



# Washoe County

## COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

### Operations Division

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## HIDDEN VALLEY OFF-LEASH MANAGEMENT PLAN STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES Monday February 23, 2015

**Participants:** *Colleen Wallace-Barnum (District Parks Manager), Jenn Budge (Parks Operations Superintendent), Cheryl Surface (Parks Planner), Karen Vigil (Washoe County CSD Office Support Specialist), Bobby Smith (Animal Services Supervisor) Shyanne Schull (Director of Animal Services), Kevin Joel (Mountain bike representative), Kyme Kelley (Natural Resource/Erosion), Sheri Campbell (Equestrian trail ride representative), Susie Kapahee (Hidden Valley HOA, Citizen), Judy Luce (Runner/Hiker no dog), Malaika Heinbaugh (Dog trainer/hiker with dog)*

**Project Goal:**

Create an off-leash management plan for Hidden Valley Regional Park.

Presentation was given by Colleen Wallace-Barnum on the Hidden Valley Park area, the designated fenced dog park with maps showing the inner loop and boundaries of the park. The presentation included how the park is used by different people, runners, hikers, walkers, some bike riding and equestrian. Colleen also spoke about other states and how they started off-leash areas and how they are managed.

**Discussion and Input:**

Bobby Smith with Animal Services spoke about chapter 55 (Animal Services) and chapter 95 (Parks) needing to be more in sync with each other in regards to animal congested areas before any changes can be made. Currently "Animal Congested" means dogs must be on a leash for the safety of the public, both human and animal and a map of animal congested areas can be found at [www.washoecounty.us/animal](http://www.washoecounty.us/animal) under "Address search for animal congested areas". There is also public confusion on rules for Humboldt-Toiyabe National forest (US Forest Service managed federal lands) off-leash, which allows dogs to be off-leash one mile from trail heads, under Forest Order. Washoe County requires dogs to be on a leash on all parklands, except designated off leash areas, like Rancho San Rafael and Link Piazza Dog Park at Hidden Valley Regional Park.

Colleen spoke about park rangers not having the ability to issue citations in our parks like animal control officers, therefore asking the public to leash their dogs can be a contentious issue when they know there is no citation authority. Right now animal services gets calls with complaints from the public regarding dogs off leash at Hidden Valley and other parks within Washoe County almost daily. Bobby explained the citations given and the penalties. 1<sup>st</sup> violation is \$100 payable within 30 days at ½ price, after 30 days

full \$100 is due. After 60 days bill will go to collections. 2<sup>nd</sup> violation is \$200. 3<sup>rd</sup> violation is \$400. 4<sup>th</sup> violation is a misdemeanor and becomes criminal. For Civil violations animal control officers do not have to appear in court, if citizen complaint the citizen must appear.

The goal is safety and compliance for future areas. It's important that each person using the off-leash area have respect for each other. Dogs off leash should be controlled by voice command within a very reasonable amount of time. Dogs need to be ON leash until the OFF leash area is reached.

Concerns with off-leash: Dog bites, dog fights, disease, dog feces not being picked up and rare plants and sandy soil being disturbed. Malaika Heinbaugh brought up that dogs probably do less damage than the wild horse herds in the area. There is concern about dogs getting hit by cars that travel at high speeds on the main access road.

Liability will lie with the dog owner, not necessarily the property owner.

Clear signage is needed; dog waste bag containers with plastic bags as well as garbage containers. It was brought up how hard it is for garbage containers to be emptied when they are so far out on a trail and dog walkers would need to carry the waste bags back to the park for disposal. This could be a problem. There could be sponsor days where certain businesses/groups come in and clean. There is a concern for Parvo and unvaccinated dogs getting ill. Even dogs with vaccines have come down with Parvo because of different strains.

It is important to NOT displace people using the park at this time. An older population of citizens primarily uses the inner loop for walking, usually in the morning hours. Should there be certain times for off-leash so as to not displace citizens without dogs?

Many of the citizens in Hidden Valley already self-police and clean up.

Safety is a primary goal for each group represented:

Mountain Bikers have mixed opinion as many of them do not use the parks they use USFS lands.

Hiker/Runners with no dogs can be uncomfortable with dogs running loose and would like an area that is safe.

Equestrian riders are supposed to be given the right of way and would prefer if dog owners put the dogs back on a leash or have excellent voice control of the dog. Many equestrian riders have dogs (off-leash) with them.

Plant and soil erosion is always a concern in certain areas. It was brought up that it might be a good idea to rotate off-leash areas throughout the year. Also should the off-leash area be considered on a 1 year trial basis?

The next meeting (TBA) will be on sight at Hidden Valley. The third meeting will be small groups and focus assignments. The fourth meeting will be a draft plan and review.

