



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: November 2, 2021

**DATE:** October 26, 2021  
**TO:** Open Space and Regional Parks Commission  
**FROM:** Celia Walker, Park Ranger II,  
Community Services Department, 785-4512, [cwalker@washoecounty.us](mailto:cwalker@washoecounty.us)  
**THROUGH:** Colleen Wallace Barnum, Park Operations Superintendent,  
Community Services Department, 328-2181, [cwallace@washoecounty.us](mailto:cwallace@washoecounty.us)  
**SUBJECT:** Possible recommendation for staff to move forward with an off-leash dog pilot program, utilizing various flat fields throughout Washoe County Parks.

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### SUMMARY

Off-leash dogs are a common occurrence in all Washoe County Parks. Park staff interact with park visitors multiple times daily, reminding them of the leash requirement or providing alternative locations to bring their dog where they can be off-leash. With a growing population and apartment dwelling on the rise, the need for spaces to bring dogs to run is increasing, while open space is decreasing. The off-leash dog pilot program proposal seeks to create solutions based on success in other regions of the country.

### PREVIOUS ACTION

None

### BACKGROUND

Washoe County currently has two areas where dogs can be off-leash. One site is the Link Piazza Dog Park, within Hidden Valley Regional Park. This area is specifically dedicated to off-leash dogs and provides a double gated entrance, a separate small and large dog enclosure, access to water and dog waste bags. The second area is the multi-use pasture at Rancho San Rafael Park. This is an off-leash area with a 22-acre expanse of pasture for dogs to run. It has dog waste bags and access to water during the growing season. It is flood irrigated and the pasture is managed through a pasture lease agreement with a local rancher to irrigate and hay the fields in the late summer.

Washoe County Park staff recognize the need for additional off-leash options for park users. Many pet owners want to allow their dogs to run on the open athletic fields within the parks. While this use is currently not allowed in Washoe County, it has been allowed in other cities throughout the country with success. Both the cities of Portland and Boise have allowed, specific times of the day and year, off-leash dog use on some athletic field areas.

AGENDA ITEM # \_\_\_\_\_

There are four proposed locations for off-leash use on flat fields. The locations are: North Valleys Regional Park, Lazy 5 Regional Park, South Valleys Regional Park and Whites Creek Park. Currently, athletic teams are permitted to use the fields in the spring, summer and fall - March 1 through October 31. Most athletic teams are permitted in the afternoons and evenings from 3pm-10pm mid-week and all day on weekends (8am-8pm). The pilot program proposes for off-leash use during the permitted months from 8am through 1pm, Monday through Friday. During the non-permitted months of November 1 through April 30, off-leash use would be permitted from 8am until sunset every day. Times can be adjusted based on demand, use, public feedback, or other factors.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The fiscal impact is minimal. The cost of the signs is \$651.30. Staff will need to spend some additional time collecting data during park patrols. All of the dog waste bag dispensers and waste bags are being donated or currently exist at the various flat fields.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission approve moving forward with an off-leash dog pilot program, utilizing various flat fields throughout Washoe County Parks as off-leash areas during non-league use times and evaluate the use after one year.

### **POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with the staff recommendation, a possible motion would be:

“Move to recommend that staff move forward with an off-leash dog pilot program, utilizing various flat fields throughout Washoe County Parks as off-leash areas during non-league use times and evaluate the use after one year.”