection of wetland habitat.



Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park Off-Leash Dog Area Features:

1. Multiple entrances to the off-leash area, southern entrance is not double gated
2. There is an abundance of duplicative and excessive signs at the entrance
3. Parking lot is not monitored by a security camera
4. Natural surface trails throughout, traversing both open spaces, and shaded wooded areas
5. Wetland is troublesome for some park users, don't like that their dogs get muddy. permanent or temporary fencing may be necessary with boardwalks over wetland for trail crossings.
6. Off-leash area is split into separate areas for small and large dogs.
7. Trial planning for a regional or in park trail has been identified through the corridor, adding to the accessibility of the site.
8. Site is fully enclosed by fence

Legend

Park Border		Park Paved Trail		Parking Lot	
Park Entrance		Park Turf Trail			
Feature Point		Off Leash Area Trail			
Metro Tranist Stop		Regional Trail			

Rice Creek Regional Trail Off-Leash Dog Area Inventory & Analysis

History

The off-leash dog area at Rice Creek North Regional Trail Corridor was a part of the initial pilot program of off-leash areas in Ramsey County running from the summer of 1997 to December 31, 1998. The area was initially approximately five acres located off of Lexington Avenue North south of County Road J. Parking was available but the popularity of the site exceeded parking capacity.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation accepted the current policy regarding off-leash dog areas on April 13, 1999 and the off-leash area at Rice Creek North Regional Trail Corridor was chosen as a permanent site in March of 2000. Due to the publicity and popularity of the site during the pilot phase the off-leash area saw considerable use. It was decided that a number of actions would take place as a part of the permanent installation of the off-leash area including:

- Expand the northern boundary of the site
- Relocate the access trail to reduce erosion around the pond
- Realign and redevelop the existing parking lot to increase capacity
- Security camera in the parking lot

As part of future development fencing was installed around the entire off-leash area.

In 2013 the parking lot was redeveloped and a restroom building, drinking fountain, and small watercraft access to the Rice Creek Water Trail were constructed as a part of the regional trail head development for the Rice Creek North Regional Trail Corridor.

Site Amenities

- Parking lot off of Lexington Avenue North, with the lower lot being dedicated to small watercraft with space for five vehicles, and the upper lot serving the trail and off-leash area with space for 30 vehicles.
- Fully Fenced area encompassing approximately 13 Acres
- Natural surface trail meandering through a prairie
- Two entrance gates
- Rules signs at all entrances

Planning Considerations

Currently the off-leash dog area at Rice Creek North Regional Trail Corridor has entirely natural surface trails which do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as part of redevelopment access into and through the off-leash area should be considered for everyone regardless of ability.

Security of personal belongings left in vehicles has been raised as a concern. A security camera has been installed overlooking the parking lot. Ramsey County has and will continue to encourage everyone visiting the park to not leave any valuables left unattended whether they are in a locked vehicle or not.

Additional trails and activities are planned to be developed in spaces adjacent to the off-leash area. The off-leash portion of the park should continue to be kept separate from other recreational activities so that conflicts do not arise.

Potable water and a restroom are located near the parking lot. Water could be brought up closer to the off-leash area entrance for the installation of a drinking/washing station.

Natural Resources

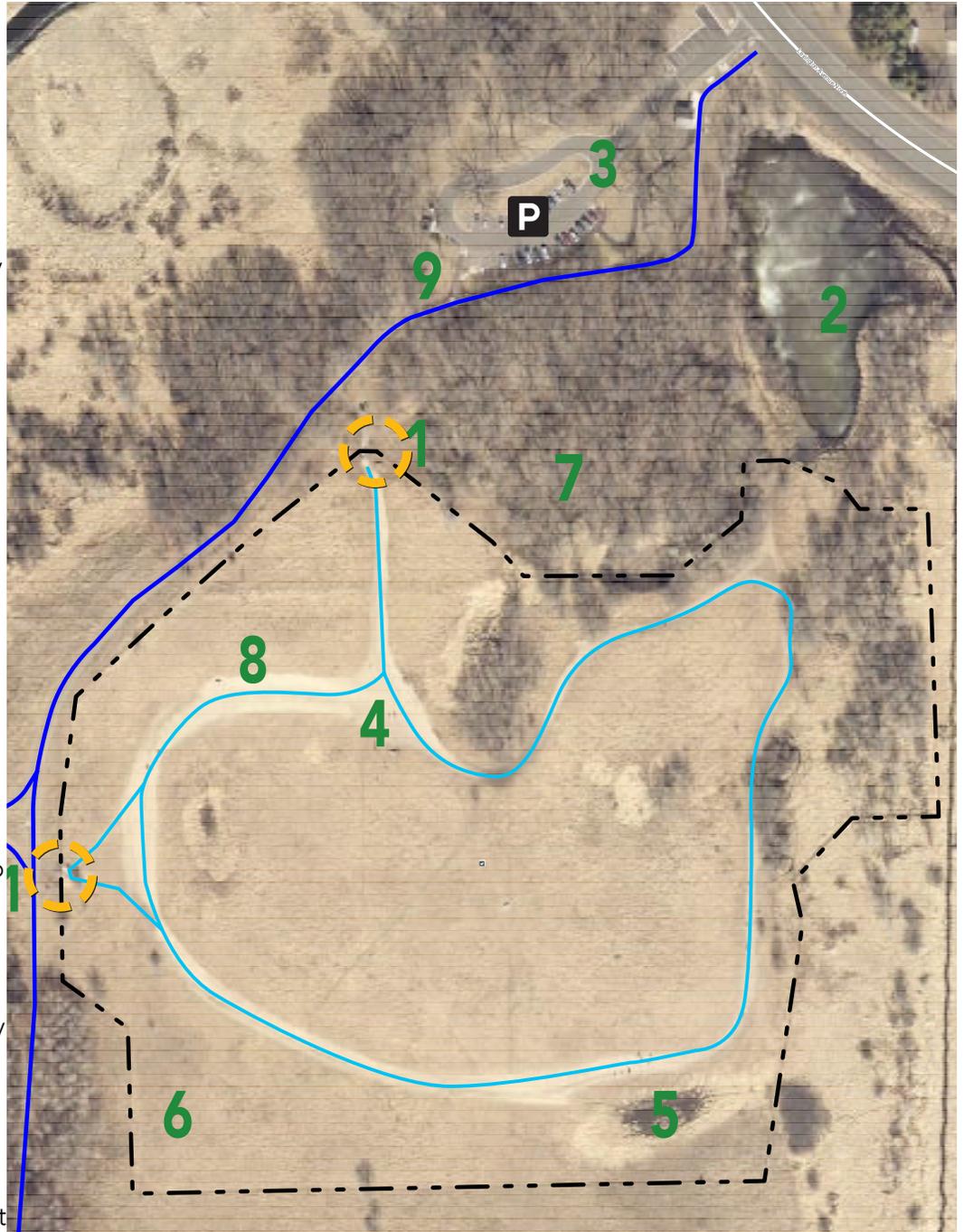
Natural resources within the off-leash dog areas are impacted by invasive vegetation and by the dogs and people using these areas. The numerous barriers attributed to the use of off-leash dog areas makes the restoration of natural resources a priority below the greater park system. To reestablish or maintain natural resources within these areas would include the partitioning of park sections for alternate use, term closures for an unknown amount of time, or permanent closures of specific sensitive areas within the current boundaries.

The land cover within the Rice Creek off-leash dog area is mostly an open field consisting of brome grass and other invasive herbaceous vegetation. There is little native habitat or wildlife use within the Rice Creek off-leash dog area because of the presence and impact of dogs and park users. There is a well-worn trail with no vegetation that encircles the field. This trail is getting wider and is eroding in high use areas. There is currently no access or impact to any water features within this park. In the past, there was access to a wetland water resource on the east side of the site. This wetland area is a mitigation site that is regulated for added protection, and because of the damage to the wetland shoreline through off-leash dog area use, the permanent closure of access to the wetland area was prompted. The areas damaged were replanted with native wetland vegetation.

Re-growth of vegetation along the trail would require the temporary closing of the area for many growing seasons to establish high use turf or hearty vegetation which could sustain heavy use. Once the vegetation re-grew the off-leash dog area could be partitioned for alternate use to maintain a certain percentage of vegetation and allow regrowth of vegetation.

Rice Creek North Regional Trail
Corridor Off-Leash Dog Area
Features:

1. Multiple entrances to the off-leash area, both are double gated
2. Nearest open water body is a wetland mitigation site, and therefore dogs are not allowed entrance.
3. Trail corridor parking lot does have a security camera
4. Natural surface trails throughout, traversing open prairie space
5. Area is sometimes wet, sometimes muddy. Owners are split as to whether this area should be fenced off or not.
6. No Separate area for small dogs, plenty of room to add fencing and create two spaces
7. No natural shade currently on site. Opportunity to perhaps add some area under tree canopy or man made structure.
8. Site is relatively flat, lending itself to development making the space accessible



9. Nearest water source is located by the parking lot, and would be relatively easy to bring potable water to an off-leash area entrance.

Legend

Park Border		Park Paved Trail		Parking Lot	
Park Entrance		Park Turf Trail			
Feature Point		Off Leash Area Trail			
Metro Tranist Stop		Regional Trail			

Woodview Open Space Off-Leash Dog Area Inventory & Analysis

History

The off-leash dog area at Woodview Open Space was identified as a new site after the acceptance of the county policy on off-leash dog areas was passed in March of 2000 because it could serve residents in the central part of the county, the site is a large open space that was underutilized. The primary use area was identified as a part of the open space that previously was being used for garden plots. Parking did not exist on site at the time, however there were future plans in place including a trail through Reservoir Woods that included a trailhead parking lot. It was decided that a number of actions would take place as a part of the permanent installation of the off-leash area including:

- Primary site access would be located off of Larpentuer Avenue
- A trail or path route would need to be determined and cleared
- Create an additional accessible fenced site

As part of future development fencing was placed around the entire small dog and accessible area, and along the path and Larpentuer Avenue partially encompassing the large dog area. The trail and a trailhead parking lot were also developed in conjunction with the city of Roseville as a part of Reservoir Woods Park.

Site Amenities

- Parking lot off of Larpentuer Avenue with space for 19 vehicles
- Fully fenced and accessible small dog area and a partially fenced large dog area approximately 4 acres
- Rules sign at all entrances
- Well shaded by a natural tree canopy
- Separate small and large dog areas

Planning Considerations

Currently the off-leash dog area at Woodview Open Space has entirely natural surface trails which do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities act, as part of redevelopment access into and through the off-leash area should be considered for everyone regardless of ability.

Security of personal belongings left in vehicles has been raised as a concern. A security camera should be considered in the parking lot. Ramsey County has and will continue to encourage everyone visiting the park to not leave any valuables left unattended whether they are in a locked vehicle or not.

Additional trails and activities are planned to be developed in spaces adjacent to the off-leash area. The off-leash portion of the park should continue to be kept separate from other recreational activities so that conflicts do not arise.

Potable water and a permanent restroom would be difficult in this location as there are no services nearby at this time.

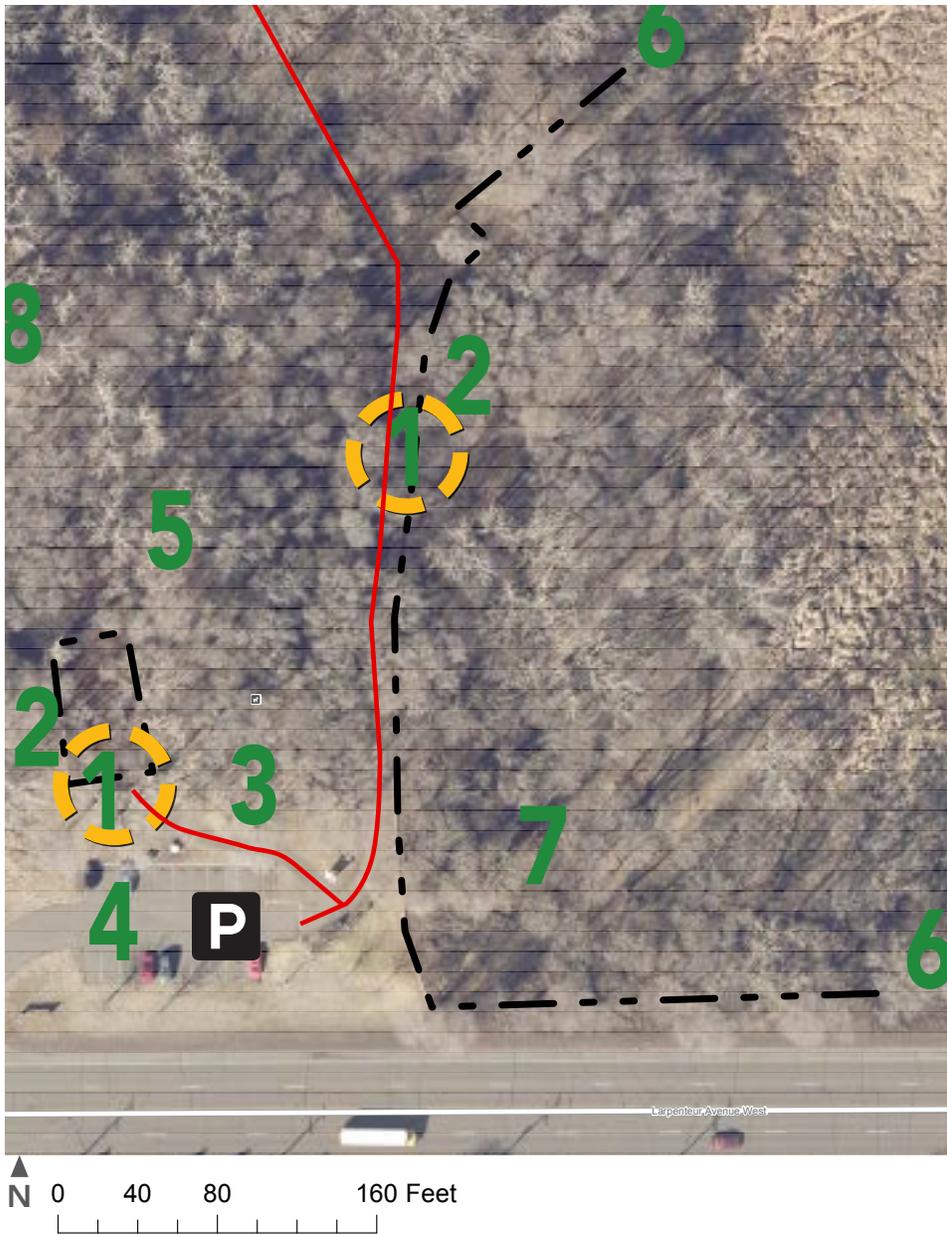
Ramsey County Community Corrections owns a 17.8 acre parcel directly to the west of the off-leash dog area. This parcel has been identified in the Parks & Recreation System Plan as a possible area of expansion for Woodview Open Space. If this occurred expansion of the off-leash dog area and trailhead facilities would be possible, as this is the smallest off-leash dog area that the county maintains and it is under our suggested 10 acre regional off-leash area goal it would help to serve the central area of the county and its residents much better.

Natural Resources

Natural resources within the off-leash dog areas are impacted by invasive vegetation and by the dogs and people using these areas. The numerous barriers attributed to the use of off-leash dog areas makes the restoration of natural resources a priority below the greater park system. To reestablish or maintain natural resources within these parks would include the partitioning of park sections for alternate use, term closures for an unknown amount of time or permanent closures of specific sensitive areas within the current boundaries.

The land cover within the Woodview off-leash dog area consists of mainly mixed woods abutting a wetland, which is a state and federally protected resource. Invasive vegetation exists within the park. Most wooded areas contain invasive buckthorn and the wetland consists of a cattail edge. Limited restoration has been completed through the woodland areas. Park use has caused the loss of vegetation and erosion within the woodlands and trails leading to the wetland edge. The constant presence of dogs within the park disturbs the habitat for wildlife.

Restoration within the off-leash dog area is difficult because of the consistent heavy use and apprehension for herbicide use on invasive vegetation. Restoration of eroding areas would require long term to permanent closure of sections to regain and maintain vegetated cover. To preserve wetlands, access to these areas should be permanently closed to regain plant growth and for continued protection of wetland habitat.



Woodview Open Space Off-Leash Dog Area Features:

1. Entrance to the small dog and accessible area is double gated, large dog area is not
2. Signs should be removed from within the off-leash area and moved outside entrance gates
3. Currently the only accessible off-leash area run by Ramsey County
4. Relatively undersized parking lot does not have any security camera
5. County staff has observed rogue paths and dog prints, indicating off-leash activity outside of designated area
6. Fences do not completely contain large dog area, but could be modified to do so
7. Many widow makers, overhanging limbs, and unkept underbrush conditions along with trash make Woodview off-leash area the least safe and most unattractive off-leash area in the county.
8. Site to the west has been identified for acquisition.

Legend

Park Border		Park Paved Trail		Parking Lot	
Park Entrance		Park Turf Trail			
Feature Point		Off Leash Area Trail			
Metro Transit Stop		Regional Trail			

Comparison To Other Off-Leash Dog Areas

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation has taken a look at the surrounding region’s off-leash areas in order to compare the existing rules, permitting, and physical characteristics to those of the county’s own. These findings will help the county make decisions, along with public input received, when evaluating and making any recommended changes to the current off-leash dog area structure.

List of Park Districts Surveyed for Comparison:

Local: off-leash areas looked at for a direct comparison of rules, regulations, and general size in contrast to Ramsey County

- Three Rivers Park District
- Dakota County Parks
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
- Saint Paul Parks & Recreation
- Anoka County Parks & Recreation
- Carver County
- City of Woodbury
- City of Oakdale

National: Off-leash areas looked at for a comparison of rules and regulations in contrast to Ramsey County

- Salt Lake County
- City of Denver Parks and Recreation

Off-Leash Dog Area Classifications

Off-leash dog areas are generally broken into a few classifications defined roughly by their size, service area, and function. Larger parks will serve a larger service area and are intended to be a regional draw, whereas a smaller park is better suited to a smaller service area and function as a neighborhood draw to get a quick workout with your pet. Classifications have been derived from the public input process as well as through the department’s research of other park systems.

