



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



Increasing Compliance with Leash & Scoop Laws in Parks
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Dogs and Parks

- *Dogs (and their people) are welcome visitors to most all Portland parks, trails, and natural areas*
- *Responsible use of parks with pets means obeying leash and scoop laws*



Increasing Compliance with Leash & Scoop Laws in Parks



- Dog owners and their pets are frequent, enthusiastic visitors to Portland parks.
- But the city's parks, natural areas and trails are extensively used for all types of recreation, and off-leash dogs and dog waste have significant impacts on the health, safety, and usability of park lands.
- To keep parks enjoyable for all visitors, Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) encourages compliance with leash and scoop laws through education, enforcement, and providing legal recreation options for dog owners.

Off-Leash Recreation

- *Off-Leash Areas (OLAs) were first established as a park amenity in 1995*
- *The number of OLAs has since grown from 3 to 33*
- *Portland consistently ranks first in number of dog parks per capita, with 5.5 OLAs per 100,000 residents*



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- Portland Parks & Recreation's Dog Off-Leash Program encourages healthy, responsible use of parks with pets through:
 - Providing off-leash areas for legal dog-owner recreation. The first OLAs were established in 1995 when City Council authorized the new amenity. Council then approved expansion of the OLA system in 2004. PP&R currently has 33 OLAs, and is consistently first in the Trust for Public Land's annual ranking of dog parks per capita.
 - Ongoing dog owner education efforts aimed at leash/scoop compliance, as well as proper "petiquette" and keeping pets healthy
 - Ongoing engagement of the dog owner community, through multiple advisory groups and task forces, to determine the best ways to meet this recreational need – while also keeping parks healthy and safe for all

The Problem

- *Disregard for leash/scoop laws has become common behavior*
- *PP&R receives more complaints about dog violations than any other type of behavior*
- *Reversing the trend will take:*
 - *Ongoing education & engagement*
 - *Continuing to provide OLAs for recreation*
 - *More effective enforcement than is currently possible*



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- Though many dog owners are respectful park visitors, disregard for leash and scoop laws has become common behavior.
- PP&R receives more complaints about dog violations than any other type of behavior. This includes:
 - More than 60 individual citizen requests to Dog Program staff in 2012 for increased leash/scoop law enforcement
 - More than 200 off-leash dog complaints to Park Rangers in 2011
- Stakeholder groups who have raised concerns about lack of leash/scoop law enforcement include many neighborhood associations, sports user groups, nature/wildlife groups, and Portland Public Schools.
- Respectful dog owners who DO keep dogs on leash are also greatly impacted by off-leash dogs approaching their pets
- Reversing the trend will take:
 - Ongoing education and engagement with the dog owner community
 - Continuing to offer off-leash areas that are safe, healthy options for recreation, and continuing to maintain and improve these OLAs
 - More effective enforcement of leash/scoop laws

Proposed Code Change

- *Effective enforcement tools are crucial to improving leash/scoop compliance*

The proposed code change would:

- *Allow the Commissioner-in-Charge to enact rules allowing Park Rangers to issue citations*
- *Eliminate park exclusions and criminal charges for leash/scoop*



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- A sustainable, effective approach to leash and scoop law compliance needs to include effective enforcement.
- PP&R is proposing revising Parks Code Title 20 in order to:
 - Allow the Commissioner-in-Charge to enact rules that authorize the Park Rangers to issue citations and fines for leash and scoop violations in all parks
 - Make leash and scoop violations a non-criminal offense that's subject to civil penalty (fine) only
 - Eliminate park exclusion or criminal charges for leash/scoop violations
 - Increase the enforcement tools Park Rangers have to gain compliance, particularly with individuals who repeatedly refuse to comply, and in parks that have chronic serious leash/scoop non-compliance.
- These changes will greatly improve PP&R's ability to gain compliance with leash/scoop laws. Currently, Title 20 only allows the City to address leash and scoop violations through park warnings and exclusions, with criminal trespass charges as the penalty for offenders who've been issued an exclusion.
- PP&R had previously contracted with Multnomah County Animal Services to provide leash/scoop enforcement in parks. One MCAS Officer was assigned to address leash/scoop issues in ALL Portland parks, and their time was divided between in-park work and paperwork.
- The proposed change will allow PP&R to more effectively address this widespread issue by leveraging the presence of Park Rangers, who are already present in parks, to enforce leash/scoop. Without the changes, Rangers cannot issue fines but instead can only request identification and issue park warnings or exclusions which are not as effective deterrents as fines.

Community Involvement

- *PP&R's Off-Leash Advisory Group supported the code change, along with other ongoing efforts:*
 - *Enforcement, including warnings and fines*
 - *Education, including outreach and engagement*
 - *Continued maintenance and improvement to the OLA system*



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•The proposed code change was supported by PP&R's Off-Leash Advisory Group, which met bi-monthly from March 2010 to June 2012 to provide guidance on PP&R's efforts to encourage compliance, create healthy OLAs, and engage the dog community.

•The advisory group's term ended in June 2012. In the group's final two meetings, they thoroughly reviewed the education/enforcement/OLA improvement approach to compliance, and recommended PP&R move forward with making the code change, continuing education, and prioritizing improvements to specific OLAs.

•Advisory group meeting notifications were sent to an email list that included dog owners, neighborhood association livability chairs, and other community members who expressed interest in dogs in parks, including those who had complained about lack of enforcement.

•Response to the proposed change was overwhelmingly positive.

Implementing the Change

- *PP&R's Implementation plan includes:*
 - *Continuing our existing model of education followed by enforcement*
 - *Issuing \$150 fines for leash/scoop violations*
 - *Development of an appeals process for dog owners*
 - *Continued maintenance and improvement to the OLA system*



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Education & Enforcement Model

- Continue PP&R's **standard approach** for leash/scoop violations:
 - Warning for first contact
 - \$150 for second and all subsequent contacts
- Continue PP&R's **intensive approach** for parks with chronic noncompliance:
 - Extensive education/outreach period, including signs, in-park outreach, contact to stakeholders
 - Following outreach period, \$150 fine issued on every contact



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•The standard approach is used as a baseline throughout the city. Dog owners receive a warning on first contact, citation on second contact.

•The intensive approach is used at parks that have chronic and serious levels of non-compliance. Concentrated effort is necessary at these parks to encourage compliance, and this additional outreach and enforcement is designed to have significant impact on improving behavior.

Fine Comparison – Oregon

- o *Bend: \$330*
- o *Clackamas County: \$50*
- o *Eugene: \$160 (altered) & \$232 (fertile)*
- o *Oregon State Parks: \$142*
- o *Oregon Metro: \$89*
- o *Washington County (Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District, Beaverton, Hillsboro) \$317*

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•In 2003-04, Council approved not only the expansion of the OLA system, but also PP&R's enforcement contract with Multnomah County. The \$150 fine was established as part of that contract, and has been the standard fine for leash/scoop infractions in parks ever since.

•The amount is well-aligned with the fines in other Oregon jurisdictions.

Appeals Process

- o *Citation will be administratively reviewed by Park Security Manager*
- o *If Administrative review is not in the park user's favor, the user may request a hearing with the Code Hearings Office*



Goals of the Change

- *Portland's parks, trails and natural areas are healthy, safe, and enjoyable for all user groups*
- *Reverse the culture of noncompliance with leash/scoop laws*
- *Create a sustainable approach to encouraging compliance that includes effective education, enforcement, and OLAs*



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