



Ramsey County Parks and Recreation

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MEMORANDUM

To: Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Group
From: Scott Yonke, Director of Planning and Development
Cc: Jody Yungers, Director of Park Services and Operations
Date: February 24, 2012
RE: Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Area – Site Improvements

In regards to requests received from the Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Guardians for possible site improvements, a site assessment was completed to verify existing site conditions; and provide recommendations at Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Area. The requests listed below were provided to Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department (RCPRD) in high, medium and low priority.

High Priority:

Gate Areas

Request: (Upper and Lower Afton Entrances). Something needs to be done with the surface inside of the double gate and the approach areas to and from the gates, which become muddy during the spring and whenever it rains. A concrete pad should have been installed prior to erecting the gates, but now, concrete pavers are the best alternative. Crushed rock is another possibility.

Comment: Additional planning and analysis will be required for redesign or for alternative surface treatments use in bull-pen gate areas. Hard surface areas should be minimized to reduce potential impact to paws. Crushed aggregates should not be larger than ½” minus in size, smaller sizes 1/4” minus or 1/8” minus is preferred. It is anticipated these improvements can be completed by park staff. **Anticipated costs for material and park staff labor to complete improvements will range from \$2,000 - \$4,000.**

East Pond and Duck Pond

Request: Imperative that we formulate a plan to stem erosion of banks around these two ponds. The trail leading from the gate to the East Pond has developed a gully due to rain run-off, and this problem should be addressed ASAP. The trail skirting east of the Duck Pond has exposed

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roots and mud issues: Alternatives, reroute trail further east, or build walkway (wood decking) over the root/mud.

Comment: Additional planning and analysis will be required to define proper trail rerouting/design alternatives and erosion control measures. This will need to be part of an overall master plan and will require significant design and development for trail options. Overall design for erosion control and trail alternatives will depend on how these two areas will be used in the future. **Anticipated costs for improvements may vary depending on overall design.**

Trails

Request: 1) Trails sections where tree roots are exposed, presenting hazard to users; 2) Gulley's are forming on some trail sections from water run-off; 3) Some trail sections turn to deep mud during the spring and after heavy rain-fall. This is turn causes the trail to widen, as users try to walk around the mud.

Comment: Additional planning and analysis will be required to define proper repairs for exposed tree roots and eroded areas. This will need to be part of an overall master plan and will require significant design and development for corrective measures. **In the short-term, wood chips\mulch should be used in areas to avoid mud problems. Anticipated costs for wood chips\mulch may vary depending on the volume required. Cost also would be dependent on our ability to get woodchips from contractors free of charge. Anticipated cost of woodchips for primary routes only could be up to \$10,000**

Wood Chips

Request: We need to devise a plan to secure wood chips for all trails, as well as the open areas (South and North Meadow). A plan is needed to distribute wood chips around the park, with a small front end loader (e.g. Bobcat). Machine should distribute chips so they can be spread by volunteer using hand rakes (without the need of a wheelbarrow). Mostly, free chips are acceptable. For trail sections prone to mud, we should explore using higher quality chips which should last longer and function better, particularly on trail sections prone to mud.

Comment: Parks is currently seeking wood chips\mulch from nearby construction projects. Parks maintenance will disperse woodchips to central locations within the off-leash dog area for volunteers to spread. Anticipated costs for wood chips\mulch may vary depending on the volume required.

Downed Tree at two locations

Request: 1) McKnight Road (at Falcon), which are leaning against the fence; 2) East side of swimming pond, which has crushed the fence so dogs can exit the park.

Comment: Completed

Dog Park Rules

Request: Need to be revised and publicized for the RC Dog Parks. Too many users are, for instance, letting their toddlers wander around unsupervised, keeping their dogs on a leash, not picking up poop, bringing young puppies into the park, etc.

Comment: The County Parks and Recreation Department has met with Off-Leash Area Guardians and has established a set of proposed rules. The general off-leash area rules need to have an association to the general park ordinance. If the rule is not covered in the general ordinance then it cannot be in the park area rules and is not enforceable. Other off-leash area signage can be used to communicate other park use protocol or general reminders of good use etiquette. These signs will need to be reviewed and approved by the parks department. The Department will be developing signage standards for all off-leash areas.

Map

Request: We need a map that delineates trails and landmarks, which can be posted in the park and the RC website. Will aid in user navigation, but is should also make it possible to target an area in case of emergency.

Comment: A formulized map will need to be part of an overall master plan and will require significant design and development for delineated off-leash dog components. At this time, there are no formal delineated trails within the Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Area.

Short term, a map can be created to illustrate existing use areas only. It is anticipated this can be completed by planning staff. **Anticipated costs will vary depending on how many maps are needed (approximately \$800 for each map).**

User Census

Request: We know the number of users has increased substantially, but we have no reliable data. Volunteers could conduct a census.