OFF-LEASH DOG AREA CLASSIFICATIONS		
TYPE	APPROXIMATE SIZE RANGE	SERVICE AREA
Regional (Large)	10 Acres or Greater	Regional, at a Minimum Countywide
Community (Medium)	2-10 Acres	5 Mile Radius
Neighborhood (Small)	0.5-2 Acres	Up to a 2 Mile Radius

Regional Off-Leash Areas

Regional off-leash areas are typically 10 acres or greater and have a service area encompassing the entire county and, in cases where they are located in a regional park, beyond. Many of the larger parks in this category have areas that remain unfenced with small dog areas being completely fenced in. These parks often have a variety of environments and terrain for users to explore with miles of established trails. Regional off-leash areas may have fewer amenities, or amenities which are concentrated near entrances due to their more remote locations and undeveloped nature. Care should be taken when choosing sites for regional off-leash areas to mitigate or prevent negative impacts in sensitive areas such as wetlands, riparian zones, high value habitat areas, protected watersheds, and to make sure there is not a conflict with another recreational activity.

Common amenities for regional off-leash areas include but are not limited to fencing, double entrance gates, looping paved or unpaved trails, dog waste dispensers and trash cans, restrooms, drinking fountains, and regulatory signs.

Community Off-Leash Areas

Community off-leash areas are typically 2-10 acres or greater and have a service area of up to a five mile radius. Off-leash dog areas of this size are typically fully fenced, and divided to allow for separate small and large dog facilities. Common amenities for community off-leash areas include but are not limited to perimeter fencing, double gated entries, paved paths, drinking fountains, dog waste bag dispensers, trash cans, shade structures or naturally shaded areas, benches, restrooms, and regulatory signs.

Neighborhood Off-Leash Areas

Neighborhood off-leash dog areas are typically 0.5-2 acres and have a service area of one to three neighborhoods, making the park a walkable destination for many. Off-leash dog areas of this size seem to always be fully fenced with a double gated entry. Other common amenities include but are not limited to paved paths, drinking fountains, dog waste bag dispensers, trash cans, benches, and regulatory signage.

Size & Amenities Comparison

ANOKA COUNTY				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEES
Bunker Hills Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog Areas, Short Trail, Wood Chips	Community	6.5 Acres	Vehicle Entry Permit \$30
Locke County Park	Fully Fenced, Shaded, Wood Chips	Neighborhood	1.5 Acres	Vehicle Entry Permit \$30
CARVER COUNTY				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Lake Minnewashta Regional Park Off-leash Area	Fully Fenced, Ponding Area (Water Access), Open Areas, Wood Chip Trail, Aggregate Trail	Regional	17 Acres	Vehicle Entry Permit \$25
CITY OF OAKDALE				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
City of Oakdale Bark Park	Fencing, Vestibule Gate, Grass Trails, Picnic Tables/Benches, Dog Waste Bag Dispenser, Trash Cans, Signage	Community	4.6 Acres	Dog License \$12-20
CITY OF WOODBURY				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Andy's Bark Park	Partially Fenced, Mowed Trails, Benches, Shelter Area, Picnic Tables, Pet Water Station, Dog Waste Disposal and Bag Stations, Portable Restrooms, Rules Sign	Regional	70 Acres	Dog License \$10-18

DAKOTA COUNTY PARKS				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Dakota Woods Dog Park	Fully Fenced, Wooded, Open Space, Wood Chip Trail	Regional	16 Acres	Annual Pass \$42.85
MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Franklin Terrace	Fully Fenced	Neighborhood	1.37 Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
Lake of the Isles	Fully Fenced, Designated Small Dog Area	Neighborhood	1.87 Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
Loring Park	Fully Fenced	Neighborhood	0.22 Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
Lyndale Farmstead	Fully Fenced, Crushed Granite Play Surface	Neighborhood	0.62 Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
Minnehaha	Pay To Park Lot,	Community/ Regional	6+ Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
St. Anthony Parkway	Fully Fenced	Community	2.17 Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
Victory Prairie	Fully Fenced	Community	2.62 Acres	Resident \$35 Nonresident \$60
SAINT PAUL PARKS & RECREATION				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Arlington/Arkwright	Wooded Trails, Opens Space	Community	4.5 Acres	Dog License \$58/Year \$68/Life if Microchipped
High Bridge	Shade, Fully Fenced, Parking, Open Space	Community	7 Acres	Dog License \$58/Year \$68/Life if Microchipped
Meeker Island	Benches, Trail, Water Access	Community	N/A	Dog License \$58/Year \$68/Life if Microchipped
Lowertown	Fully Fenced	Community/ Neighborhood	N/A	Dog License \$58/Year \$68/Life if Microchipped

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Bryant Lake	Fully Fenced	Community/ Regional	9 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Carver Park Reserve	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog Areas	Regional	27 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Cleary Lake Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Wetland Pond	Regional	28 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Crow-Hassan Park Reserve	Unfenced	Regional	40 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Elm Creek	Fully Fenced, Wetland Pond	Regional	29 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Fish Lake Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog area	Community/ Regional	7 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Lake Sarah Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog Area, Picnic Tables	Regional	30 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Murphey Hanrehan Park Reserve	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog Area	Community	3 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
Spring Lake Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog Area, Watering & Rinsing Station	Regional	10 Acres	\$6 Daily \$45 Annual
RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION				
NAME	AMENITIES	CLASSIFICATION	SIZE	FEE
Battle Creek Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Picnic Tables, Benches, Miles of Trails, Wetland Ponds	Regional	44 Acres	None
Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park	Fully Fenced, Separate Small and Large Dog Area, Wooded, Open Space, Footpaths	Regional	10 Acres	None
Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor	Fully Fenced, Natural Surface Trail, Open Prairie	Regional	13 Acres	None
Woodview Open Space	Fully Fenced Small Dog Area, Partially Fenced Large Dog Area, Small Dog Area is Accessible, Trails, Wooded, Wetland Pond	Community	2.25 Acres	None

The information provided in the table above suggests that most government agencies accommodating off-leash areas fall into their respective categories of service. Overall, amenities offered within the region seem to be very consistent across the board. In comparison to other urban areas Ramsey County Parks & Recreation has the largest off-leash areas by size. Woodview Open Space is the one off-leash dog area that currently does not fit the county's goal of providing regional, county-wide service due to its size. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation is also the only provider regionally that does not see any form of compensation for providing off-leash areas to residents.

Rules & Regulations

Current Ramsey County off-leash dog area rules and regulations are posted at most off-leash areas as follows:

1. Owners must clean up and dispose of feces.
2. Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off-leash area and in transition corridors.
3. Owners must be in verbal control of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, biting, fighting, or excessive barking.
4. Owners must have visible leash at all times
5. Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs
6. Dogs must stay within signed boundary.
7. Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated.
8. Dogs in heat are not allowed.
9. Owners must comply with all park rules and regulations

Ramsey County's posted rules are not consistent at every off-leash area or in some cases different entrances for the same off-leash area. The posted rules also do not follow the rules which were passed by policy in 2000, and there is another differing set of rules that has been posted to the Ramsey County website. Signage that is posted also varies wildly from off-leash area to off-leash area, some have flea and tick warnings, additional rules posted about picking up after one's pet etc. An important step forward through the Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan will be the establishment of common rules that shall apply throughout the Ramsey County park system as they pertain to off-leash dog areas. Another step in the master plan will be to set a standard for all off-leash areas as to what is posted and where rule posting shall occur.

Rules and regulations among park districts that administer off-leash dog areas seem to be very consistent both regionally and nationally with a few rules that many other agencies have instituted in their off-leash areas. It is worth looking at these differences in order to open a discussion about the county's own rules and help determine whether or not a change in the stated rules is necessary. Some differences also come in the way that a rule is stated or phrased. In many cases the rule as prescribed by Ramsey County could be made clearer with a change in phrasing. A general discussion of these differences follows.

1. Many off-leash areas have a minimum age requirement below which children must be accompanied by an adult. In one version of Ramsey County rules that is posted online there is a rule that states "Children under the age of 12 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult, and should be educated about safe behavior around dogs (no running, screaming, food, etc.)" Concern was raised at public engagement meetings about the age of some handlers entering the park without supervision.
2. Almost every other park system has a maximum number of dogs per handler to ensure that the dogs stay under their control. The most commonly accepted number of dogs per handler is 2. This is also an issue that came up during some of the public engagement meetings. Off-leash area patrons had brought up the fact that they will occasionally see dog walkers coming through the park with large numbers of dogs, sometimes they keep the dogs leashed and this could lead to more problems than intended to prevent.
3. It is very common for off-leash areas to bar outside food, toys, and dog food with the exception of dog treats.
4. Nationally, it is common for off-leash areas to explicitly state that pit bulls and other breeds considered to be more aggressive/violent are not allowed in off-leash dog areas. This rule has not been noted on the regional level. Other rules observed on a national level are consistent with Ramsey County Rules.

The Plan

Rules & Regulation Recommendations

An important objective of the Off-leash Dog Areas Master Plan is to standardize the rules and regulations that are posted at county designated off-leash areas. Currently not every park, or even every entrance, has the same look and feel. Many entrances are littered with signage that is repetitive of what has already been posted on the rules and regulations signs. To rectify this all miscellaneous signs should be removed from fences and posts, and the rules and regulations sign should be the prominent source of information. A posting board may also be provided for any additional rotating information that may be needed.

The following set of rules is recommended based upon what is currently posted by Ramsey County through various materials, what was learned through public engagement, and what has been observed in other off-leash areas both regionally and nationally

1. Owners must clean up and dispose of feces.
2. Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off-leash area and in transition corridors.
3. Owners must be in verbal control of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, biting, fighting, or excessive barking. If a dog becomes aggressive, or gets into a fight it shall be leashed and escorted out of the park immediately.
4. Owners must have visible leash at all times
5. Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs
6. Dogs must stay within signed boundary.
7. Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated.
8. Dogs in heat are not allowed.
9. For every handler there shall be a maximum of two dogs.
10. Children under the age of 12 must be accompanied and supervised by an adult, and should be educated about safe behavior around dogs (Do not run, scream, offer food, pet a strange dog without permission, etc.)
11. Owners must comply with all park rules and regulations



Typical Ramsey County Rules Sign at Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor



Repetitive and obnoxious signage clutters off-leash area entrances which may be causing users to bypass rules board all together as a result of over stimulation

Off-Leash Dog Area Design Standards

Ramsey County off-leash dog areas have been developed somewhat simultaneously with different results from park to park, mostly influenced by the user base. The county would like to standardize the look and feel of its off-leash dog areas to the extents possible. Parks & Recreation will be working with and expanding upon the guidelines for off-leash dog area developed in the original policy to determine site standards.

From the public survey, public engagement, internal dialogue, and research of various other facilities the following guidelines should be followed whenever possible:

Off-Leash Dog Area Site Selection:

Size: Ramsey County originally decided that a 10 acre park would be of sufficient size to accommodate a regional draw for an off-leash area. After comparing our own system to others in the region a size of 10-20 acres would be most acceptable for a regionally sized off-leash area. The county has four off-leash areas serving the region all within a 15 minute drive of any resident so another way to fill in gaps where municipal off-leash dog areas do not exist would be considering the addition of community sized off-leash area in the range of 2-10 acres. Many county parks may be better able to fill this role.

Parking: Ramsey County Parks & Recreation previously stated that a minimum of ten parking spaces will be provided, however this number does not seem to be sufficient given the size of most of the county off-leash areas combined with the fact that the parking lots all serve another purpose than just the off-leash areas. Parking should be looked at on a case by case basis along with other recreational uses that the parking lot is serving. Woodview, for example, has an undersized parking lot for a combined trail head/off-leash area and is often at capacity during peak hours.

Shade: Shade is a highly desirable aspect to off-leash dog areas. In the public survey conducted by Ramsey County shade was the second highest amenity sought out by park users. Whenever possible a site with natural shade should be utilized, if natural shade is not available trees should be planted or a man made shade structure installed.

Conflict with Recreational Activities: It is important to maintain a buffer between off-leash dog areas and other recreational uses such as playgrounds, trails, or another programmed recreational area. A minimum of a 100 foot buffer has been established in the previous Ramsey County policy and should be maintained in the future.

Accessibility: Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation strives to gain and maintain an equitable use of all its facilities. Current sites that are not accessible should be retrofitted in the future so that at least a portion of the site is accessible to all.

Natural Resources: Ramsey County is home to a diverse landscape and animal population, with more than 1,250 species found in or adjacent to the county. County staff manage the land, plants, and animals throughout the park system to ensure their health and sustainability. As a natural resources based park system Ramsey County will weigh all impacts that any future development may have on the environment. All efforts shall be made in site selection so that no off-leash dog area has a negative impact on any native plants, animals or water bodies.

It is extremely important that all off-leash dog area users follow rules and clean up after their pets immediately as dog waste has been declared a nonpoint source of pollution by the Environmental Protection Agency. Improperly disposed of, or pet waste which is not picked up negatively impacts water quality in lakes, ponds, creeks, wetlands, and rivers. Pet waste decays in water and depletes oxygen which in combination with the warming of water bodies may lead to fish kills. The nutrients in pet waste also aid in weed and algae growth further reducing water quality, algae blooms are stinky, cause water discoloration, and in the case of blue green algae can be lethal to pets and

extremely toxic to humans. These blooms can result in fewer recreational uses for the water body which affects swimmers, boaters, and many other park recreational uses.

Improperly disposed pet waste may also make water unsafe for swimming. Diseases and parasites can be transmitted from pet waste to humans. Pet waste is not the biggest source of pollution to the regions water bodies, but it is one of many small sources that add up to larger issues, dog owners are at the front line of picking up after themselves in a responsible manner.

Water Access: Access to water for dogs in the county off-leash dog areas has been identified as an important aspect that many users would like whenever possible. While not a possibility on every site, where suitable water sources do exist within an off-leash site access should be granted. Water access for dogs will not be permitted if there is conflict with another recreational use such as swimming areas, boat launches, etc.

Site Amenities

Fencing: Where a one hundred foot buffer is not possible fencing will always be installed. Fencing shall be 4' in height and constructed of vinyl coated chain link. Almost all Ramsey County off-leash areas as well as those found regionally are fully enclosed areas. This adds to the safety of an off-leash area so that if a dogs control is lost by voice alone the owner has some reassurance that their pet will not get far.

Drinking Water: All efforts shall be made so that potable drinking water for humans and dogs is placed near at least one off-leash area entrance per park.]

Restroom Facilities: Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to off-leash areas, in most cases these will come in the form of portable facilities. Wherever possible, if there are multiple recreational programs located in the vicinity of the off-leash area, more permanent restrooms should be accommodated.

Trash Receptacles: Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional trash receptacles may be placed in parking areas or any other space deemed necessary.

Picnic Tables & Benches: Picnic tables and benches will be provided in each off-leash area, the placement and siting of the amenities should be coordinated between site volunteers and county staff.

Surfacing: A variety of surfacing will be used at off-leash dog areas. Efforts will be made to make as much of the off-leash area a natural surface. Crushed fines such as limestone or granite may be considered for trails or low lying areas to deal with erosion. An asphalt trail may be considered to make the site accessible to all users, and may aid the county in future maintenance operations within off-leash dog are boundaries.

Separate Areas for Large & Small Dogs: County off-leash dog areas shall accommodate separate areas for large and small dogs.

Signage: Rules shall be clearly posted, including codes of behavior, hours, and requirements for entry. Entrances shall also be allowed an extra posting/bulletin board for miscellaneous information. Additional and often repetitive signage posted on fences shall be removed.

Americans with Disabilities Compliance: Barrier free access to off-leash dog areas shall be provided, as well as an area through the double gated entry. Barrier Free paths should be provided throughout the off-leash area.

Entrances: Double gated entrances shall be provided at every off-leash dog area entrance. The double gated entry shall consist of an 8 foot by 8 foot fenced area with two gates, allowing for owners to safely unleash their dogs prior to letting them into the park.

Ease of Maintenance: Service gates should be provided at every off-leash dog area at a minimum of ten feet wide and located so that maintenance vehicles may easily enter from an existing road, parking lot, or street frontage.

Waste Bag Dispensers: Waste bag dispensers should be installed and refilled by the county. These dispensers should be placed minimally at every off-leash area entrance.

Agility Equipment: Agility equipment was the lowest rated site amenity from the public survey, and little interest was voiced in the public engagement process. As such, there are no immediate plans to include an agility course but one could be considered in the future if a user group expresses interest.

Shade: Trees and/or shade structures should be provided if a site has insufficient shade to allow humans and dogs to retreat from the sun.

Trails: Trails encourage owners to interact with and monitor their dogs and provide easier access to the entire site. At least on trail loop should be made accessible to all. Trail material should be evaluated on a case by case basis for every site, a variety of surfacing materials will likely be used for every site. Trails will vary from natural surfaces, wood chips or crushed limestone for low lying and erosion prone sites, to asphalt paths for accessible and maintenance vehicle routes.

Management & Enforcement of Off-Leash Dog Areas

Staffing: It is recommended that county staff monitor the off-leash dog areas during heavy periods of use.

Fines: Warnings, followed by tickets and fines are recommended for repeat offenders to help reduce any illegal off-leash dog activity outside of designated off-leash areas.

Hours of Operation: Hours of operation should remain consistent with current park hours: one half hour prior to dawn until one half hour after dusk.

Volunteers: Volunteer involvement should continue to be encouraged to promote the stewardship of off-leash dog areas. County staff shall work with volunteers to help develop programs, events, and to aid in the recruitment of new volunteers.

Fees or Donations to Off-Leash Dog Areas: When asked through the off-leash dog areas survey whether patrons would be willing to pay a fee or donate to county run off-leash dog areas 87.71 percent of respondents said they would be possibly likely or very likely to do so. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation is also the only agency in the region that does not ask for fees, licensing fees or donations to aid in the management or future development of its off-leash areas. It is recommended that the county look into a donation system to aid with maintenance and development costs for current and any future off-leash areas.

Education: County staff should work with off-leash dog area volunteers to develop educational programs addressing park etiquette, dogs, and off-leash dog areas among others.

Future of the Volunteer Program

The volunteer program that has been implemented in a majority of the county's off-leash dog areas has been vital to the success of the off-leash program. Volunteers have aided in the enforcement of park rules, gone above and beyond in their capacity to maintain and clean the off-leash areas, and report maintenance issues to Parks & Recreation staff, among many other responsibilities.

Volunteers

Volunteers are a group of people on our email list who are available for when there are service projects, programs or awareness projects that need to take place in the park. They can lend a hand when we have spring cleanup or wood chips to spread, or they can help spread the word when we have a program, like a dog training seminar or nail trimming opportunity.

