



Contents

Dog Owners Resist CRD Thetis Leash Law..... 1
Representation on Advisory Committee 2
Regional Dog Owners Group..... 2
What You can Do 3
Parks Committee Members..... 4
CRD Board of Directors..... 5
Victoria Ban Continues..... 6
The Truth about Parks and Dogs..... 7

DOG OWNERS UNITE TO RESIST THE CRD PARKS PROPOSED LEASH LAW AT THETIS LAKE PARK

In the past few months dog owners in Greater Victoria have come together over the issue of the Capital Region District's Parks Branch proposal to restrict dogs in Thetis Lake Park and two other regional parks. **CRD Parks spent five years developing a draft management plan for the parks and solicited input from a number of groups but dog owners were NOT represented, even though they were the one group most impacted by the plan.**

Several groups of dog-friendly people worked together to organize resistance to the CRD Parks proposal.

- Citizen Canine, a City of Victoria on-line advocacy group, which has been working to expand off-leash access for dogs in city parks, developed an on-line petition against the plan to leash dogs at Thetis Lake.
- Capital Comets, a local dog sports club, submitted a detailed response to the CRD's plan and helped organize a paper petition asking the CRD to rethink the proposed leash law.
- A group of dog owners who regularly visit Thetis Lake informed visitors to Thetis Lake of the proposal, handed out CRD response forms on the Draft Management plan, and gathered signatures to the petition.

Within just a few weeks of the announcement of the planned changes, the petitions had gathered more than 2,200 signatures. **At the CRD Parks public meeting held April 2 to discuss the draft plan, the petitions were formally presented to the Parks committee.** Dozens of people at the meeting voiced their opposition to the proposed leash law. Many excellent points were made to support continued access by off-leash dogs at these parks. At the April 2 meeting around 100 people were turned away because of lack of space, so the staff organized a second public meeting on April 16. An estimated 200 people attended the second meeting.

More than 50 people spoke at these meetings, and all but a few expressed strong opposition to the CRD's proposed leash law. Many people were irate that the CRD would impose such a change without consultation or research. **CRD Parks also requested public input by means of response forms with questions about the planned changes in the parks. Over 300 response forms were received by the CRD Parks staff.**



DOG OWNERS REPRESENTATION ON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At the start of the April 2 meeting, CRD Parks Committee Chair Karen Watson invited dog owners to give her the name of a representative to sit on the advisory committee for the completion of the management plan. By the second meeting the three organizing groups had agreed to nominate Mark Hawkes, of the Capital Comets Dog Sport Club, to the position. Mark is a past president of the Capital Comets Club who works for the education ministry in the provincial government. He also owns two border collies and is interested in promoting responsible dog ownership. Mark has the experience, diplomacy and background to be an excellent representative of the views of dog owners.

Mark's name was put forward as a potential representative at the second meeting on April 16. Since no other people came forward to express interest in taking on this role, Capital Comets and Citizen Canine jointly submitted Mark's name to Karen Watson to represent the interests of dog owners on the advisory committee.

The CRD directors have now approved the addition of Mark Hawkes name to the advisory committee for the Thetis Lake Park Management Plan as a representative of the dog-owning community. Although this is a positive step, it doesn't guarantee any kind of change to the proposed leash law. It simply offers a chance for the interests of dog owners to be considered as the CRD moves to finalize the management plan for the three parks.

ORGANIZATION OF A REGIONAL DOG OWNERS GROUP

While Citizen Canine has been lobbying for the past two years for greater off-leash access for dogs in the City of Victoria, it's obvious that there is a need for a region-wide organization to represent the interests of dog owners in the Greater Victoria area.

Citizen Canine has now joined forces with Capital Comets and other interested dog owners to create an expanded group. This group will be an alliance of organizations and individuals whose purpose is to promote and protect the interests of the dog-owning community of Greater Victoria through education, advocacy, and canine community building.

