



# WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

[www.washoecounty.us](http://www.washoecounty.us)

## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: November 1, 2022

**DATE:** October 24, 2022

**TO:** Open Space and Regional Parks Commission

**FROM:** Celia Walker, Park Ranger  
Community Services Department, 785-4512, [cwalker@washoecounty.gov](mailto:cwalker@washoecounty.gov)

**THROUGH:** Colleen Wallace Barnum, Park Operations Superintendent,  
Community Services Department, 328-2181, [cwallace@washoecounty.gov](mailto:cwallace@washoecounty.gov)

**SUBJECT:** Possible recommendation for staff to move forward with an off-leash dog program, utilizing various flat fields throughout Washoe County Parks during non-league use times.

---

### 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 program proposal seeks to create solutions based on success in other regions of the country.

### PREVIOUS ACTION

November 2, 2021 - Open Space and Regional Park Commission motioned to recommend that staff move forward with an off-leash dog pilot program, utilizing various flat fields at North Valleys Regional Park, Lazy 5 Regional Park, and South Valleys Regional Park as off-leash areas during non-league use times and evaluate the use after one year. Whites Creek Park was to be evaluated throughout the year to determine if this park should be added as an off-leash field.

### BACKGROUND

Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space has been conducting a one-year pilot program for off-leash dog use on three flat fields during certain non-league use times. The three field locations are at North Valleys Regional Park, South Valleys Regional Park, and Lazy 5 Regional Park. The pilot program offers off-leash dog use during the league permitted months of March 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup> from 8am through 1pm, Monday through Friday. During the non-permitted months of November 1<sup>st</sup> through February 28<sup>th</sup>, off-leash use is permitted from 8am until sunset every day.

Statistics have been kept by park staff throughout the year in the following parameters:

1. Number of users during off-leash hours by day/month/year
2. Number of users during non-off-leash hours and public informational interactions
3. Dog waste left on field
4. Number of calls to Washoe County Animal Services
5. Number of refilled dog waste bags
6. Damage reports filed
7. Comments and suggestions from the public

Please see attached table of statistics for each location.

Overall, the program has been very well received by the public. An overwhelming majority of dog owners are thankful to have an off-leash option for their dogs that is closer to where they live. Most users have been respectful, follow the posted rules, and clean up after their pet. We now have regular groups that meet everyday at these fields, which has contributed to a sense of community and is a positive addition to the parks.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Fiscal impact has been minimal. Initial cost of the new signage was \$651.30, and all dog waste bags and dispensers were donated. New verbiage stickers covering the pilot program message on signage will be created.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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

### **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 program, utilizing various flat fields throughout Washoe County Parks as off-leash areas during non-league use times.”