Stewards

Stewards are frequent users of the park (daily or weekly), who are invested in the maintenance and character of the off-leash dog area. Some of the tasks can include:

- Be the eyes and ears on the ground at the dog parks and communicate any problems or concerns that the dog park may have: maintenance issues, dangerous users, ideas and input.
- Clean up the park as you walk around: pick up any trash, pick up stray dog poop, refill poop bags. Stewards will often help to shovel snow around the entrance gates when snow piles up.
- In Battle Creek, moving the trash cans out to the entrance on Thursdays.
- Have an open line of communication with the Ramsey County Recreation Services Supervisor, so that we can get your input on issues.
- Recommend ideas to help improve the dog park and pitch in your talents to make those ideas come to life.
- Recruiting volunteers.
- Foster a positive spirit of community for those who come to the park.

Future Maintenance and Operations within Off-leash Dog Areas

One of the largest concerns that was identified through the online survey and public engagement was how maintenance operations are handled within off-leash dog areas. Volunteer groups and general park users agree that more could be done on the part of the county in regards to how trash collection is performed as well as general maintenance of the off-leash areas.

Currently volunteers are charged with moving trash receptacles from within park boundaries to the curb where waste management picks them up. Ramsey County Parks & Recreation would like to assist in park maintenance in any way we can. One way this may be accomplished in the future goes along with the development of an accessible route. Accessible Routes could be developed as a 10' wide asphalt path which maintenance workers could use to drive a county vehicle to trash receptacle pads installed along the perimeter of the site making trash disposal a faster and easier operation. Individuals would still be charged with picking up after their pets and making sure animal waste makes it into a trash receptacle.

Miscellaneous repairs are currently requested by off-leash dog area users by calling Parks & Recreation staff to alert them to any issues. County staff generally enters the park to make fence repairs, cut and remove dangerous trees etc. on a regular basis during heavy use periods. County staff shall continue to work with volunteers to find the best way to take care of and address these issues.

Improvements to Existing Facilities

An important step in the development of off-leash dog areas within Ramsey County will be to bring our current facilities up to the development and design standards addressed in the Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan. Many of our current parks are beloved in their current form, however all of our off-leash areas would benefit from improvements both in constructed amenities and maintenance. Many of our off-leash dog areas are very close to being up to standards set in the master plan, such as Rice Creek, and would need minimal development. Others, such as Woodview, need quite a bit of work just to make the site walkable and safe. Following is a map and description of first steps to take in each of the Ramsey County off-leash areas. Maps are for conceptual purposes only and do not imply final locations for any improvements made to the off-leash areas. Any developments made within the off-leash areas would need to go through further public engagement and design procedures.

Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park Off-Leash Dog Area

1. Addition of an accessible route for the inclusion of all park users as well as maintenance operations.
2. Permanent fencing around wetland and sensitive area.
3. Accessible concrete bench pads and trash receptacles.
4. Bring a dog and human drinking fountain and water line up to the off-leash area entrances
5. Double gated entry at south entrance
6. Install trash receptacles throughout the off leash area along with waste bag dispensers
7. Remove miscellaneous and duplicative signage on fences and relocate to bulletin board



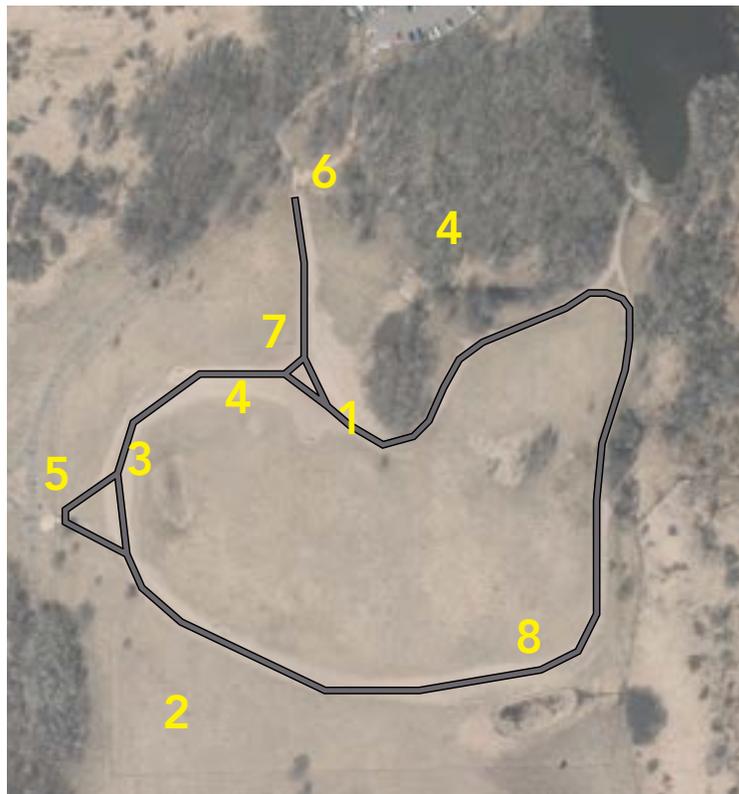
Battle Creek Regional Park Off-Leash Dog Area



1. Addition of an accessible route for the inclusion of all park users as well as maintenance operations.
2. Accommodate an area within the off-leash dog area for small dogs only by fencing off a portion of the site with double gated entry
3. Accessible concrete bench pads and trash receptacles.
4. Bring a dog and human drinking fountain and water line up to the off-leash area entrances
5. Double gated entry at North and West entrances
6. Remove miscellaneous and duplicative signage on fences and relocate to bulletin board
7. Install 10' maintenance gate
8. Standardize rules boards at entrances, currently not the same rules are posted at each entrance
9. Install trash receptacles throughout the off leash area along with waste bag dispensers

Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor Off-Leash Dog Area

1. Addition of an accessible route for the inclusion of all park users as well as maintenance operations.
2. Accommodate an area within the off-leash dog area for small dogs only by fencing off a portion of the site with double gated entry.
3. Accessible concrete bench pads and trash receptacles.
4. Look into the possibility of expanding the off-leash area boundary to include more trees for shade, planting additional trees for shade, or constructing a shade structure.
5. Install 10' maintenance gate
6. Bring a dog and human drinking fountain and water line up to the off-leash area entrances
7. Accessible concrete bench pads and trash receptacles.
8. Install trash receptacles throughout the off-leash area along with waste bag dispensers



Woodview Open Space Off-Leash Dog Area

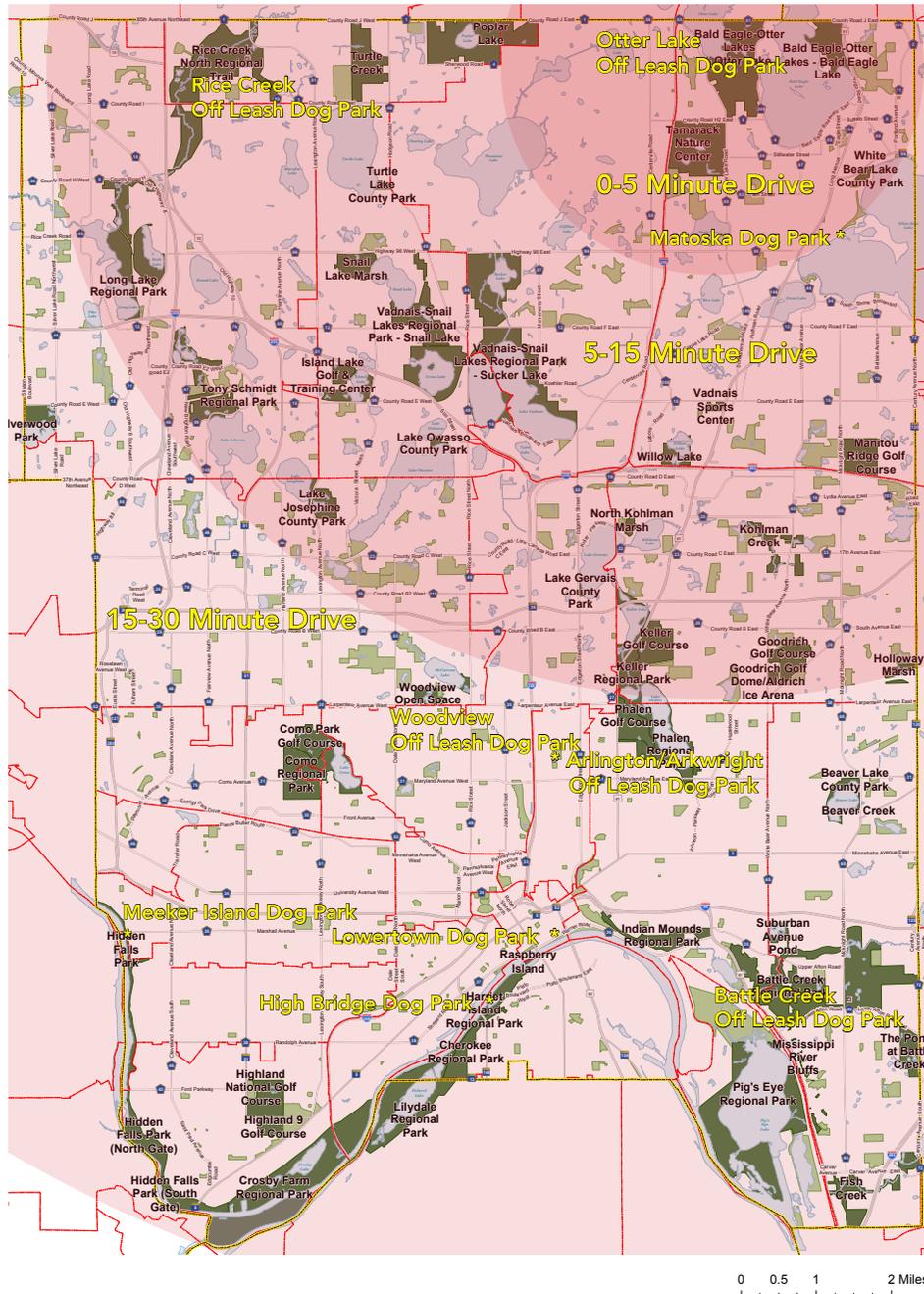


1. Woodview off-leash dog area has an accessible small dog area, finding an accessible route into the large dog area will be more difficult due to the topography of the site but should be explored and executed if possible by Parks & Recreation
2. Woodview is the only current site that does not meet the size requirements of a regional off-leash area, making this off-leash area the top priority among the county's current system. Every effort should be made to expand the current site. The system plan has identified the county owned parcel to the west of Woodview Open Space for acquisition, this area would be a prime location for an expanded off-leash area as there are few if any conflicts.
3. The off-leash dog area at Woodview Open Space is in the worst condition of any in the Ramsey County system, and is identified as the top priority for future development of off-leash areas. There are many overhanging hazardous trees, brush, and other debris making the site difficult and unsafe to traverse. This should be the number one priority going forward to make this site safe.
4. The rules signs and bulletin board should be moved out of the off-leash dog areas and relocated to the front of the entrances.
5. A water line for a human and dog drinking fountain should be brought to the entrance.
6. A double gated entry should be installed for the large dog area
7. Fencing should be installed to fully enclose the large dog area, along with any expansion area
8. Install trash receptacles throughout the off-leash area along with waste bag dispensers
9. If possible install a 10' maintenance gate.

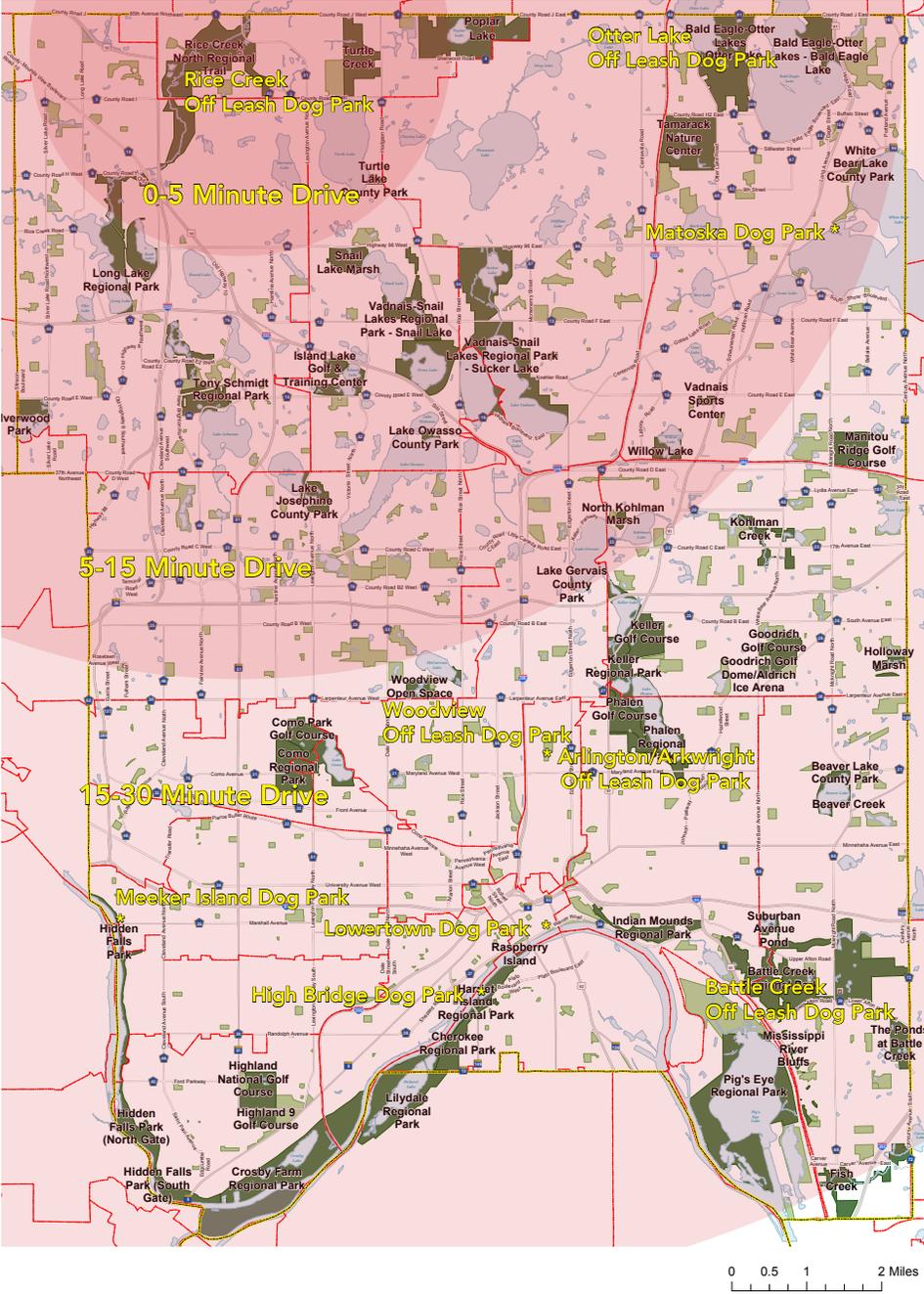
Future Development of Off-Leash Dog Areas

An original goal of the policy passed by Parks & Recreation was to locate a regionally serving facility within a 20 minute drive of any county resident, allowing for other municipalities to fill in gaps with neighborhood and community sized off-leash dog areas. The current system accomplishes this goal with the exception of the Woodview Open Space off-leash dog area due to its size, reinforcing the need for improvement at this facility or another area nearby to serve this segment of the county. The following maps show the distribution of the county's off-leash dog areas along with drive times and other supporting off-leash areas not provided by the county. Only off-leash areas within Ramsey County boundaries are shown, there are others very close by such as Lock County Park near the northwest corner and Andy's Bark Park located in Woodbury.

Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park Off-Leash Dog Area



Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor Off-Leash Dog Area



Although Ramsey County Parks & Recreation has accomplished the original goal of placing an off-leash area within a twenty minute drive of all county residents there still may be a future need or demand to develop new off-leash dog areas within the park system. Care shall be taken in the selection of any new site that may be developed, taking into account natural resources, proximity to other off-leash dog areas, and the demand for service weighed against conflicts with other recreational programming.

If public demand and support exist to establish a new off-leash area site selection and design shall conform to the standards discussed in the Off-leash Dog Area Master plan. The following process for review, evaluation and site selection of off-leash dog areas shall be followed:

1. A planning team comprised of county staff, off-leash area users and volunteers, and the natural resources manager shall work together to identify potential sites using the guidelines and standards enclosed in the master plan.
2. The planning team will evaluate potential sites according to the master plan guidelines and standards to identify the best possible location(s).
3. Public engagement meetings shall be coordinated to develop a concept plan for the proposed site(s)
4. As a part of the public engagement process a questionnaire shall be developed to address any potential conflicts with other recreational programs/uses, neighbors, trails, etc. that may have been overlooked during site selection.
5. Once a concept plan for the off-leash dog area has been developed it shall be presented at another public engagement meeting for any final changes and to address whether or not there is general support for the project, and to double check the appropriateness of the site making sure that the off-leash area is serving an under served area within the county that does not currently have an off-leash area nearby.
6. Upon acceptance through public engagement of the final concept, Ramsey County staff will evaluate the plan to make cost estimations for the implementation of the project.
7. The final concept along with project cost estimates shall be presented to the County Parks & Recreation Board for acceptance.
8. Upon acceptance county Parks & Recreation staff will work internally and with volunteer groups to fund, create construction documents following the final concept, go through any necessary design reviews, and implement the project.

Implementation

Phasing Priorities

There have been many aspects to off-leash dog areas that have been identified as a part of the Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan that Ramsey County Parks & Recreation needs to address in the future. As such development and implementation of the plan will need to be phased over a period of time. The following list is a proposed timeline of implementation based on needs according to the findings of the master plan.

1. Woodview Open Space Off-leash Dog area is currently in the worst condition of any of the county's off-leash dog areas. There are numerous hazardous trees making the large dog area unsafe along with litter, tractor tires etc. The top priority concerning off-leash areas should be to clean up and make this area safe for the numerous users that use the open space.
2. Woodview Open Space is also the only off-leash dog area that does not meet criteria for a regionally sized off-leash area. Efforts should be made to expand the usable space of the off-leash area. Park patrons are already using space not designated in the off-leash area as evidenced by unmarked trails and dog tracks observed by county staff. The Parks & Recreation System Plan has identified property to the west for acquisition which would be one option. Another would be to expand the off-leash area to the north and west of the path where tracks and trails have been observed. A rough take off shows that the county could expand the current site to approximately ten acres by designating additional space, which would provide a more regionally sized off-leash area serving the southwest area of the county.
3. All existing county off-leash dog areas shall be evaluated and reviewed according to the design guidelines and standards outlined in the Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan. Cost estimations should be put together for each park in order to bring the off-leash area up to the design standards of the master plan. These improvements should then be executed as funding becomes available. Cost estimation should be re-evaluated prior to any new funding request to make sure the amount allotted is in alignment with current construction costs.
4. New off-leash dog areas shall be explored according to the review, evaluation, and site selection criteria outlined in the Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan.