The new Citizen Canine mandate is now reflected on the citizencanine.org website. Briefly the goals are to:

- Develop a strong community of responsible dog owners through an information sharing network
- Promote awareness among the public, policy makers and media about the many benefits of embracing dogs and dog ownership
- Work with city and regional planners and policy makers to expand and preserve recreational off-leash areas throughout the Greater Victoria region
- Lobby at all levels of government for fair animal by-laws
- Advocate against discriminatory policies that limit access by dogs and their owners to rental accommodation and transit
- Strive to ensure that off-leash walking is seen as a legitimate recreational choice
- Work with other groups to develop and support educational programs that encourage responsible dog ownership
- Educate the public about dogs and their behaviour



We encourage everyone who has an interest in these goals to visit the website at citizencanine.org. There is also a new forum on the web page where members can exchange information and ideas about dogs and dog-related issues.

The new Citizen Canine organization will work to develop associations with many groups and individuals in the greater Victoria area. We will seek out representation by such groups as the SPCA, animal behaviourists, dog clubs, kennel clubs, veterinarians, and merchants. **It is important that the new organization speak with a strong voice about the needs and views of dog owners and dog-related associations around the greater Victoria area.**

You are receiving this newsletter either because you are already a member of this organization or you have asked to be kept up to date on issues of off-leash access to parks in the region. **Because of the interest you have shown in the Thetis Lake Park issue, we have given you an automatic membership in Citizen Canine. You will be kept informed of developments in this and other dog-related issues in the region.** We look forward to hearing your views and working with you to make greater Victoria a dog-friendly community. If you do not wish to receive further correspondence, please just send us an e-mail at: citizencaninevic@shaw.ca and we will remove you from our membership list.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO FIGHT FOR OFF-LEASH ACCESS IN PARKS

Experience in other cities has shown that change doesn't come easily. The adoption of progressive pet laws depends on wide-ranging pressure from the public. It's important that everyone who is concerned about off-leash access for their dogs makes a point of contacting their elected officials.

Although the CRD Parks has invited representation from dog owners, there is no guarantee that the proposed policy will be changed. CRD Parks still plans to finalize the management plan for Thetis Lake by this fall. Parks staff will summarize the responses they received to the draft management plan and prepare a report for review by the CRD Parks Committee.

The Parks Committee consists of seven assigned CRD board members as well as the CRD board chair. All of these people are elected representatives from various municipalities in the region. Many of the parks committee members are new to the job. They were elected last November and likely don't have a lot of information about the concerns of dog owners. **It is crucial that these people hear from dog owners about their concerns.**

You can let them know how you feel by contacting them personally, either by letter, e-mail, or fax. Or you can telephone them or make an appointment to meet with them to talk about your views. It's best to contact the committee member responsible for the

municipality in which you live, but you can also send a copy to all other committee members. If Parks Committee members know how strongly their constituents feel about this matter, they will be more likely to question the proposed dog management actions in the plan for Thetis Lake Park.



PARKS COMMITTEE MEMBERS, 2003

Karen Watson Mayor, Metchosin	Municipal Hall, 4450 Happy Valley Rd, Victoria V9C 3Z3 Phone 474-3167 fax 474-6298 e-mail: mayor@districtmetchosin.bc.ca
Vic Derman, Councilor, Saanich	945 Lucas Ave. Victoria V8X 4E6 Phone 475-1775 fax 475-5440 e-mail: council@gov.saanich.bc.ca
Dorothy Hartshorne, Saanich Councilor	Municipal Hall, 1620 Mills Road, North Saanich V8L 5S9 Phone 656-0781 fax 655-3034 e-mail: arborinfo@shaw.ca
Darwin Robinson, Mayor, Esquimalt	Municipal Hall, 1229 Esquimalt Rd. Esquimalt V9A 3P1 Phone 414-7100 fax: 414-7111 e-mail mayor@esquimalt.bc.ca
Karel Roessingh, Mayor, Highlands	Municipal Hall, 1980 Millstream Rd. Victoria V9B 6H1 Phone 474-1773 fax: 474-3677 e-mail karel@roessong.com
Denise Savoie, Councilor, Victoria,	City Hall, 1 Centennial Square, Victoria V8W 1P6 Phone 361-0220 fax 361-0348 e-mail denises@city.victoria.bc.ca
Rich Tamboline, Rep. So. Gulf Islands	260 Georgina Point Rd RR 1, Site 25 Comp. 9 Mayne Island V0N 2J0 Phone 539-2730 fax: 539-2735 e-mail directorsgi@crd.bc.ca
Judy Brownoff, Councilor, Saanich	Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Ave. Victoria V8X 2W7 Phone 475-1775 fax: 475-5440 e-mail: chair@crd.bc.ca