Comment: Currently the Parks and Recreation Department, as one of the Regional Park implementing agencies, is required to collect user count data, prescribed by the Metropolitan Council Research Department. This data is collected by Ramsey County and then submitted to Met. Council and calibrated based on a prescribed methodology. Our staff does collect park entrance data at both the Lower and Upper Afton sites, however there is no separation as to

general park use vs. off-leash area use. In order to get a specific count on the use of the off-leash area of Battle Creek, this would require the use of volunteers to collect specific data at prescribed times and would have to request the assistance of either the Met. Council or U of M Research Department.

Medium Priority:

Pooch Patch

Request: Install a pooch patch to the left of the trail, just inside the Upper Afton Entry gate. Drainage gravel with 4-6" of Class 5 crushed rock on top, and tree 6' post (set in ground 24"). The existing fence would have to be moved back (away from the trail) by about 6' to create sufficient space.

Comment: Additional planning and analysis will be required for design of pooch patches at gate entrances for site impacts. Crushed aggregates should not be larger than ½" minus in size, smaller sizes 1/4" minus or 1/8" minus is preferred. Management of pooch patches will be completed by volunteers. **Installation of the pooch patches can be completed by park staff. Anticipated costs for material and park staff labor to complete improvements will range from \$2,000 - \$3,000 for each pooch patch.**

Video Cameras – Parking Lot Surveillance

Request: Many requests to help stem break-ins. Both lots presently have signs warning patrons not to leave valuables in car, which have proved ineffective. 1) A request for a portable video camera unit (from Sheriff's Dept.) for the Upper Afton parking lot on a trial basis; 2) Explore alternate signage that will be more noticeable to users.

Comment: Parks will need to work with the Sheriff's Department for parking lot surveillance options and possible locations for a video surveillance. Additional planning and analysis will be required to explore possible site improvements required for video camera units and alternate signage options. Anticipated costs may vary depending on the surveillance and alternate signage options. There is no power source currently located in close proximity for the cameras. In addition, the Sheriff's Department does not provide exclusive monitoring of cameras. The best solution is continued education of users not to leave anything of value in their cars and not to get out of their cars and place anything in the trunk once at the site.

Porta Potti

Request: Locate at Upper Afton parking lot. A unit is already provided in the Lower Afton parking lot.

Comment: Completed

Low Priority:

Create Small Dog Area

Request: Area can be 1/2-acre to 1-acre. Area should be located near either the Upper Afton gate, so all users can access through the same gate which will be important should an electronic card reader eventually be installed. Should not be sited in the east area of the park which would encourage users to park in residential neighborhoods and force them to cross heavily traffic on McKnight Road.

Comment: This will need to be part of an overall master plan and will require significant design and development for a feasible small dog area. Anticipated costs for improvements may vary depending on overall design. The addition of a small dog area would have to be designed within the current off-leash designated area.

Water Source

Request: Explore cost/feasibility of drilling well, equipped with hand pump (no electricity required). Explore cost/feasibility of tapping nearest municipal water source and pipe to location inside the park.

Comment: Additional planning and analysis will be required to explore feasible water sources for the Battle Creek Off-Leash Dog Area and will need to be part of an overall master plan. Significant site improvements will be required for either a hand pump or municipal water connection. A municipal water source is located in both Lower Afton Road and Upper Afton Road however; further planning will be required for possible site impacts and improvements.

Anticipated costs for drilling a well for a hand pump will range from \$7,000 - \$10,000.

Anticipated costs for municipal connections are undetermined at this time.

Winter Maintenance

Request: Plowing the trails is not required, but ice on the trail is a problem. Many request for a plan to spread sand or poultry grit on the most treacherous trail sections within the park. We now have a locked can with grit for the approach. Explore feasibility of placing cans in strategic locations within the park for grit or plain sand.

Comment: Additional planning and analysis will be required for alternative natural surface treatments. Surface treatments used for pathways must be compatible to the surrounding areas and not negatively impact drainage ways or wetlands. This will need to be part of an overall master plan and will require significant design and development for non delineated trail repair and management. At this time, Parks and Recreation does not have the resources for winter maintenance by staff.

In the short-term, wood chips\mulch should be used in these areas until more compatible surface treatment material is selected. Anticipated costs for wood chips\mulch may vary depending on the volume required.

Master Plan Recommendations

Recognizing that each of the four off-leash areas within the park system and all have their own unique characteristics, a System-wide Off-leash Dog Area Master Plan should be prepared in efforts to establish system-wide guidelines for all Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Off-Leash Dog Areas. This will require significant planning, design and development and may require a design consultant for preparation. Anticipated cost for design and development of a system wide Off-Leash Dog Area Master Plan will range from \$50,000 - \$75,000.

References for System-wide Off-Leash Dog Area MasterPlans

<http://www.denvergov.org/Parks/DenverDogParksMasterPlan/tabid/434238/Default.aspx>
<http://www.recreation.slco.org/admin/dogParks/Index.html>