Alternative Delivery Options to Meet Demand

An alternative to the creation of additional fenced off-leash dog areas may be to adjust some park rules to accommodate off-leash activities at some county parks and open spaces. One Precedence of this comes from the city of Minnetonka, where a rule is in place allowing for off-leash dogs on dirt paths or in non-mowed spaces. Another option may be to designate certain fields, open areas etc. for off-leash activity which could be limited to certain hours of the day or week. This would greatly expand off-leash options within the Ramsey County park system with minimal cost.

Programs

Adding programs at the off-leash dog areas seems to be a huge opportunity, and one that people have interest in. Socialization and training programs seem to be popular choices.

If Ramsey County Parks & Recreation considered adding an agility training course, programs could be built around the feature creating an exciting opportunity.

Ramsey County Parks & Recreation is interested in continuing a program implemented in the past where veterinary technical schools come to the park to do free nail trimmings.

Donation System Options

Adding the option of giving donations had overwhelming support in the survey. 32 percent said that they would be very likely to donate, and 55 percent said that they were possibly likely to donate depending on proposed improvements.

People were wary of donations being stolen if a donation box were implemented, but perhaps posting on the bulletin boards an online location to donate would be a good way of collecting donations, or even holding special events once in a while to make improvements. People were especially interested in donating to specific projects for specific dog parks knowing that their donation is going to an area they use. The county could make an event out of it, doing a dog costume contest in Halloween, or other fun events.

Appendix A Off-Leash Dog Area History

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department Off-Leash Dog Area Pilot Program January 8, 1997

Summary

There are several areas throughout the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation system where owners are illegally allowing their dogs off-leash. Recently, a group of dog owners requested that the department consider developing off-leash areas. Parks and Recreation staff have reviewed national and local trends and responses to requests for off-leash areas. Based on expressed demand, historical uses and capacity of park resources, staff recommends establishing a pilot program of two off-leash dog areas.

Background

As urban areas develop, owners increasingly use parks to exercise their dogs. Ordinances control dogs in parks by requiring the use of leashes and restricting areas where dogs are allowed. However, dog owners have recently become more vocal and organized against these restrictions, petitioning for increased freedom with their pets. In response, many agencies have designated spaces where dogs are allowed to exercise and socialize without being leashed.

There are several areas throughout the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation system where owners of dogs are illegally allowing dogs off-leash. Staff regularly observes users at Rice Creek, Grass Lake, Battle Creek, and other parks with dogs off-leash.

Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets (ROMP) made a presentation at the October 8, 1996 Park and Recreation Commission meeting, requesting establishment of one or more designated off-leash dog areas. ROMP cited several successful off-leash programs throughout the United States.

Current park ordinances allow for the creation of specialized off-leash areas. Chapter III, section T, Subsection 3 states: "It shall be unlawful for any person to bring a pet into an authorized area of a park unless caged or on a leash not more than six (6) feet in length, except in a designated pet exercise area."

Comparative analysis

National

Based on an Internet literature search, it appears that the development of off-leash areas is most active on the East and West coasts. This development has been in direct response to citizen's requests for areas where their dogs can exercise and socialize off-leash.

Although not a complete nationwide list, the following is a sample of off-leash areas available on the Internet:

San Francisco Bay Area

- Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve, a 290-acre site, permits dogs off-leash in a 17 acre area located inside a loop road.
- Marin County Open Space District allows dogs off-leash on fire roads.
- The East Bay Regional Park District operates about 76,000 acres, dogs may run off-leash in undeveloped areas.

New York City Area

- 18 neighborhood parks within the New York City area have dog runs.

City of Seattle

- Seattle recently established off-leash areas in seven geographically distributed city parks for a 12-month pilot program.

Local

A survey of Twin Cities agencies that operate regional parks was conducted in the fall of 1996. The following is a summary of metropolitan off-leash policies:

Anoka County

- No official sites, but owners run dogs off-leash in the Chain of Lakes area.

Carver County

- No off-leash sites.

Dakota County

- No off-leash sites.

Hennepin Parks

Hennepin Parks has three designated areas available by special permit for training and exercising pets. The sites are located at Elm Creek Park Reserve, Crow-Hassan Park Reserve, and Lake Sarah Regional Park. Sites are approximately 30 acres. The Elm Creek area is fenced; Crow-Hassan and Lake Sarah have fencing along adjacent roads.

Special use permits of \$25/year provide access to the off-leash area for the permit holder and immediate family members residing in the same household. In addition, an annual parking permit of \$25 is required. 125 special use permits were issued in 1996.

Minneapolis

- No off-leash sites. In 1994, a citizen's group presented a proposal for the creation of an off-leash dog area in Powderhorn Park. According to Park Board staff, the Board initially authorized staff to create the off-leash area for a one-year pilot program. However, this required amending the park ordinance to permit dogs off-leash, which apparently raised additional Board concerns about the impact of this type of activity. The proposal was not implemented.

St. Paul

- There is a designated "Pet Park" in a fenced area near I-94 and 6th Street in Lower Town. The area is approximately one acre, fenced, and covered with wood chips. There is no fee to use the area.

Washington County

- No off-leash sites. There have been requests, but Washington County has decided against providing off-leash sites.

Proposed Pilot Program

Issues	Literature Review	Battle Creek Regional Park-Lower Afton Site	Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor
Site Characteristics	<p>Off-leash areas provide an opportunity for dogs to exercise and socialize. Ideal locations for off-leash activities are areas that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can withstand free-running by dogs without interfering in activities in or around the area. • Are fenced to park boundaries, have natural boundaries, or require minimal fencing. • Are not associated with established recreation interests or attract high concentrations of users. 	<p>Battle Creek Regional Park site is located east of McKnight Road and north of Lower Afton Road. The terrain is hilly and the site contains tall grasses, shrubs, and scattered trees.</p>	<p>Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor site is located north of Sherwood Road and west of Lexington Avenue in Shoreview. The terrain has a slight slope and the site contains tall grasses and shrubs.</p>
Size, Site Layout and Design	<p>The following is a general summary of ideal site areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the area is generally less important than its location and suitability for dogs' use. • Generally, a "rougher" setting is more suitable than a mowed area for free running; however, owners using the area for specialized training prefer a mowed area. • Sites that can be both mowed in part and retain natural areas are best. • Paving is not recommended, but wood chips or paving can be used on paths if necessary. • Contour which varies adds to the appeal for dogs and plants add to the interest and diversity. 	<p>Both sites possess the characteristics desired in an off-leash area: a "rougher" setting, varying terrain, tall grasses, and some trees and shrubs. Each site has sufficient space to establish a 5-6 acre off-leash area and maintain the necessary buffer from existing paths and roads.</p> <p>The following changes would be made to the sites for the pilot program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mowed corridors would provide a transition area from trails and parking lots to the off-leash site. Dogs would be required to be leashed on this corridor until reaching the off-leash area boundary. • Mowed perimeter trails on the sites would help define the off-leash area boundaries. • Additional trails could be mowed to create a more interesting experience for dogs and their owners. <p>Site drawings can be found in Appendix A.</p>	
Boundaries	<p>In most cases, boundaries where free-running is permitted need to be fenced. Fencing is also used where natural barriers are not available to prevent dogs from straying, being injured, or causing a traffic hazard. Finally, clearly identified boundaries are a barrier to other park users who might unknowingly wander into it.</p>	<p>The west boundary of the proposed area would be located approximately 150 feet off of McKnight Road, allowing a growth of pine trees to establish a natural boundary. Other natural boundaries include a ravine to the north and woods to the south and east.</p>	<p>The south boundary would be established approximately 300 feet from the trail corridor's border. The remaining boundaries would be at least 100 feet from any trails.</p> <p>In general, the site would be set apart from the remainder of the trail corridor by trees and tall grasses in the area.</p>
Fencing	<p>A four-foot-high fence will restrain most dogs and slow down others. Higher fences may be needed in some places, such as adjacent to busy public roads and neighboring residential properties.</p>	<p>Although fencing is desirable in some situations, the natural boundaries of these sites would be adequate for the pilot nature of this program.</p>	
Signage	<p>Two types of signage are normally used at off-leash areas: regulatory and advisory. Regulatory signage displays the rules of the facility. Advisory signs caution unsuspected</p>	<p>Signage would be required at each site. The following types of signs would be installed at each location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One general access sign at each corridor entrance directing users to 	

	<p>park users of the activity and indicate park boundaries.</p>	<p>the site;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One rule sign at each entrance to the off-leash area; and, • Site markings to identify the off-leash area boundaries. <p>Additional signage would be posted in other park areas informing users of the designated off-leash areas as needed.</p>
Support Facilities	<p>Support facilities to consider in the establishment of off-leash areas include shelter, toilets, seating, drinking water, and parking.</p>	<p>Parking areas with trash containers currently exist at each site. Restrooms, water, and additional facilities are not proposed for this pilot program.</p>
Disposal of Feces	<p>Users are normally required to clean up after their pets. Some agencies choose to provide bags or scoops for cleaning up, while others require users to supply their own clean-up tools. Feces is usually disposed of in trash containers; however, some disposal units are buried in the ground which permits natural decomposition back into the soil.</p> <p>Dogs are instinctually attracted to long grass for defecating. If a site contains tall grass, feces that is not in mowed areas or on paths could be left to naturally decompose.</p>	<p>Owners would be required to supply their own clean-up tools, pick up after their pets, and dispose of feces in a designated trash container.</p>
Impact on Wildlife and Vegetation	<p>The impact on wildlife and vegetation needs to be determined for each facility. Generally, dogs will have a minimal impact on natural grasses and brush. However, an area might see a decrease ground wildlife and an impact on nesting birds.</p>	<p>Directing pet owners to designated off-leash areas would reduce the negative impact of dogs on natural areas where illegal off-leash activity is occurring, thus resulting in positive system impact.</p> <p>No significant vegetation is present at either site.</p>
Maintenance of Site	<p>Maintaining paths and parking lots, mowing, collecting trash, and other general maintenance is generally required.</p>	<p>Each site currently has parking and limited support facilities. Increased maintenance needs would include mowing the access paths and a portion of the off-leash site, collecting trash, and general upkeep. Parking lots would be plowed in the winter; no other winter maintenance would be performed.</p> <p>Some of the increased maintenance activity could be assumed by R.O.M.P. or other organizations through the Ramsey County Park Partners program.</p>
Rules	<p>The following is a list of rules typically posted at a dog run area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated. • Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off-leash area and in transition corridors. • Owners must be in verbal control of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, biting, fighting or excessive barking. • Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs. • Owners must have a visible leash at all times. • Owners must clean up and dispose of feces. • Dogs in heat are not allowed. • Owners must comply with all other park rules and regulations. 	<p>Rules would be as stated on the left column.</p>

Fees/Charges	Fees and charges vary. Hennepin Parks currently charges \$25 for an annual permit. Many agencies such as the Cities of Seattle and New York City require a city license only.	Ramsey County provides all existing park areas (excluding shelters, pavilions, and Long Lake Beach) free to park users. No additional fees or charges are proposed during this pilot program.
Penalties and Enforcement	Varies.	Ramsey County Parks and Recreation would work closely with the Ramsey County Sheriff to actively enforce the existing dog ordinance. Enforcement would include informing dog owners of the new areas and consistent ticketing of repeat offenders who illegally have their dogs off-leash in non-designated areas.

Recommendation

Parks and Recreation staff proposes a pilot program creating two off-leash dog areas within the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation system, one at Battle Creek Regional Park and one at the Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor. The pilot program would be initiated in early summer 1997 and run through December 31, 1998, subject to funding availability. The department reserves the right to discontinue this program at any time if it is found unacceptable.

Cost

Implementation

The following costs are directly associated with the development of the off-leash areas, excluding staff time:

Item	Cost by Location	
	Battle Creek	Rice Creek
Signage and Boundary Markings	\$1,500	\$1,500

Projected Annual Operating Costs

Item	Cost by Location	
	Battle Creek	Rice Creek
Mowing and General Site Maint. (Bi-weekly, May-Oct, \$105/site)	\$1,260	\$1,260
Trash Removal (Twice per week, year round at \$9)	\$936	\$936
Winter Plowing (10 snowfalls X \$142/snowfall)	currently plowed	\$1,420
Total	\$2,196	\$3,616

Monitoring and Evaluating the Program

This program would have a baseline study prior to opening to estimate current use at each site. The sites would be monitored throughout the program to record number of users. Users would also be asked to complete evaluations periodically throughout the program.

All information would be reviewed at the conclusion of the program and a decision to discontinue, continue as is, or expand the program would be made at that time.

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department Off-Leash Dog Area Pilot Program Summary February 5, 1999

BACKGROUND

A citizens' group, Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets (ROMP), made a presentation at the October 8, 1996, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting requesting establishment of one or more designated off-leash dog areas within the park system. ROMP cited several successful off-leash programs throughout the United States.

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation staff reviewed both local and national response to citizen requests for off-leash areas. On January 11, the Parks and Recreation Commission endorsed a staff proposal to establish two off-leash areas for a pilot program beginning June 27, 1997 and running through December 31, 1998.

The off-leash areas were located at Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor in Shoreview and the Lower Afton area of Battle Creek Regional Park in Maplewood. The areas were not associated with established recreation areas, one of the criteria in site selection. The Rice Creek site was approximately five acres; Battle Creek was approximately 4 acres. Mowed corridors (where pets are required to be leashed) provided transition areas from trails and parking lots. Mowed perimeter trails and signage defined the off-leash area boundaries.

The creation of the sites was not part of the department's 1997 operating budget. In recognition of the cooperative effort between the department and the citizens' group, ROMP provided a donation of \$3,000 for the signage and boundary markings. The department provided staff time and equipment to prepare the sites.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Ramsey County's pilot off-leash dog area program concluded on December 31, 1998. The proposal to establish the pilot program indicated that an evaluation of the program would be conducted at its conclusion. This evaluation would determine the future direction of the program, which included discontinuing the program, continuing as is or expanding the program.

In order to effectively evaluate the program and determine the future direction, seven evaluation criteria were established:

1. Number of users;
2. Public comments;
3. Natural resource impact;
4. Reduction of illegal activity in other park areas;
5. Expenses associated with the program; and,
6. Off-leash activity occurring in other agencies.

Number of Users

Two methods of monitoring were used to determine the number of users: staff counts and a ROMP sign-in book. However, since department staff is not typically in the park system continuously throughout the day, exact use numbers are not available. The following represents an estimation of use:

a. Staff Counts

Prior to opening the off-leash areas, some off-leash use was observed by staff, although usually not in designated sites. Throughout program: Use would depend on day and time visited. Use was most prevalent during the late afternoon/early evening on weekdays, and Saturday and Sunday throughout the day. Staff

most frequently observed 5-10 human users.

b. Romp Sign-In Book Examples (1998) for Battle Creek

Dates	Number of Users
February 13 - February 19	95
April 11 - April 17	211
June 11 - June 17	196
August 11 - August 17	188
October 11 - October 17	196

(ROMP estimates number under-reported by approximately 30%.)

Public Comments

Public comments on the program were received in a variety of methods, including letters, e-mail, web site comments, and phone calls. In addition, the department held a community meeting on Tuesday, January 12, 1999, before the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission to receive comments on the program. Eighty-one members of the community attended the meeting.

a. **In Support of the Program**

- 14 e-mail comments
- 31 telephone calls
- 7 letters
- 127 comment cards

b. **Concerns About the Program**

- Three calls received regarding a perceived increase in illegal off-leash activity near sites.
- One call reporting owner’s dog being attacked by stray dog.
- One call reporting injured dog. Owner originally thought injury was caused by a trap, but no traps were found.

c. **Community Meeting**

Members of the community who attended the meeting were asked to respond to four questions. Comments were summarized as follows:

Should Ramsey County provide off-leash dog areas?

There was unanimous consent that Ramsey County should provide off-leash dog areas. Individuals cited several positive outcomes of the off-leash dog areas in support of their position, including:

- Off-leash dog areas help build community by bringing together individuals of varying interests, abilities and ages.
- Off-leash dog areas help keep dogs and people active by getting out of their homes and into the parks.
- Dogs have an important role in families and the off-leash areas provide a positive focus for families.
- Off-leash activity is a valid recreation use of parkland.

How well did the pilot off-leash dog areas function?

Individuals were generally satisfied with the pilot program sites. However, they frequently suggested changes that would enhance the sites. Comments included:

- The pilot program sites provided common meeting space for dogs and their owners.
- Dogs had the opportunity to socialize with people, other than their owners, meeting strangers and learning tolerance and manners.
- People followed the rules, cleaned up after their dogs, supervised and controlled their dogs and even extended themselves beyond baseline responsibility.

What were the positive aspects of the off-leash dog areas in the pilot program and what changes would you recommend?

Positive Aspects

- Dogs could run free of the usual hindrances without breaking the law.
- Increased health, longevity and well-being for people and dogs.
- Off-leash recreation benefits the dogs, their owners and the general public.
- Sites are used throughout all seasons of the year.

Recommended Changes

- Add more sites.
- Increase the size of the sites to 10-20 acres.
- Add more trash receptacles.
- Install fencing.
- Consider lighting for winter use.
- Allow dogs off leash on entry paths.
- Consider inner-city locations.
- Provide "clean" water for dog swimming and cooling-off.
- Provide people facilities, including restrooms and drinking water.

In your opinion, what are the desirable elements of an ideal off-leash dog area?

- Clean water for dogs' use.
- Drinking water for people.
- Restroom facilities.
- Variety of terrain.
- Safe, convenient parking.
- Fencing.
- Safety from traffic.
- Trash receptacles.
- Sites with 10-20 acres.
- Inner-city location.
- Lighting for winter use.
- Adequate signage to inform users and non-users of the areas and the associated rules.

Additional comments:

- Consider time-share areas such as waterfronts and trails.
- Consider use fees to provide off-leash dog areas.

Natural Resource Impact

The department's Natural Resource Specialist conducted an evaluation of the impact off-leash dog areas have on the natural resources associated with the pilot program sites:

- No apparent impact on vegetation or larger wildlife species.
- Some impact on nesting birds is possible.
- Would not recommend using wooded areas due to potential for increased erosion and greater impact on wildlife.