Once the Parks committee approves the final draft of the management plan, it will be brought forward for the CRD board of directors to consider. CRD board members will each have a vote on the plan. If it is accepted, the CRD will adopt it as a bylaw. **We need to make sure that all CRD board members, not just Parks Committee members, are fully aware of just how strongly dog owners feel about the off-leash access to parks. The list below gives the names of the CRD Board of Directors for 2003.**

In writing letters, faxes or e-mails, it is important to be polite and respectful. We want to be listened to, not make people angry. **Please put as much personal information into your letter as possible, giving details of how the ban on off-leash activities will affect you.** It's also important to make the point that as a voter and a taxpayer you would like services that enable you to pursue your chosen recreational activities with your dog.

The more letters our elected representatives receive, the more this issue will stay in their minds. Please contact the CRD board member for the area you live in to let them know how you feel. If you're writing a letter, send a copy to each of the CRD directors. You might also consider posting the letter to the Citizen Canine forum so other people can see it and get inspired to write.

If you would like some points to include in your letter, take a look at the last page of this newsletter titled "The Truth about Parks and Dogs."



CAPITAL REGION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2003

Name	Representing	Mailing Address	Phone	e-mail address
Don Amos	Sidney (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 10210 Third St., Sidney V8L 3B9	656-1139 (w) 656-6290 (h)	damos@town.sidney.bc.ca
Denise Blackwell	Langford (Councillor)	Municipal Hall 2 nd Floor 877 Goldstream Victoria V9B 2X8	478-7882 (w) 589-6169 (h)	council@district.langford.bc.ca
Judy Brownoff (CRD Chair)	Saanich (Councillor)	Municipal Hall 770 Vernon Ave Victoria V8X 2W7	475-1775 (w) 727-2008 (h)	council@gov.saanich.bc.ca
Christopher Causton	Oak Bay (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 2167 Oak Bay Ave Victoria V8R 1G2	598-3311 (w)	council@oakbaybc.org
David Cubberley	Saanich (Councillor)	Municipal Hall 770 Vernon Ave Victoria V8X 2W7	478-7882 (w) 727-6441 (h)	council@gov.saanich.bc.ca
Ted Daly	North Saanich (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 1620 Mills Road North Saanich V8L 5S9	656-0781 (w)	arborinfo@shaw.ca
Marcus Farmer	Sooke (Acting Mayor)	Municipal Offices 2205 Otter Pt. Rd. Sooke V0S 1N0	642-1634 (w)	mfarmer@district.sooke.bc.ca
Rob Fleming	Victoria (Councillor)	Municipal Hall #1 Centennial Square Victoria V8W 1P6	361-0216 (w)	rob@city.victoria.bc.ca
Allison Habkirk	Central Saanich (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 1903 Mt. Newton X Rd. Saanichton V8M 2A9	652-4444 (w)	allison.habkirk@saanich.bc.ca
Graham Hill	View Royal (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 45 View Royal Ave Victoria V9B 1A6	479-6800 (w)	graham.hill@town.viewroyal.bc.ca
Gary Holman	Saltspring Island Electoral area	160 McLennan Dr. Salt Spring Island ,V8K 1X2	653-2042	gholman@saltspring.com
Frank Leonard	Saanich (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 770 Vernon Ave Victoria V8X 2W7	475-5510 (w) 479-6710 (h)	mayor@gov.saanich.bc.ca
Alan Lowe	Victoria (Mayor)	Municipal Hall #1 Centennial Square Victoria V8W 1P6	360-0200 (w) 598-4549 (h)	mayor@city.victoria.bc.ca
Erik Lund	Juan de Fuca Electoral Area	E.A. Planning Services 2205 Otter Pt. Rd. Sooke V0S 1N0	642-1620	directorjdf@crd.bc.ca
Carol Pickup	Saanich (Councillor)	Municipal Hall 770 Vernon Ave Victoria V8X 2W7	475-5510 (w) 475-0454 (h)	council@gov.saanich.bc.ca
Darwin Robinson	Esquimalt (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 1229 Esquimalt Rd Esquimalt V9A 3P1	474-7100 (w)	mayor@esquimalt.ca
Karel Roessingh	Highlands (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 1980 Millstream Rd Victoria V9B 6H1	474-1773 (w)	karel@roessong.com
Denise Savoie	Victoria (Councillor)	Municipal Hall #1 Centennial Square Victoria V8W 1P6	361-0220 (w)	denises@city.victoria.bc.ca
Rich Tamboline	Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area	260 Georgina Pt. Rd. RR1, Site 25, Comp 9 Mayne Island V0N 2J0	539-2730 (w)	directorgi@crd.bc.ca
Jody Twa	Colwood (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 3300 Wishart Rd Victoria V9C 1R1	478-5541 (w)	twas@shaw.ca
Karen Watson	Metchosin (Mayor)	Municipal Hall 4450 Happy Valley Rd Victoria V9C 3Z3	474-3167	mayor@district.metchosin.bc.ca
Leif Wergeland	Saanich (Councillor)	Municipal Hall 770 Vernon Ave Victoria V8X 2W7	475-1775 (w)	