Reduction of Illegal Activity in Other Park Areas

The department attempted to determine the effect the off-leash dog areas had on reducing illegal off-leash activity in other park areas. Generally, enforcing illegal off-leash activity is a low priority for law enforcement. Therefore, data is difficult to obtain. The Ramsey County Sheriff Lakes and Trails Unit indicates no perceived difference. In addition, the City of Maplewood indicates that the areas have had little impact, either positive or negative, primarily due to lack of knowledge of the sites.

Expenses Associated With the Program

- Rule and Directional Signage: \$550 per site
- Boundary Markings: \$425 per site
- Temporary Fencing (Battle Creek only): \$650
- Minimal operating costs. (Bi-weekly trash removal, occasional mowing, occasional snow compaction with groomer.)
- Materials provided by donation made on behalf of ROMP.
- Department provided all labor.

Off-Leash Activity Occurring in Other Metropolitan Agencies

Anoka County

- Occasional requests from the public, primarily received by operations staff.
- Discussed concept internally and identified one possible site (Rum River Central) when park undergoes redevelopment in 2-4 years.
- Park users generally disregard current ordinance due to limited enforcement.

City of Bloomington

- Task force established to consider issue.
- Preliminary findings indicate two one-acre sites in city parks.
- Early summer implementation.

Dakota County

- Department has received informal requests from the public.
- Discussed internally, but no current plans.
- Expect to consider issue in 1999.

Hennepin Parks

- Currently has three sites in operation, each approximately 30 acres in size located in the outer tier areas of the county. No planned modifications to current sites.
- Special use permit (\$25) required for use of any site.
- Some discussion to add a site in one Southern Division park, but no site selected.

City of Minneapolis

- Citizens Advisory Committee established to study issue.
- Recommended that the City and Park Board establish a minimum of six to ten initial sites throughout Minneapolis that will be operational within the next 12-18 months.

Suggested one site per park district, with additional sites placed in areas of identified need.

City of St. Paul

- One small area (<1 acre) near Mears Park to accommodate condominium residents.
- Internal discussion, but no formal discussion at the Park Commission level.
- Mayor's Office has received complaints regarding leash laws, primarily after being cited for illegal off-leash activity.

Washington County

- No formal request from park users, except for ski touring and dog sledding.
- Have identified a potential area in Lake Elmo Park Reserve, but without expressed need, will not move concept forward.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department has determined that the two off-leash pilot areas were successful. In order to implement the complete program, the department will develop an administrative policy on off-leash areas. The administrative policy will:

- Identify the characteristics, amenities, and operation of Ramsey County's off-leash areas.
- Define the number and general geographical location of the site(s) in the Ramsey County park system.
- Establish a process for reviewing and evaluating sites.

The pilot program sites will remain in operation as established in the pilot program until the administrative policy is developed and implemented. These sites will then be subject to review based on the criteria established in the administrative policy.

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department

Off-Leash Dog Area Administrative Policy

April 13, 1999

Background

A citizens' group, Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets (ROMP), made a presentation at the October 8, 1996, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting requesting establishment of one or more designated off-leash dog areas within the park system. ROMP cited several successful off-leash programs throughout the United States. Ramsey County Park Ordinance Chapter 3, Section T requires pets to be caged or on a leash not more than six (6) feet in length, except in a designated pet exercise or training area.

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation staff reviewed both local and national response to citizen requests for off-leash areas. On January 11, 1997, the Parks and Recreation Commission endorsed a staff proposal to establish two off-leash areas for a pilot program beginning June 27, 1997 and running through December 31, 1998.

Upon conclusion of the pilot program, it was evaluated based on six criteria:

1. Number of users;
2. Public comments;
3. Natural resource impact;
4. Reduction of illegal activity in other park areas;
5. Expenses associated with the program; and,
6. Off-leash activity occurring in other agencies.

Results of the pilot program found that the provision of off-leash dog exercise areas are a legitimate recreational program that can be accommodated at carefully selected sites within the County park system. The following administrative policy defines the number and general geographical location of the site(s) in the Ramsey County park system; identifies the characteristics, amenities, and operation of Ramsey County's off-leash areas; discusses accessibility goals; and establishes a process for reviewing, evaluating, and selecting sites.

POLICY

The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department will endeavor to provide off-leash dog exercise areas that serve multiple communities within the County. Off-leash dog exercise areas will be separate from any current or planned recreational use areas.

The following additional general guidelines will apply:

- Attempts will be made to locate an off-leash area within a twenty-minute drive of any residence in the county. However, it is recognized that Ramsey County does not own parkland in the south and west portions of the City of St. Paul. Accordingly, the City of St. Paul will be encouraged to provide these regional facilities.
- County off-leash areas will be geographically located to compliment "close to home" municipal areas.
- Sites will be designated in areas that will have minimal impact to significant natural resources. Proposed sites will be evaluated by the County's Natural Resource Specialist for potential impact.
- Up to four sites will be established in the Ramsey County Park System.
- Sites must be consistent with municipal zoning and/or park master plans.

Site Characteristics

A. Size

Sites will be approximately ten acres, including buffer zones.

B. Buffer Zones

Where feasible, sites will include a 100' buffer zone around their perimeter to avoid conflict with other park users or adjacent land uses. Improvements within the buffer zone will be limited to perpendicular access trails. Off-leash dogs will be allowed in the buffer zone at the discretion of their owners.

C. Perimeter Markings

The boundary of each site will be delineated with Carsonite type markings located at 100' intervals around the perimeter. Each Carsonite marking will have a decal applied to both sides indicating the boundary of an off-leash dog area.

D. Fencing

Where a 100' buffer zone is feasible, fencing will not be installed. However, if a 100' buffer zone is not feasible due to specific site characteristics or proximity to other recreational use areas, a fence will be considered, subject to funding availability.

E. Signage

Rules signs will be posted at each entrance to the off-leash area. Directional signs may be placed at parking areas or trail entrances where necessary to direct users to the off-leash areas.

F. Water Access for Dog Use

Access to water for dog use will be a high priority in selecting off-leash sites. Where suitable water resources do not exist within an off-leash site, auxiliary water access sites may be considered in areas adjacent to off-leash sites. Water access for dogs at other park use areas (such as swimming areas, boat access sites, etc.) will not be permitted.

Support Facilities

A. Parking

A minimum of ten vehicular parking spaces will be provided at each off-leash area. In areas where multiple activities exist (such as trail use), additional parking will be provided where feasible.

B. Drinking Water (Potable)

Potable water will not be provided for the off-leash sites, unless currently provided.

C. Restroom Facilities

Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to off-leash areas. In most cases, these will be portable facilities.

D. Trash Receptacles

Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional trash receptacles may be placed in parking areas or where deemed necessary.

E. Picnic Tables/Benches

Picnic tables and/or benches will be provided in each off-leash area.

Disabled Access

Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. At least one site within the system will include an accessible trail from the parking lot to the interior of the site. At other sites where access is limited, the County will work with users to improve accessibility.

Use Policies

The following use policies will apply:

- Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated.
- Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off-leash area and in transition corridors.
- Owners must be in verbal control of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, biting, fighting or excessive barking.
- Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs.
- Owners must have a visible leash at all times.
- Owners must clean up and dispose of feces.
- Dogs in heat are not allowed.
- Owners must comply with all other park rules and regulations.

Fees will not be charged for the use of the off-leash areas.

Review, Evaluation, and Site Selection

The implementation of this administrative policy will begin a process for reviewing, evaluating, and selecting sites. This process will involve five steps:

1. County staff will identify candidate sites that meet the criteria outlined in this policy.
2. A planning team comprised of four off-leash dog area users and County staff will review candidate sites, including on-site visits.
3. County staff will identify expenses associated with establishing and maintaining each site. Staff and users will work together to explore possible funding sources for development and ongoing maintenance.
4. County staff will develop a timeline for establishing each site.
5. County staff and users will work to establish each site.

The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department will monitor the criteria and sites established under this policy. It reserves the right to modify the policy and/or sites to maintain park resources, address public health and safety issues, or to meet changing use patterns.

4/16/99

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department

Off-Leash Dog Area Program Implementation

March 14, 2000

Background

A citizens' group, Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets (ROMP), made a presentation at the October 8, 1996, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission meeting requesting establishment of one or more designated off-leash dog areas within the park system. ROMP cited several successful off-leash programs throughout the United States. Ramsey County Park Ordinance Chapter 3, Section T requires pets to be caged or on a leash not more than six (6) feet in length, except in a designated pet exercise or training area.

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation staff reviewed both local and national response to citizen requests for off-leash areas. On January 11, 1997, the Parks and Recreation Commission endorsed a staff proposal to establish two off-leash areas for a pilot program beginning June 27, 1997 and running through December 31, 1998.

The pilot program was evaluated based on six criteria:

1. Number of users;
2. Public comments;
3. Natural resource impact;
4. Reduction of illegal activity in other park areas;
5. Expenses associated with the program; and,
6. Off-leash activity occurring in other agencies.

Results of the pilot program found that the provision of off-leash dog exercise areas is a legitimate recreational program that can be accommodated at carefully selected sites within the County park system. The Off-Leash Dog Area Administrative Policy was developed, which established criteria for the program, including:

- The number and general geographical location of the site(s) in the Ramsey County park system;
- The characteristics, amenities, and operation of Ramsey County's off-leash areas;
- Accessibility goals; and,
- A process for reviewing, evaluating, and selecting sites.

Site Review Summary

In August of 1999, a site review team was formed to examine possible changes to the pilot program sites, and considered additional sites for program expansion. The site review team members were off-leash users who resided in different geographic regions of the County, as well as a Parks and Recreation Commission liaison and department representatives:

- Roseanne Carbone, St. Paul
- Barb Heideman, Falcon Heights
- Rose Quaday, Shoreview
- Laura Jean Rathmann, St. Paul
- Deb Schneider, White Bear Lake
- Philip Jenni, St. Paul (Park and Recreation Commission Liaison)

- Larry Holmberg, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department
- Greg Mack, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department
- Bill Schnieder, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department
- Mark Themig, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department

The review team examined six sites to determine how each site would meet the criteria established in the Administrative Policy. The following are the results of the review:

Site	Summary of Review	Summary of Findings
Battle Creek Regional Park, Maplewood (Pilot Program Site)	Reviewed site for possible expansion to north to increase size and permit access to water.	Existing site meets criteria and expansion will better serve increasing use. Expansion will also provide access to water for dog use. <i>Expansion of site to north is recommended.</i>
Woodview - Reservoir Woods Open Space, Roseville	Reviewed both the Woodview Open Space (operated by Ramsey County) and the Reservoir Woods Open Space (operated by the City of Roseville) for possible location of additional off-leash area.	Reservoir Woods: Roseville's master plan for this site will not accommodate off-leash activity. Woodview: Site meets criteria and serves population in the center of the County. Potential for accessible area at site. <i>Creation of site at Woodview Open Space is recommended.</i>
Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park, White Bear Township	Two sites were reviewed for possible creation of off-leash area: Bald Eagle segment and Otter Lake segment.	Bald Eagle Segment: Site lacks close parking. Master plan indicates trail development, which may interfere with off-leash use. Otter Lake Segment: Site meets criteria, has existing parking, and a variety of terrain and vegetation. <i>Creation of site at Otter Lake is recommended.</i>
Rice Creek Regional Trail Corridor, Shoreview	Site was reviewed for possible dog access to Rice Creek.	Water access would be separate from existing facility, require extensive fencing, and provide limited access area. <i>Providing access to water at Rice Creek is not recommended. Minor expansion of existing site is recommended.</i>
Vadnais-Snail Lakes Regional Park, Shoreview	Two sites were reviewed for possible water access: north side of	Sites do not meet criteria. North side has extensive vegetation along

	Snail Lake and south side of Snail Lake.	shoreline. South side has limited space and is adjacent to active recreation areas. <i>Providing water access is not recommended at either site.</i>
Island Lake County Park, Shoreview	Site was reviewed for possible water access to Island Lake.	Site does not meet criteria. Vegetation is extensive along shoreline and site size is limited. <i>Providing water access is not recommended at this site.</i>

Proposed Action

The following outlines proposed action. However, implementation of any of these steps depends on the availability of funding.

1. Expand the Battle Creek site north to provide water access.*
2. Create an additional off-leash site at Otter Lake.*
3. Realign parking lot and conduct minor expansion at Rice Creek.*
4. Create site at Woodview Open Space with additional accessible area.*
5. Continue to research and attempt to identify additional water access areas.

(*Details on proposed action follow.)

Funding

Funds have not been allocated in the department's operating budget for this program. In order to implement the program, funding sources will need to be explored. As with other elements of the off-leash efforts, a partnership with the off-leash area users to explore funding will facilitate implementation of the program. Three possible funding opportunities have been identified:

1. Corporate Sponsorship and/or Grants

Funding may be available from corporations such as pet food suppliers, veterinarian suppliers, granting agencies, etc. If these types of sources are identified, it might be more beneficial to have off-leash users apply for any funding, rather than the County.

2. User Donations

Donations were received for the creation of the pilot program. Additional funds could be solicited from users to continue development.

3. User fees

The concept of user fees could be explored. Although fees are charged for special use areas such as picnic shelters and pavilions, fees are not charged for general park use. In addition to developing fee policies and procedures, the issue of enforcement would need to be considered in greater detail.

Battle Creek Regional Park

Off-Leash Dog Area

Summary

- This pilot program site was evaluated for its current use, as well as possible expansion.
- Due to increased publicity and proximity to St. Paul, use at this site has grown considerably over the past three years.
- User comments have indicated a desire for increased space, as well as access to water for dog use that is currently out of the site boundaries.
- Many users have expressed concern regarding McKnight Road. Fencing should be installed along McKnight.

Proposed Action

- Extend off-leash border north to provide access to pond.
- Relocate existing boundary markings to accurately reflect off-leash border.
- Relocate trail away from small pond to reduce erosion.
- Install crossing or bridge at deep culvert.
- Re-route trail around second culvert.
- Maintain existing circular trail.
- Install fencing along McKnight from southern border of area to north of pond.
- Install gate at McKnight entrance.

Potential Future Action

- Create new access to the off-leash area from the new Upper Afton parking lot.
- Install bulletin board at picnic table.
- Improve turf in high use areas.

Timeline

- Spring 2000, pending available funding.

Application of Administrative Policy

Characteristic	Policy Goal	Review Team Findings	Estimated Costs
Size	Sites should be approximately 10 acres.	Expansion of the site to the north would create an additional 4.5 acres, creating a total off-leash area of 10.9 acres.	
Buffer Zones	100' buffer zone should be established around perimeter to avoid conflict with other park users or adjacent land uses.	Buffer zone could be established throughout the majority of the site. However, the perimeter may come close to a trail running along McKnight.	

Perimeter Markings	Carsonite markings with labels placed every 100'. Estimated pricing per marking (with labels on front and back) is \$17.25.	Perimeter is approximately 4,000'. Approximately 30 markings exist. Additional 10 markings would be needed.	\$170.25
Fencing	Where 100' buffer zone is not feasible, fencing may be considered to buffer use areas. Estimated pricing on "hog wire" type fencing (installed) is \$3.50/linear ft. Double gates run approximately \$400.	Fencing along McKnight should be considered. Pilot program users have expressed concern about the proximity of the site to McKnight. Approximately 1275 feet of fencing would be required.	Fencing = \$4,500 Double Gate = \$400
Signage	Rules signs will be posted at each entrance to the off-leash area. Directional signs may be posted where necessary. Estimated sign pricing is \$250 for rules signs, \$100 for directional signs.	Two rule signs exist. A third rule sign and directional sign may be required if an official access is created to the north.	\$350
Water Access for Dogs	Access to water for dog use will be a high priority.	Expansion of the site will provide water access to small pond on north end of site.	
Parking	A minimum of 10 vehicular parking spaces will be provided.	Ample parking exists at the Lower Afton lot. Additional parking exists at Upper Afton.	
Drinking Water	Potable water will not be provided, unless in place.	Drinking water available at picnic pavilion.	
Restroom Facilities	Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to the off-leash areas. In most cases, these will be portable facilities.	Portable restroom currently being provided at the Lower Afton parking lot.	\$55/month
Trash Receptacles	Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional receptacles will be provided where necessary.	Two receptacles are in place. If access is created from the north (Upper Afton Lot), an additional receptacle may be required.	
Picnic Tables/Benches	A picnic table or bench will be provided for each off-leash area.	One picnic table in use. No additional tables proposed.	
Accessibility	Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. At least one site in the system will include an accessible trail from the parking lot to the interior of the site.	Developing an official trail link to Upper Afton parking lot could provide accessibility to site. However, making entire site accessible would be difficult due to terrain.	

Woodview Open Space

Off-Leash Dog Area

Summary

- This possible expansion site was identified because it could serve the population in the center of the county.
- It is a large open space site that is currently underutilized. The primary use area would be an area that was previously used as garden plots. However, this site may not be useable during wet period.

- An additional 1.2 acre area could be made accessible but would need to be fenced.
- Parking does not exist on the site. However, future plans include a parking lot and trail access to the Reservoir Woods area. Fencing may be needed along trail segment.
 - Larpenteur Avenue is a busy street and fencing may be necessary on the roadside perimeter.
 - There is no water access.

Proposed Action

- Create site with primary access off of Larpenteur Avenue.
- Trail/path route would need to be determined and cleared.
- Create additional accessible fenced site.

Timeline

- Summer 2000, pending available funding.