IN VICTORIA THE BAN ON OFF-LEASH DOGS CONTINUES

Citizen Canine continues to strongly oppose the City of Victoria's animal control by-law, which requires that dogs be on leash in all city parks except for one area at Dallas Road. Having one off-leash area for the entire city is woefully inadequate. It concentrates too many dogs in one area--which can create problems. Also, it requires everyone who lives beyond walking distance to drive their dogs to the site (which increases car use and air pollution), and it discriminates against people who do not own a car since dogs are not allowed on public transit.

For years the city has ignored the need for citywide access for dogs to Victoria parks. This ban on dogs goes against the trend of major municipalities throughout Canada, which are creating more off-leash areas for dogs. In April, 2002 Victoria City Council voted against processes that would have led to policy and by-law reforms. Citizen Canine has lobbied the Mayor and the new city Councilor and parks liaison to have the city reconsider its stance. **Since the election last November, there appears to be a new openness to the idea of a balanced, city-wide off-leash policy and it is possible that the matter may be brought back to city council for a vote in the upcoming months.**

Now is the time to hold City Council accountable for Victoria's archaic ban on off-leash dogs. Things will change only if the Mayor and councilors start hearing from dog owners across the city. Please call or write a letter to let them know how you feel about the leash regulations in Victoria and to ask these elected officials to work on your behalf to create a balanced policy that supports your need for off-leash access in city parks.

You can mail your letters to the **City of Victoria, #1 Centennial Square, VICTORIA, BC V8W 1P6** or send them by fax to 361-0348.

Mayor Alan Lowe	Phone 361-0200	e-mail mayor@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Chris Coleman	Phone 361-0223	e-mail ChrisCo@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Rob Fleming	Phone 361-0216	e-mail rob@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Dean Fortin	Phone 361-0218	e-mail deanf@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Bea Holland	Phone 361-0222	e-mail beah@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Helen Hughes	Phone 361-0217	e-mail helenh@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Pamela Madoff	Phone 361-0221	e-mail pmadoff@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Denise Savoie	Phone 361-0220	e-mail denises@city.victoria.bc.ca
Councilor Charlayne Thornton-Joe	Phone 361-0219	e-mail charlaynet@city.victoria.bc.ca

- This newsletter will be posted on the Citizen Canine website at www.CitizenCanine.org
- Take a look at our new forum to see what other dog owners in this area are thinking and doing about the apparent prejudice against dogs and their owners that exists among local politicians and policy makers.
- Please pass the information in this newsletter on to your dog-owning friends so they can also take action.



The Truth about Parks and Dogs (taken from an open letter to the CRD by Dale Shpak)

Park Usage: The park system should be designed for use by all citizens. This design should reflect the needs of the user community and should take into consideration the number of users in each group. Dog owners are, by far, the largest user group of Thetis Lake Park. The CRD says in the parks newsletter "Restrictions on where dogs can run off-leash in other jurisdictions, combined with an increase population, have resulted in an increase in the number of dogs coming to regional parks." From this statement, the need is obvious for more areas for dogs to run off-leash so that the concentration of canine park users is kept to a reasonable level, which would help keep the environmental impact to a minimum. Therefore, it is completely irrational to further reduce the park area that is available to dogs. Since population within the CRD will continue to grow, it makes more sense to be proactive and increase the areas available to dogs in the near future.

Individual Safety: Many women run with their dogs in this park, knowing that the dogs are a deterrent to assaults. With a leash law, they must choose either to run without their dog, thereby increasing their risk of being assaulted and the related increase in personal stress, or to run with their dog on leash. This presents a risk of personal injury from the loss of balance and possible loss of footing on rugged trails. Alternately, they could travel the extra distance to Elk/Beaver Lake and contribute to the overcrowding on the trails there.

Park Safety: The numerous responsible dog owners who use the park year round act as deterrents to vandalism and assaults. It would be open season for vandals and criminals if the dog owners were to abandon the park, especially in the winter months when most of the foot traffic is people walking their dogs.

Ecological Impact: The Ecological Survey of Thetis Lake, Francis/King and Mill Hill Regional Parks showed no evidence of a scientific inquiry into the actual impact of dogs on the parks. It appears that the environmental bias against dogs in the Draft Management Plan is based on hearsay. In the absence of a genuine scientific study, it is more reasonable to assume that, even if vegetation is randomly and inadvertently damaged by a dog, the damage is to a very small area, which will regrow much more successfully than large-scale areas of damage by cyclists. The ecological impact of dogs will be found to be minor since most dogs follow their owners along the trails. No unbiased study has been done to compare canine impact to that of other user groups. Clearly, humans are the cause of the most malevolent, widespread and long-term ecological damage. Broken bottles, cigarette butts, plastic containers, and other garbage will be there for countless years.

Dangerous Dogs: It is disturbing that humans are allowed to freely express extreme prejudice against dogs. Certainly, there are dogs that have behavioral problems, and this is compounded when ignorant, irresponsible people do not train their dogs or treat them well. However it is unfair to restrict all dogs based on the actions of a few irresponsible humans. A far more fair and effective deterrent is to heavily fine irresponsible dog owners. It is well known that dogs that are not socialized or exercised are more likely to have behavioral problems. There will always be a large number of dogs in our communities (about 40% of households). If society wants to have well-behaved dogs, there must be more opportunities for canine socialization.

Enforcement: This is the biggest problem throughout the CRD. The current bylaws are adequate but they are not enforced. When was the last time that a dog owner was fined for not cleaning up excrement? If a leash law is put in place in Thetis Lake, only the responsible, law-abiding citizens will comply. Irresponsible park users will continue to be irresponsible and will have more opportunities for destructive behavior since there will be fewer vigilant eyes and voices. A far wiser move is to greatly increase the enforcement of all existing bylaws. The revenue from fines would pay for salaries and the quality of the park experience will be improved for all.



Taxes: Dog owners pay taxes for the parks. These taxes should go towards making parks more accessible to people who want to go there with their dogs. Dog tags are an additional levy that should go to support canine services.