Application of Administrative Policy

Characteristic	Policy Goal	Review Team Findings	Estimated Costs
Size	Sites should be approximately 10 acres.	Initial boundaries indicate that the primary site would be 8 acres, with an additional 1.2 acre accessible area.	
Buffer Zones	100' buffer zone should be established around perimeter to avoid conflict with other park users or adjacent land uses.	No existing uses. However, future trail and parking lot would require fencing in some areas.	
Perimeter Markings	Carsonite markings with labels placed every 100'. Estimated pricing per marking (with labels on front and back) is \$17.25.	Perimeter is approximately 2,500'. Approximately 25 markings would be needed.	\$431.25
Fencing	Where 100' buffer zone is not feasible, fencing may be considered to buffer use areas. Estimated pricing on "hog wire" type fencing (installed) is \$3.50/linear ft. Double gates run approximately \$400.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fencing along Larpenteur should be considered (900'). • Additional fencing along trail may be needed (770'). • Entire accessible site would need fencing (900'). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fencing along Larpenteur = \$3,150 • Fencing along trail = \$2,695 • Accessible area fencing = \$3,150 • Double Gates (2) = \$800
Signage	Rules signs will be posted at each entrance to	Two rule signs would need to be installed.	\$500

	the off-leash area. Directional signs may be posted where necessary. Estimated sign pricing is \$250 for rules signs, \$100 for directional signs.		
Water Access for Dogs	Access to water for dog use will be a high priority.	No water access available.	
Parking	A minimum of 10 vehicular parking spaces will be provided.	Construction of 20-car parking lot is planned for 2000 and funded by the City of Roseville.	
Drinking Water	Potable water will not be provided, unless in place.	No drinking water.	
Restroom Facilities	Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to the off-leash areas. In most cases, these will be portable facilities.	Portable restrooms would be provided.	\$55/month
Trash Receptacles	Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional receptacles will be provided where necessary.	Trash receptacles would be provided at each entrance.	
Picnic Tables/Benches	A picnic table or bench will be provided for each off-leash area.	One picnic table would be provided.	
Accessibility	Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. At least one site in the system will include an accessible trail from the parking lot to the interior of the site.	Potential for creation of smaller accessible area with paved trail access. Due to proximity of parking lot and trail, fencing would be needed.	Cost of paved trails (to be determined).

Bald Eagle/Otter Lakes Regional Park

Off-Leash Dog Area

Summary

- This possible expansion site was identified because it could serve residents in the northeastern part of the County. The site is a large open space area that is not established for other types of recreational use. It is relatively flat, with both wooded and open areas.
- Although much of the site is adjacent to Otter Lake, weeds would limit water access to only the boat launch area. It is thought that this would not conflict with boaters because the launch has relatively low use.
- Existing parking is available.
- Fencing along Otter Lake Road may need to be considered.

Proposed Action

- Create site with access from the parking lot south of the boat launch.
- Boat launch area could provide water access.
- Area along Otter Lake Road may need fencing.

Timeline

- Spring, 2000

Application of Administrative Policy

Characteristic	Policy Goal	Review Team Findings	Estimated Costs
Size	Sites should be approximately 10 acres.	Initial boundaries locations indicate that the site would be 12.3 acres.	
Buffer Zones	100' buffer zone should be established around perimeter to avoid conflict with other park users or adjacent land uses.	The only existing use is boat launch parking and unofficial walking trails. Throughout the majority of the site, a buffer zone could be established. However, additional signage may be needed in the boat launch area if water access is permitted.	
Perimeter Markings	Carsonite markings with labels placed every 100'. Estimated pricing per marking (with labels on front and back) is \$17.25.	Perimeter is approximately 3,568'. Approximately 35 markings would be needed.	\$603.75
Fencing	Where 100' buffer zone is not feasible, fencing may be considered to buffer use areas. Estimated pricing on "hog wire" type fencing (installed) is \$3.50/linear ft. Double gates run approximately \$400.	Fencing along Otter Lake Road may need to be considered. Approximately 1,111 feet of fencing would be required.	\$3,900
Signage	Rules signs will be posted at each entrance to the off-leash area. Directional signs may be posted where necessary. Estimated sign pricing is \$250 for rules signs, \$100 for directional signs.	One rule sign would need to be installed	\$250
Water Access for Dogs	Access to water for dog use will be a high priority.	Water access is available at the boat launch. Weeds prohibit access at other points.	
Parking	A minimum of 10 vehicular parking spaces will be provided.	The current parking lot can accommodate users.	
Drinking Water	Potable water will not be provided, unless in place.	No drinking water.	
Restroom Facilities	Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to the off-leash areas. In most cases, these will be portable facilities.	Portable restrooms would be provided.	\$55/month
Trash Receptacles	Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional receptacles will be provided where necessary.	Trash receptacles would be provided at the entrance.	
Picnic Tables/Benches	A picnic table or bench will be provided for each off-leash area.	One picnic table would be provided.	
Accessibility	Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. At least one site in the system will include an accessible trail from the parking lot to the interior of the site.	Accessibility to site is possible, but gravel lot would make accessibility difficult. In addition, terrain limits accessibility in the site.	

Rice Creek Trail Corridor

Off-Leash Dog Area

Summary

- This pilot program site was evaluated for its current use, as well as possible access to Rice Creek on the east side of Lexington Avenue. However, the shoreline, vegetation, and distance from the existing parking lot do not make this option feasible. A small pond is used by some dogs, although the water level drops in late summer.
- Parking is available, but the popularity of the site has exceeded the lot's capacity. A realignment of the existing site is needed to create additional spaces.
- Expansion of the site to include the wooded area will provide better access and a variety of vegetation.

Proposed Action

- Expand the northern boundary to include the wooded area.
- Relocate the access trail to reduce erosion around pond.
- Realign the parking lot to increase the number of parking spaces.

Future Action

- Construction of new entrance road and paved parking lot.

Timeline

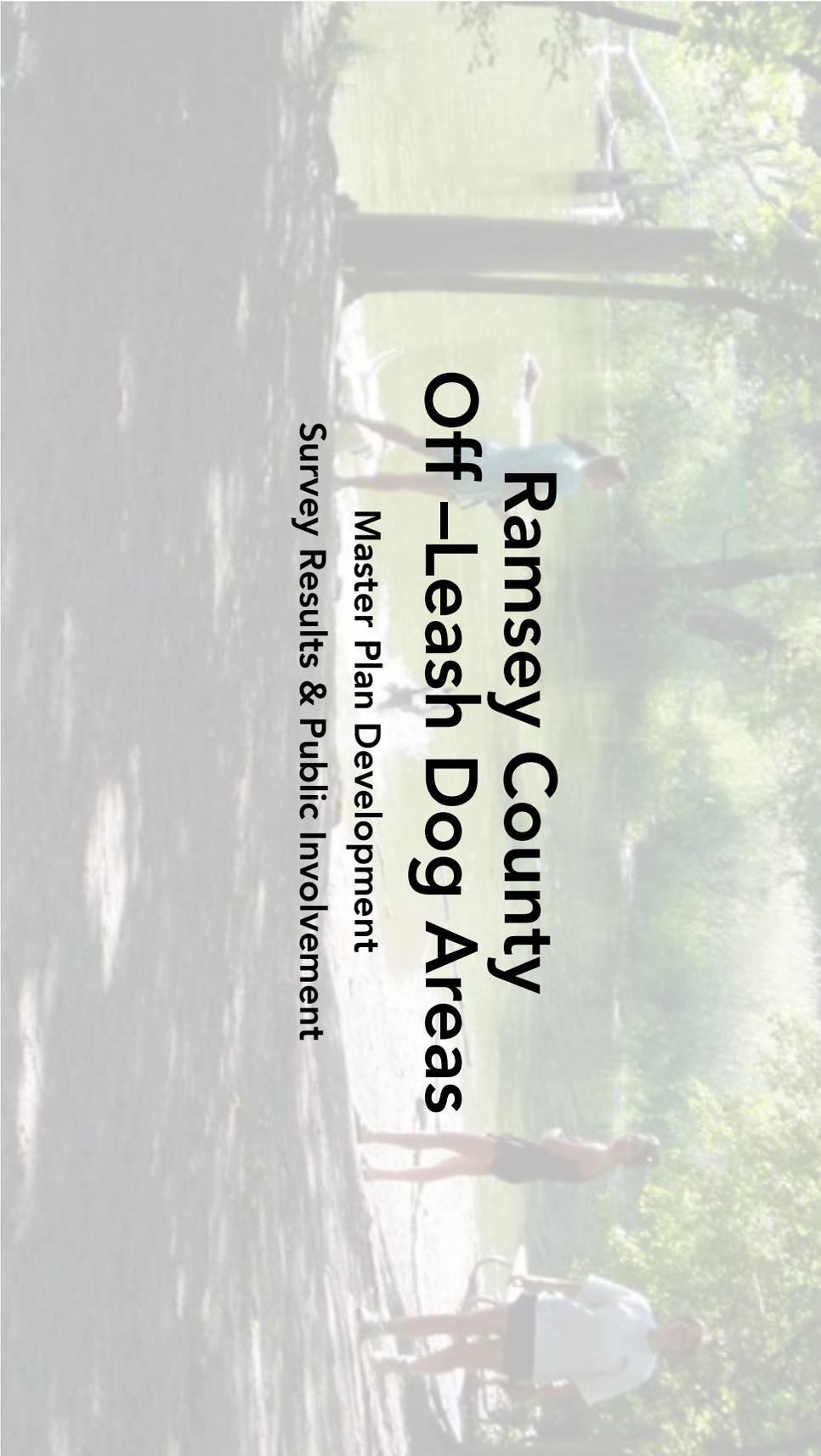
- Spring, 2000

Application of Administrative Policy

Characteristic	Policy Goal	Review Team Findings	Estimated Costs
Size	Sites should be approximately 10 acres.	Minor expansion of this site would result in approximately 14.8 acres.	
Buffer Zones	100' buffer zone should be established around perimeter to avoid conflict with other park users or adjacent land uses.	Appropriate buffer zones currently exist, and could also be incorporated when relocating the buffer zone.	
Perimeter Markings	Carsonite markings with labels placed every 100'. Estimated pricing per marking (with labels on front and back) is \$17.25.	Perimeter is approximately 3,253'. Approximately 20 markings exist. An additional 13 markings would be needed.	\$224.25

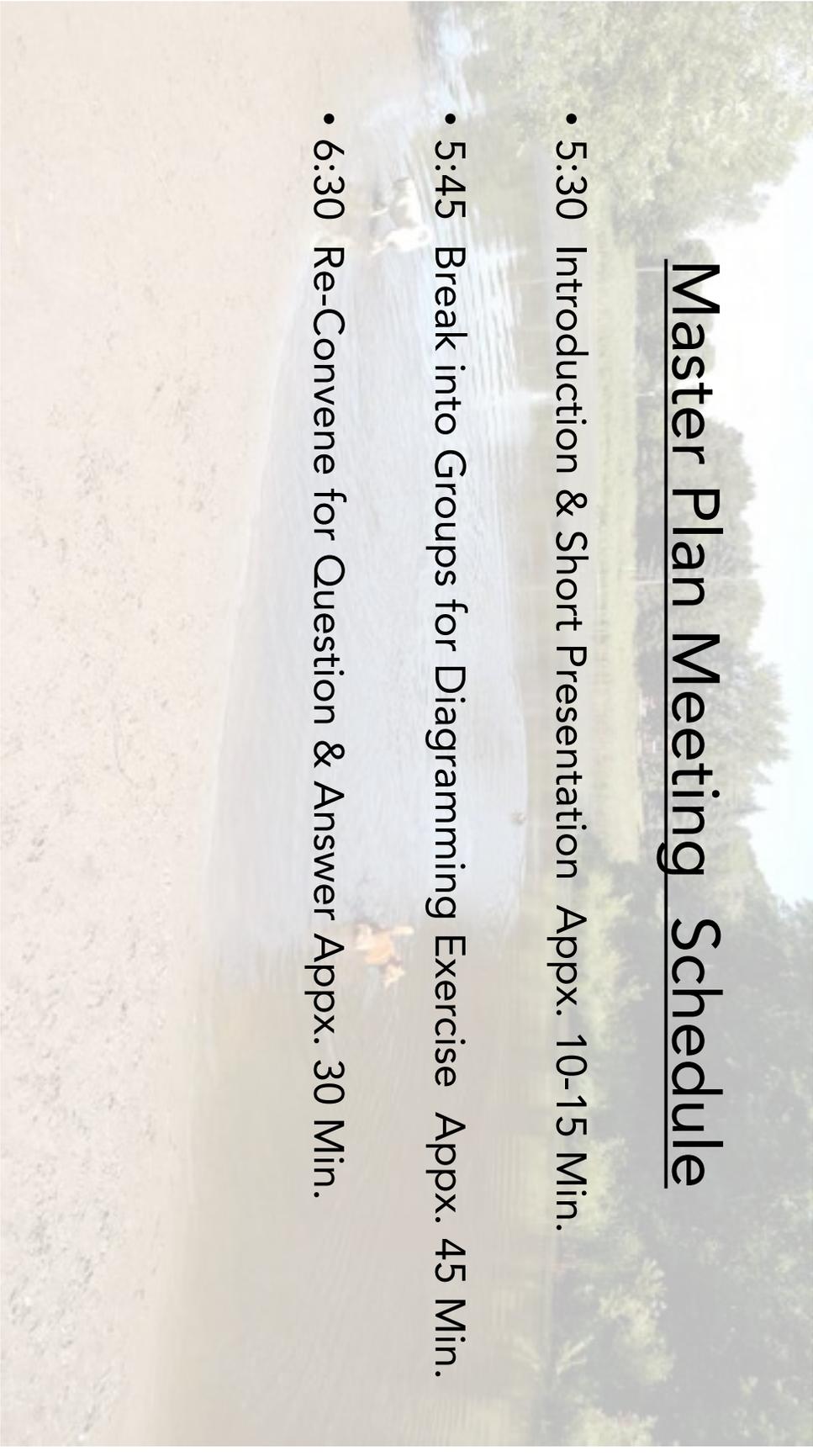
Fencing	Where 100' buffer zone is not feasible, fencing may be considered to buffer use areas. Estimated pricing on "hog wire" type fencing (installed) is \$3.50/linear ft. Double gates run approximately \$400.	Not required at this site.	
Signage	Rules signs will be posted at each entrance to the off-leash area. Directional signs may be posted where necessary. Estimated sign pricing is \$250 for rules signs, \$100 for directional signs.	Two rule signs exist. No additional signs required.	
Water Access for Dogs	Access to water for dog use will be a high priority.	Water access is available at the pond. No other water access will be provided.	
Parking	A minimum of 10 vehicular parking spaces will be provided.	14 parking spaces exist, but it is not adequate capacity. Realignment of the existing lot would result in 24 total spaces. Master plan for the Regional Trail Corridor calls for removal of existing parking lot and creation of 30-carpaved lot with access road, funded through regional park funds.	\$1,000
Drinking Water	Potable water will not be provided, unless in place.	No drinking water.	
Restroom Facilities	Restroom facilities will be provided in close proximity to the off-leash areas. In most cases, these will be portable facilities.	Portable restroom would be provided.	\$55/month
Trash Receptacles	Trash receptacles and removal service will be provided at each entrance point. Additional receptacles will be provided where necessary.	Trash receptacles are located at the parking lot.	
Picnic Tables/Benches	A picnic table or bench will be provided for each off-leash area.	One picnic table is provided.	
Accessibility	Priority will be given to sites that can accommodate access for individuals with disabilities. At least one site in the system will include an accessible trail from the parking lot to the interior of the site.	Long-term plans include installation of paved parking lot that could provide accessibility in the future.	

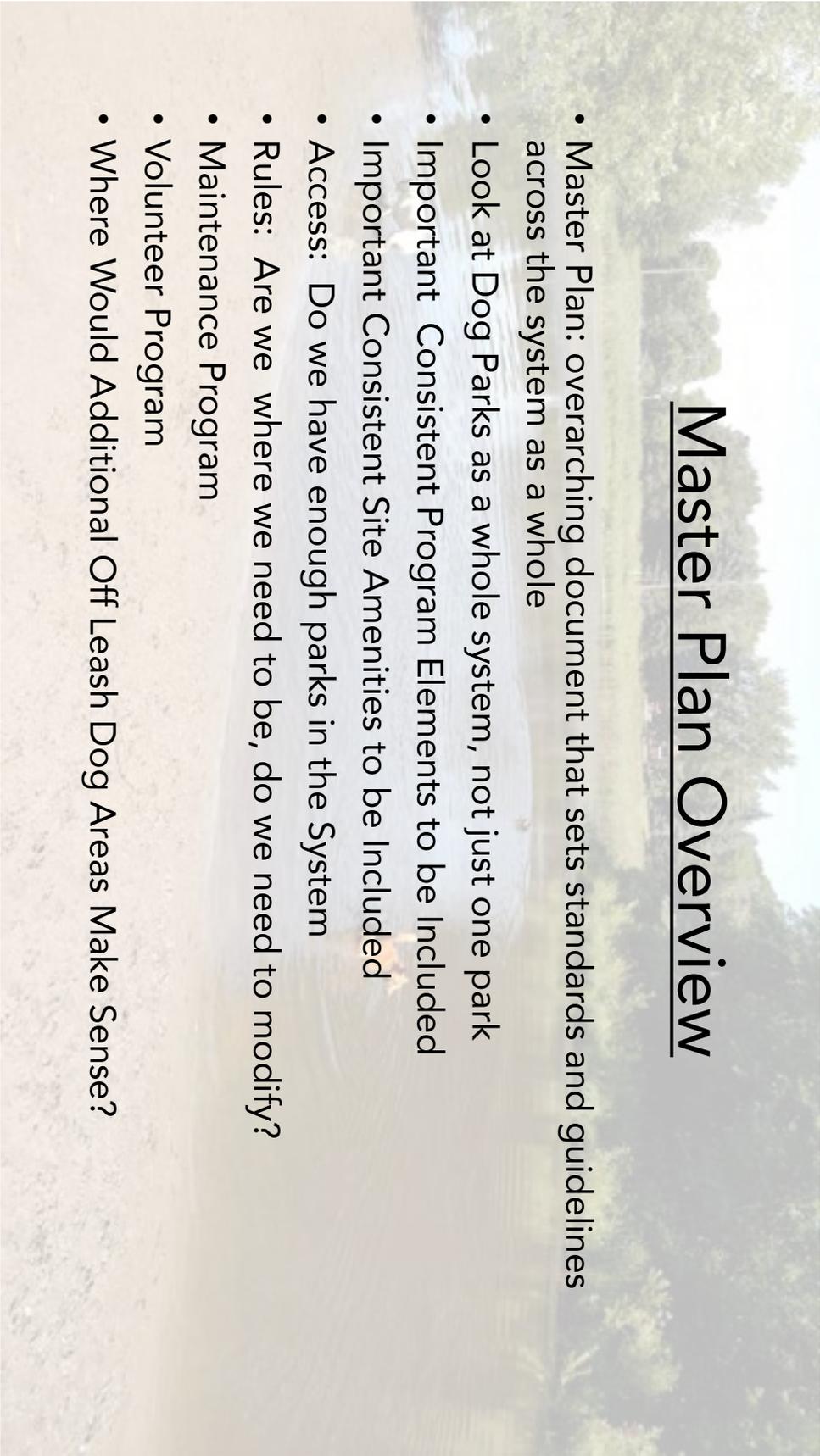
Appendix B Ramsey County Parks & Recreation department Public Engagement Presentation



Master Plan Meeting Schedule

- 5:30 Introduction & Short Presentation Appx. 10-15 Min.
- 5:45 Break into Groups for Diagramming Exercise Appx. 45 Min.
- 6:30 Re-Convene for Question & Answer Appx. 30 Min.



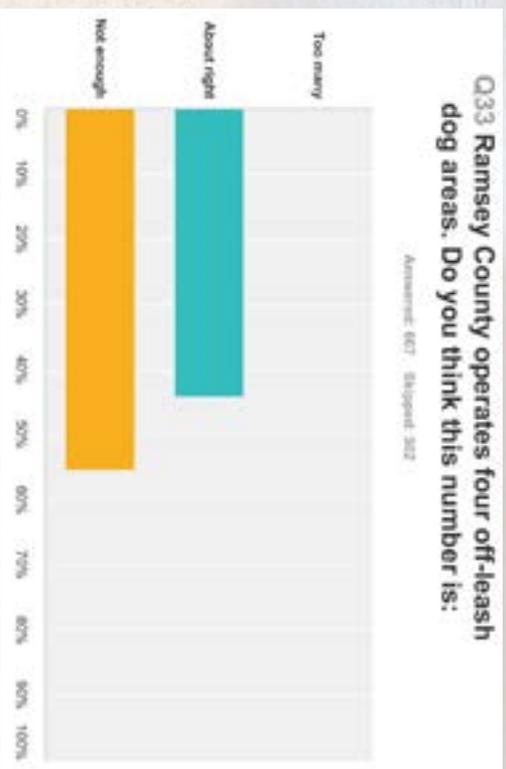


Master Plan Overview

- Master Plan: overarching document that sets standards and guidelines across the system as a whole
- Look at Dog Parks as a whole system, not just one park
- Important Consistent Program Elements to be Included
- Important Consistent Site Amenities to be Included
- Access: Do we have enough parks in the System
- Rules: Are we where we need to be, do we need to modify?
- Maintenance Program
- Volunteer Program
- Where Would Additional Off Leash Dog Areas Make Sense?

Do We Need More Off Leash Dog Areas In Our System

- Average Drive Time Maps
- People Overwhelmingly Drive to the Park, Greater Than 95%
- Average of 35 MPH



How Long Does it Take to Travel to Ramsey County OLDA Parks

Battle Creek

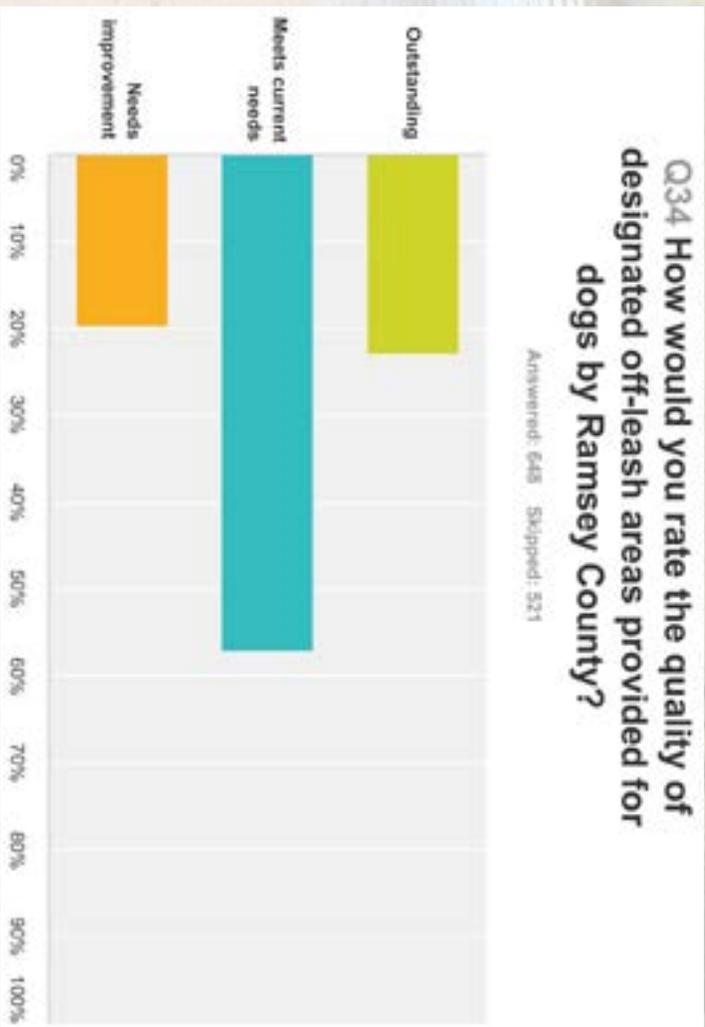
Otter Lake

Rice Creek

Woodview

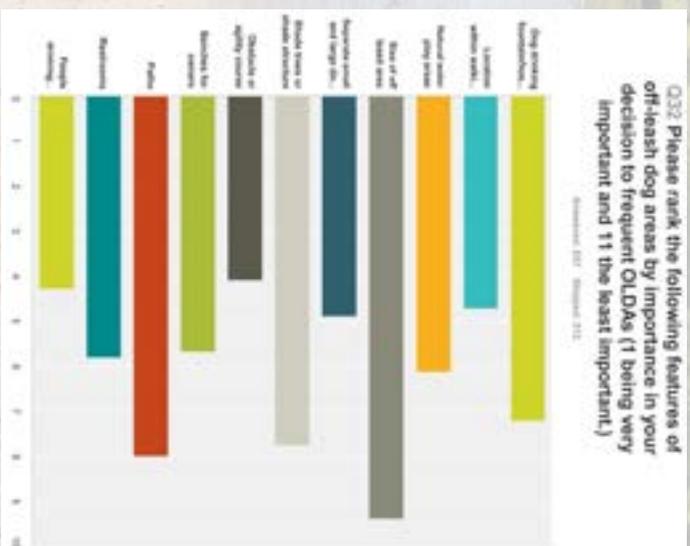


Quality of OLDA System What Could Be Improved Upon



Quality of OLDAs System What Could Be Improved Upon

- Top 4 Features/Amenities
 1. Size
 2. Paths
 3. Shade
 4. Drinking Fountains
- Followed by
 - Natural Water Play Area
 - Restrooms
 - Benches
 - Separate Small And Large Dog Area
- Other Ideas?



Visual Example Survey



• Paths

- Aggregate Surface
- Bituminous
- Wood Chips
- Other?

Visual Example Survey



- Shade
 - Elaborate
 - Sails
 - Trees
- Combine with Benches/Tables etc.



Visual Example Survey



- Drinking Fountains
 - Dog Only
 - Multi-Species



Visual Example Survey



- Water Play
 - Natural
 - Man Made
 - Combination

Visual Example Survey



- Restrooms

- Central Piece with Shade, Benches/tables
- Stand Alone
- In Park
- At Trailhead/Parking Lot



Visual Example Survey



- Other Amenities or Features
 - Separate Small and Large Dog Areas
 - Agility Course
 - Others?





Dog Park Rules

- Existing Rules
 1. Owners must clean up and dispose of feces
 2. Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off leash area
 3. Owners must be in verbal command of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, fighting or aggressive barking
 4. Owners must have visible leash at all times
 5. Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by other dogs
 6. Dogs must stay within assigned boundary
 7. Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated
 8. Dogs in heat are not allowed
 9. Owners must comply with all park rules and regulations
- Proposed Rule Changes/Additions

Volunteer/Maintenance

- **Guardians**
 - Help Identify and Report Dog Park Maintenance Issues
 - Make Suggestions and Recommendations for Dog Park Improvements
 - Identify Inappropriate Use and Report to Department Staff or Law Enforcement
- **Ramsey County**
 - Interior Trail Maintenance Physical Trails & Brush)
 - Invasive Species Control
 - Mowing
- **Other Ideas & Suggestions**



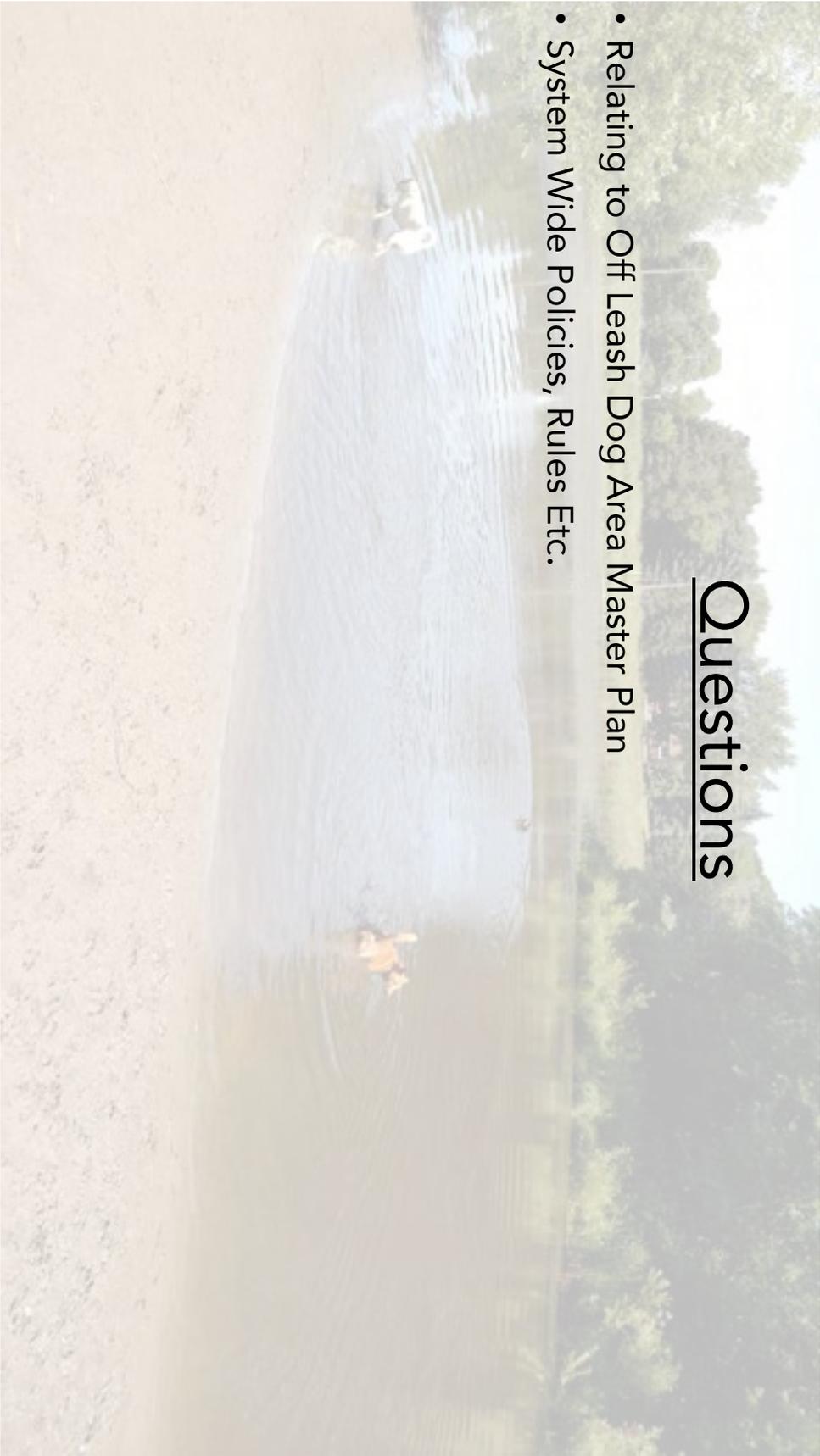
Break For Group Diagramming Exercise

- Assume Brand New Off Leash Dog Area Development
 - Where would amenities be located?
 - Fully fenced/separate large dog small dog areas?
- May Assume access to Water Feature
- Schematic Drawing of Ideal Layout
 - Think of a Bubble Diagram
- No Specific Park in Mind
- Gathering Ideas for Off Leash Dog Area Standards System Wide



Questions

- Relating to Off Leash Dog Area Master Plan
- System Wide Policies, Rules Etc.



Appendix C Comments from Public Engagement Meeting at Tamarack Nature Center 9-11-2017

1. Move to the south, make larger, split in half. Open ½ one week ½ the next
2. There seems to be a need to improve the email list – to make it easier to sign up, and to get updates like survey requests, meeting notices, dog park information, etc.
3. Animal control/trainers provide seminars at dog park
4. Start counting users at each of the dog parks
5. Thanks for the opportunity to comment on planning for Ramsey County Off-leash dog areas. I'm aware of the problems with establishing a dog beach, but also of the potential solutions. The county beach area has great potential
6. RE: otter lake. Issue – Drainage, establish better holding ponds. County Needs to budget for maintenance within the park
7. RE: Otter Lake. Fencing needs to be replaced. Small dogs are able to escape and there are barbs on the top which can cause injury.
8. Otter lake Dog Park Suggestions: Additional parking lot on SW corner, with entry into both large and small parks. Keep newly – proposed trail on east side of otter lake road to the north. Expand larger park to south, closing the north area of the park. Add one more restricted time for small dogs only to the smaller dog park area.
9. RE: Otter Lake. Add additional dog park land to the south, replacing the lower/wetland which can be removed from park and fence off that area. 2nd access point to the south to relieve congestion at entrance. Possible walking path access 2nd entrance from parking lot.

Appendix D Comments and Charrette Drawings from Public Engagement Meeting at Battle Creek Community Center 9-21-2017

1. Emergency personnel need to know where the park is located when 911 is called (geolocation Markers)
2. Thanks, great meeting
3. Small dog parks with separate entrance, no seating or minimal seating at entrance. Open space as well as paths. Minimal seating throughout so people don't congregate
4. We need a stronger fence at the Battle Creek Dog Park. Thank you for this spectacular park.
5. Battle Creek needs more security for the parking lots. Despite the camera, cars are still getting broken into
6. Would like water for dogs. Do not cut tall weeds – limit to grassy areas. Natural paths
7. Take picnic tables out of common big areas – there is one up in a secluded area (that's good!) the one in the upper meadow should be moved to. People congregate and the problems arise from people gathering and not exercising their dog
8. Little Library Installation for informational material
9. Minimize places where people will sit and congregate. When dogs congregate in one place, problems can arise. Best to keep moving. Ok for benches in various places, but not to create an area where people gather. Natural paths are best! Dirt paths, wood chips. No asphalt – gets too hot on dogs feet in summer, slippery in winter
10. It would be nice if Ramsey County could help with pulling up the plants that have burrs on them that would be helpful. Add to Rules: no digging.
11. In my perfect world, it would be nice to have a little station where we could rinse the dogs off after leaving the park with warm water. That is only needed in a park with swamps. (like BC) places where dogs get muddy
12. Battle Creek Off-leash dog area just needs more attention from the county. Most users love it the way it is; though the volunteers could use more assistance from the county. For example, access to a wood chipper to dispose of the buckthorn trees would be good, or putting down sand on the slippery paths in the winter would make park better
13. Thank you for the awesome BC dog park
14. Water at Battle Creek. Poison Ivy Removal. Ice Reduction in Winter. Please help.

We love Battle Creek Off-leash dog park!!

- Lots of entrances (there are two off the parking lots and several just from the street, so there are plenty of access points!)
- Natural pathways! (wood chips are nice addition!)
- Wash station* and bathrooms outside the entrance *for rinsing muddy dogs & boots (people)
- Charge a permit fee (and provide incentives so people with lifetime licenses could pay less! :) Also people could donate extra for a fund for people who can't afford the \$)
- Do not create space for people to congregate! Benches aren't so often on trails is great! Picnic tables... wrong message
- Keep in mind this is a dog park where the "amenities" should be aimed more toward dog joy than people convenience. :)

Battle Creek OLDA is the BEST! :)

* Little kids
Make some dogs
VERY anxious &
Nervous!



- SHADE OPPORTUNITY

- NATURAL PREFERRED

- TEMPORARY/MAN MADE UNTIL TREES MATURE

- FULLY FENCED

- MINI BC OLDA SEPARATE
4-5 ACRES

* DON'T NEED TO BE COOLIE GUTTER



- SMALL DOG / BIG DOG SEPARATE ENTRANCES
 - ~~KEEP~~ KEEP PEOPLE MOVING
 - NOTHING AT ENTRANCE; GET PEOPLE TO OTHER AREAS
- ENTRANCE SEQUENCE

- DIVERSE TERRAIN
- OVERUSE LEADS TO EROSION
- NO PAVILION; NATURAL TREES PREFERRED

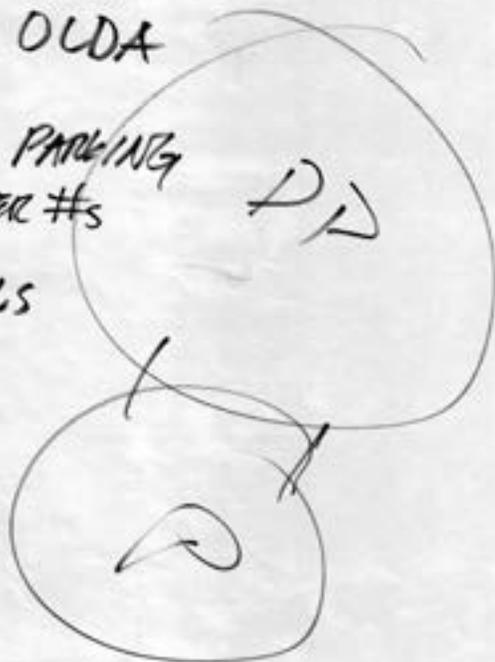
← WATER - BOTH PEOPLE + DOGS

• IN THE OLDA

- USE AVAILABLE PARKING TO CONTROL USER #s

- NATURAL TRAILS

- WOOD CHIPS
- GRAVEL



COTTAGE GROVE

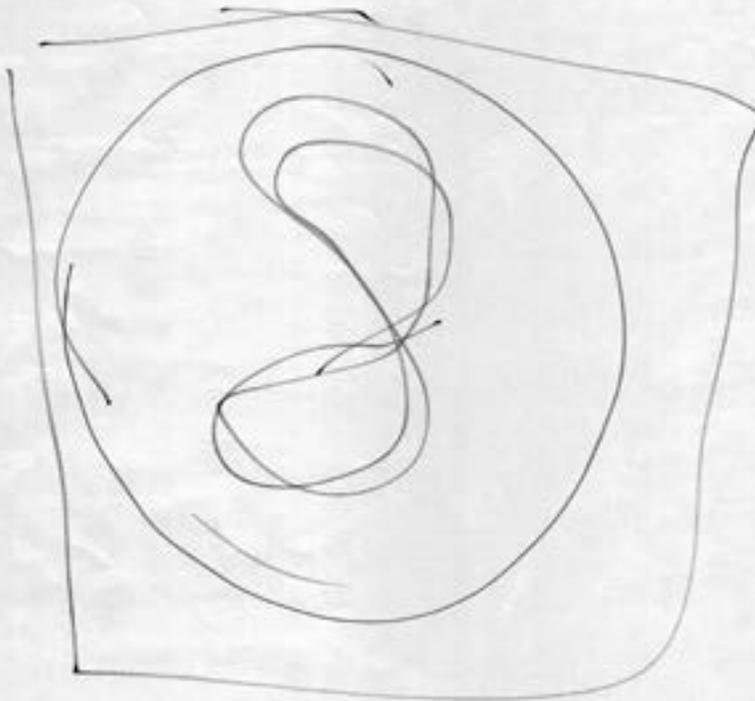
- OUTSIDE OLDA

- LIGHTING

- LENGTH OF STAY

- 30 - 2 HRS

- 20 MIN LAP DURATION - 2 TO 3 LAPS OK



- WATER PLAY - AERATION?

- NO ALGAE

- NO MUD + WEEDS

- KEEP MONITORING NATURAL WATER

- WASTE MANAGEMENT
 - BAG DISPENSERS - MORE!
 - DISPOSAL BARRELS ON WHEELS
 - MULTIPLE PTS OF WASTE EGRESS
 - CONSIDER FREQUENCY OF BARRELS
 - GENERAL RECYCLING FOR WATER BOTTLES
- LIGHTING - WINTER NIGHT LIGHT SETUP
- FENCING - BOUNDARY
 - CHECKING FOR "DIGGERS"
- DOG RUN FOR BALL THROWING
- EVEN SMALL DOG AREA NEEDS AN ACRES
- NO OR VERY LIMITED SEATING OPPORTUNITIES
- SEPARATE ENTRANCE & EXIT PTS
- NO SHARPED GATE FROM SM TO LG DOGS



Volunteer Groups:

- Are needed
- ~~find~~ balancing maint between staff & vol.
- get more volunteers.

- interior trail signage
- Maps
- Seperate double gates work
 - 1 for in
 - 1 for out

- Dog fountain @ Entrance or ~~the~~ Main sitting area
- All Fenced in
 - wire & chainlink work
 - NO angle or corners (Reduce dogs to be ~~cornered~~)
 - Reduce
- Dog Signage/Educational in larger areas
 - help avoid fights

- TREAT NATURAL WATER SOURCES

- Reduce amount of picnic tables

- Bridges - natural material
 - NO-metal

9/21/17

- Benches - inside park
(add to park - more seating)
- (small benches 1-2 people)

Have:

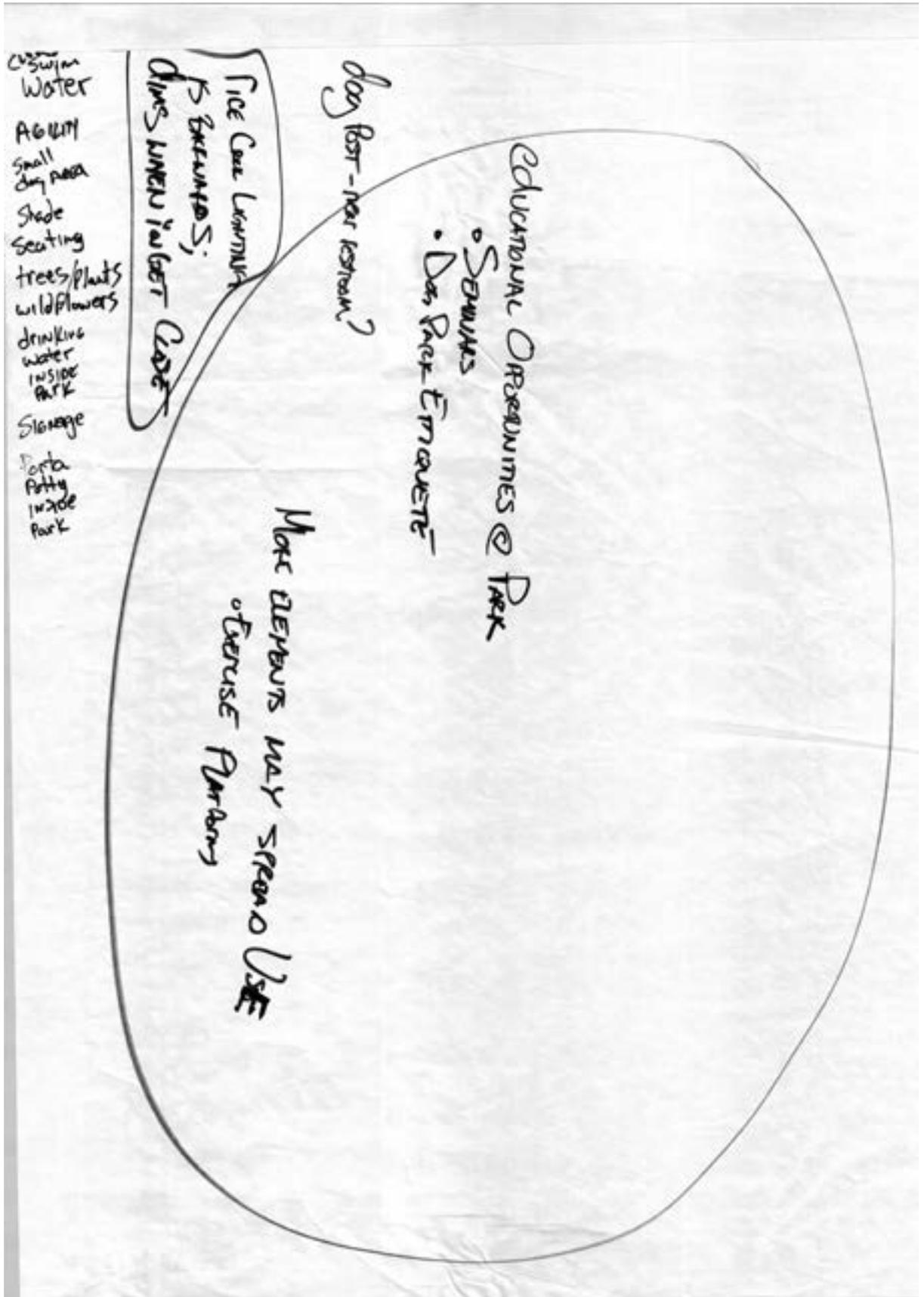
Option for small dog area.

NO ASPHALT!!

(only into areas for entry/seating)

- Natural v.s. man-made water area: washing area. - outside of gates
- mult areas.
not near gate entrances
- Small water feature
- Natural water not runoff
- INCREASED SAFETY
- Camera's
- * MORE DISPENSER & RECYCLE BAGS
- + Educational signs for proper dog use.
- * Safety of kids (should they be allowed under a certain age).

Appendix E Comments and Charrette Drawings from Public Engagement Meeting at the New Brighton Community Center 10-4-2017



• Fixing Current Issues New Reservoir Project

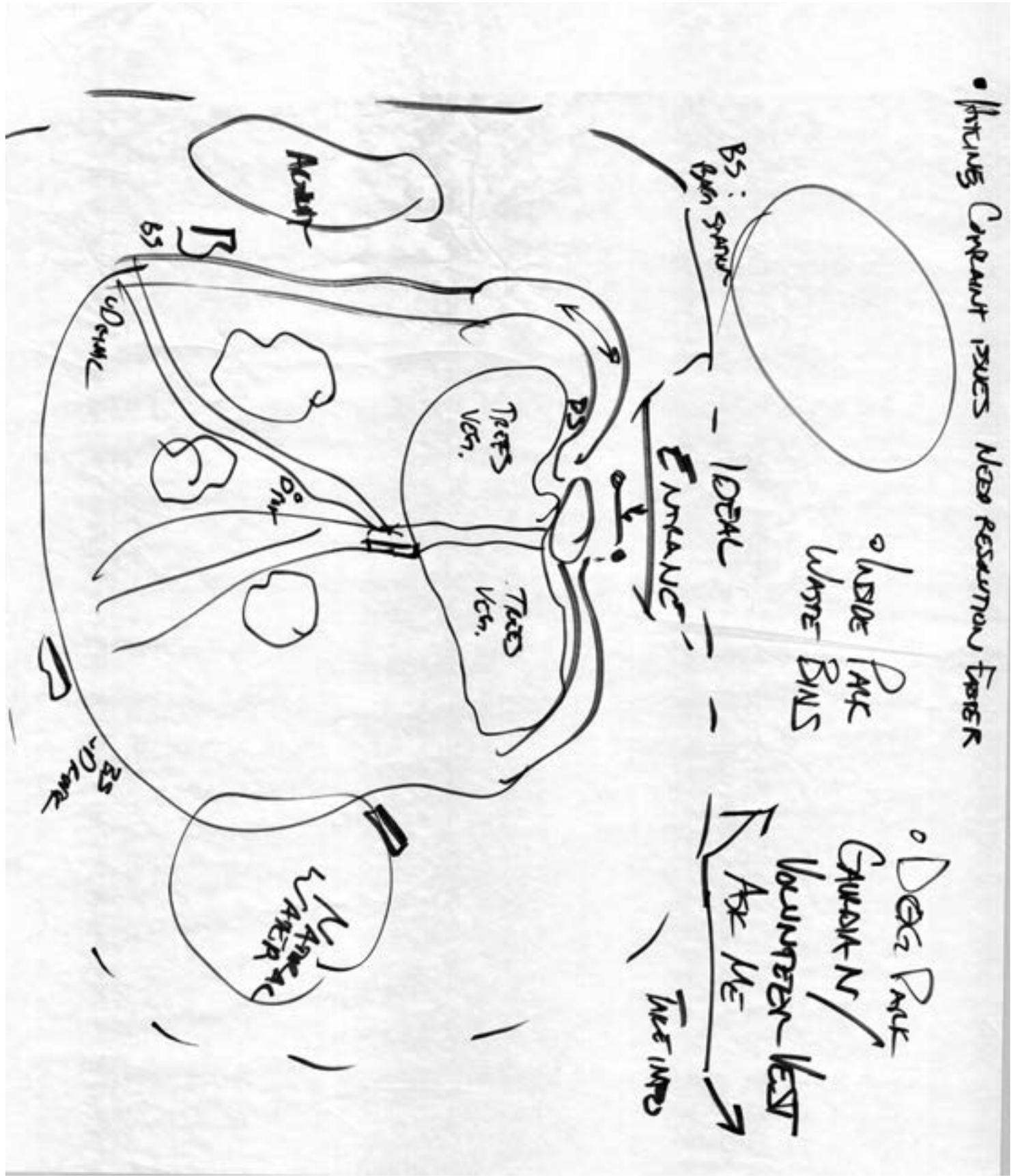
o Inside Park
Where BINS

BS: 3000
BIN SPAC

IDEAL

ENTRANCE

o Dog Park
GRAND N
WOUNDER WEST
ASK ME
TRAILING





- less emph. on larger Free play areas
- MORE trails -
 - Wider ~~to~~ 8-10' min
 - Loops
 - Maps
- * Sitting areas should be in the O.L.D.A further.
 - creates less gathering of Dog Fights
- * prefer trees over hard structure
- * lights.
 - Depends on park
 - Could be a safety problem with lights.
- * like the mail boxes throughout the park
- * Education kiosk boards
- * Porta potty . in dog park area
- * post dog safety & Education
- * like variety in dog parks . small to large
with different amenities

Appendix F Comments Recieved From Final Draft Open Comment Period

1. What kind of feedback are you soliciting? I just read the survey results and the report, and thank you, it is really a good set of information. But now, as I said, what kind of feedback are you asking for?

There are a group of us in St. Paul's District 10 who have been meeting to try to establish an OLDA in or adjacent to Como Regional Park and I would like to forward this for their review.

2. Thank you for continuing to provide recreational opportunities for people and their dogs in the Ramsey County off-leash dog areas.

First, I'm disappointed that more wasn't done to find new opportunities for aquatic exercise areas. As you know, the City of White Bear Lake has been providing a dog beach on a wonderful spot with clear water and a sandy bottom, but has been under pressure from several neighboring residents to move it to a place that's not so near their homes. It would be great if an alternate site could be found and developed to satisfy both dog owners and neighborhood residents.

Second, although I've been involved in buckthorn removal at Otter Lake dog park--including cutting, treatment of the stems with herbicide, and removal of the slash offsite--I don't know what the following sentence in the master plan means: "Restoration within the off-leash dog area is difficult because of the consistent heavy use and apprehension for herbicide use on invasive vegetation." And I believe that the following statement is incomplete: "Past restoration within the off-leash dog area has been limited and consisted of some cutting and stacking of buckthorn on site."

Third, I don't believe there's any disagreement from dog owners on the need to fence-off muddy wetland areas in the dog parks. Several such areas have been fenced-off in Otter Lake dog park without controversy. There's no need to make the process seem so complicated or controversial as in the following statement: "To preserve wetlands, access to these areas should be permanently closed to regain plant growth and for continued protection of wetland habitat."

Fourth, in relation to the point about wetland conservation that's been made in the plan, I think that there's potential to develop one or more of the larger wetland areas in Battle Creek dog park for improved aquatic recreation, rather than for improved wetland conservation. Although our family dogs aren't swimmers, I've watched many times with delight as people and their dogs play in and out of the water in these ponds. There's nothing like it.

Finally, despite the critical nature of my comments above, the thing I'd like most to say, again, is thank you for continuing to provide recreational opportunities for people and their dogs in the Ramsey County off-leash dog areas.

3. Should not have included peoples email addresses in the final document.
Love that someone listed their primary language as Husky. Good one.
4. I would like to thank everyone involved in this process. I really appreciate the time and effort put into understanding, conserving, and improving our dog parks. As for comments; I read the report briefly and I have some first impressions, however, I do need additional time to do further analysis.
 - 1) Equity Plan- Community Outreach: Battle Creek is a model of cultural and ethnic diversity. We have sizeable Asian, Black, Hispanic, Muslim (best guess by dress), and many other ethnicities including Canadian. We also have a LGBTQ population. Elderly people frequent the park as do young people. We have a number of disabled individuals on a regular basis. All people are welcome.
 - 2) Open Space Preservation: At Battle Creek we have volunteers pull Buckthorn up by the roots. Much

work is done to encourage natural plants, grasses, milkweed and trees. Of course more help would always be welcome.

Erosion is a problem, but I personally believe, amateur eradication of erosion can be troublesome. Case in point, the swimming hole at Battle Creek. Logs used to "stop erosion" create safety hazards for people and dogs trying to reach the water. There should be at least one straight access to water that is not obstructed. Seniors, people with disabilities, children, and others should be considered when building erosion breakers.

Trails are a similar issue. I'd like guardians to work with professionals to come up with solutions to trail issues. Not two groups each working alone.

Please do not fill in any wetlands for dog parks even if you can. Preservation of the natural state is important.

3) As the population of the St Paul metro area grows, use and number of dogs per person increases. Week-end are sometimes packed with families, strollers, multiple dogs. Each year use increases exponentially. We have several commercial dog walkers who use the park daily. We also have people who bring packs of huskies or other breeds and just let them run. Many of the "rules" are completely ignored. Perhaps we should revisit the rules and the placement of rule signs so we have better hopes of some type of compliance.

That's all for now more to come with further analysis.

5. * Most of this looks good.

* Fencing should be installed regardless of any buffer area for safety of the dogs.

* It'd be nice to have drinking water *inside* the fenced area, not just outside of the entrance. Right next to the entrance on the inside is fine - it doesn't need to be in the middle or anything, just not require actually exiting through the gates to access.

* While providing double-gated entrances is good, there is also a need to teach people how to use them - I constantly see people opening the second gate while the first is still open.

* The hours of operation REALLY need to be expanded. 30 minutes after sunset is before people even get off work in the winter, much less home to pick up the dog, then to the dog park, then an hour or so in the park. As you might expect, nobody actually follows this rule currently as a result. I would suggest just using times - either 5 or 6am to 10pm.

* With respect to fees, I don't mind paying one to use "area dog parks", but I definitely DO mind paying a bunch of different fees for parks managed by different government entities. One of the biggest reasons I use the Ramsey County ones is to avoid that headache. A donation system sounds nice. I would expect to make any donations online with a credit card, but others surely would prefer cash or check on-site, so both options should be available. If you went to a fee, there really ought to be a reciprocity arrangement with the municipal ones in Oakdale, Stillwater, and Woodbury. It should be noted that the statement on page 25 that a vehicle entry permit is required for the two in Anoka County is incorrect - they are associated with parks that require a permit, but the dog park itself is exempt.

* For the volunteer program, it's generally unclear to the public what the relationship is between the county and volunteer groups, who is responsible for what, and who should be contacted either with concerns or how to help - that's just a communication issue.

6. These plans look dynamite and we are pretty excited about it all.
Water and some shade!
There are many dogs in my neighborhood (snell-ham) and we'd love a place we did not have to DRIVE to. I have 2 Boston Tertiars and we frequent many of the DP'S. Today we brought a jug of water and did a little clean up.
THANK YOU for your work on this project, it is much appreciated.

7. I want to thank you and others for all the work that's been done to discuss the off-leash dog areas. I am a dog person who thinks dogs in the US have a long way to go being socialized and such compared to many places in Europe (for example). I've loved taking our dog to the off leash dog parks and I think they are phenomenal. We've frequented Arkright mostly and Battle Creek now and again.

I love our natural areas and having room to run. I also like having wet areas that can be chosen or not chosen--there are days/times when I don't want a wet dog to deal with in the car. While I applaud being open minded in discussion and presenting options, in reviewing the whole discussion, presentation and plan as well as feedback, I feel strongly that we do not need and shouldn't have an amusement park for dogs. I'm not against some agility but i really didn't like the fake pools which were called Man-Made water play or Combination. I strongly feel it's a waste of tax payer dollars that could be better used elsewhere rather than a special interest group for dogs.

I love my pet and most every dog I meet and I love our dog parks. I'd like to see more dog parks and a dog friendly attitude across the United States starting in Ramsey County, but please don't go overboard and spend incredible dollars to build some amusement park for dogs when dogs can be well served otherwise and our people programs and tax base is what it is.

That's my opinion and feedback on the off-leash area plan. Thank you and your staff once again for having an open ended discussion to determine likes/dislikes and perceived needs.