

Friends Interested in Dogs AND Open Space  
Proposal for Dog Management in City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks

**Version 12**

**Proposal for Dog Management in City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks**

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**FIDOS**

**"Friends Interested in Dogs AND Open Space"**

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1. **FIDOS' Plan Overview:**

a) **IMPORTANT PREFACE: Comprehensive Nature of Proposal**

**FIDOS intends that the community view this proposal as a comprehensive dog management plan that incorporates the Community Group Forum's ("CGF) Agreements as contained in the CGF Report as well as important philosophies and rationales for designing this integrated proposal. Importantly, FIDOS does not advocate the inclusion of only selected items contained in this proposal in the Visitor Management Plan. FIDOS believes that taken as a whole, this proposal strikes an appropriate balance among all of the interests involved to meet the needs of the entire community.**

b) **FIDOS' Proposal Employs Sound Principles & Incorporates Consensus of Community Group Forum**

- (i) FIDOS Fully Supports the Community Group Forum's Consensus Points
- (ii) FIDOS Supports Long-Term Changes to Ensure Compliance
- (iii) FIDOS Advocates Sound Data Collection
- (iv) FIDOS Advocates Dog Free Opportunities for Users

c) **FIDOS Proposes a Practical Plan that OSMP Can Implement**

- (i) FIDOS' intent is to propose a dog management plan that fairly enhances visitor experiences for both people who enjoy Open Space and Mountain Parks with their dogs as well as for those who enjoy dog-free experiences on our public lands. This plan protects the environment, an important part of FIDOS' mission. FIDOS believes OSMP can implement this plan in a practical, cost-effective manner
- (ii) FIDOS believes that by employing an overarching approach that embraces and emphasizes utilization of the "Least Restrictive Means" Key Management Strategy\* combined with the "Use of Best Information" Guiding Principle\* that are contained in the draft, as revised as an agreement in the CGF Report.

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\*See Section 2 for specific language recommended in CGF.

- (iii) FIDOS believes this overall approach would result in a cost-effective, measured, fair approach by incrementally restricting dog uses, as necessary to enhance visitor experiences and preserve environmental values, based upon solid baseline data obtained as soon as practicable with the assistance of FIDOS and other interested groups or individuals, a collaboration recommended by the CGF.
- (iv) FIDOS believes that the application of both the least restrictive means and best evidence principles to dog management supports FIDOS' opinion that, prior to employing all of the proposed changes to dog policies across the entire system, that, in certain instances addressed in FIDOS' proposal, OSMP implement pilot studies to determine the exact nature and extent of any issues and collaborate with FIDOS and the community on the best solutions, employing the least restrictive means necessary to achieve the desired results.

**2. FIDOS Supports Community Group Forum Agreements**

- a) **LEAST RESTRICTIVE MEANS-Management Approach:** "OSMP shall use the least restrictive means possible to achieve management goals. Incrementally implement more restrictive solutions if less restrictive solutions are ineffective. OSMP will seek to maintain visitor freedom and choice."

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- b) USE OF BEST INFORMATION-Guiding Principle.** "Open Space and Mountain Parks shall use the best available information when making and implementing decisions on managing passive recreational and educational uses. The goal is to make sound decisions based on consideration of all relevant factors, needs, and values. Scientific information on the existing and desired conditions of natural, agricultural and cultural resources, and the impacts of visitor use on them, shall be utilized when available. When key information gaps exist, collaborative efforts with OSMP staff, other agencies, and the public will be made to conduct new studies, research, and experiments to generate new reliable relevant information."

Elements of a Best Information Standard:

- Use of the best information available without unreasonable cost, effort, or time
  - Use of diverse and inclusive information sources, as applied to a particular circumstance: biological / ecological concepts and data, visitor desires and use patterns, values of the community, socio-economic information, and other sources
  - Use of the most relevant, high-quality, and up-to-date scientific information— research studies, monitoring results, analyses, impact assessments, public opinion surveys, “expert” knowledge, other types of information
  - Use of both quantitative and qualitative information
  - Consideration of the quality, reliability, and limitations of the information
  - Assessment of trade-offs in outcomes, interests, values
  - Evaluation of alternatives that represent a spectrum of decisions or approaches
- c) Some Exceptions in HCAs and AAs:** Where there are special circumstances in HCAs and AA, OSMP should consider options besides the default strategy of requiring dogs on leash. Some of these options include:
- (i) Allow on-trail or on-corridor voice-and-sight control.
  - (ii) Use seasonal dog closures or leash requirements where appropriate (instead of permanent dog closures or leash requirements).

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- (iii) Use existing multiple parallel trails, where appropriate, to separate dog walkers from other visitors.

**d) Community Collaboration:**

- (i) Collaborate with the community in designing and implementing research and monitoring projects that will provide more complete and reliable data for management decisions. These studies should demonstrate what impacts are significant and ones that are not.
- (ii) Collaborate with FIDOS and others in the design and implementation of studies that will document the extent of non-compliance with dog regulations, the reasons why, and evaluate the efficacy of alternative solutions.
- (iii) Create an ongoing community forum including various community groups and interests that will make recommendations to OSMP staff and the Open Space Board of Trustees. Use collaborative task or ad hoc groups for specific issues or projects, as necessary. Tasks or projects that might be considered by the community forum or task groups to advise the department and Open Space Board include:

- devising specific details for programs like special use permits, commercial use permits, and user fees;
- evaluating and determining the status of social trails;
- developing partnerships for trail construction and maintenance;
- developing priorities and designs for major trailhead improvements;
- developing monitoring protocols and implementing a monitoring program;
- guiding problem-focused research studies;
- devising pilot programs like education for voice and sight privileges and dogs on-leash at trailheads.

**e) Miscellaneous Principles:**

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- (i) Do no harm—don't fix if it ain't broke, and don't break it either.
- (ii) Where recreational activities may, or will, or could harm the environment, seek to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or restrict (as a last resort).

**f) Voice and Sight Access to Peaks for Dogs:**

Western Mountain Parks Habitat Conservation Area: Dog management requirements should allow voice and sight trail corridor access to Green Mountain Peak, Bear Peak, and South Boulder Peak. The Shadow Canyon Trail, the Bear Peak connecting trail between Bear Peak and South Boulder Peak, and the Ranger Trail to the Green Mountain summit should be voice and sight control in trail corridor.

**g) Big Bluestem / South Boulder Creek Trail.**

Seasonal leash requirements, rather than all-year leash requirements, should be implemented here, and these trails should be targeted for further assessment of voice-and-sight control regulation.

**3. FIDOS Supports Long-Term Changes to Ensure Compliance**

**a) Education**

- (i) **Install separate signs at trailheads and along trails pertaining specifically to dogs**, designed in collaboration with FIDOS, that educate and politely yet emphatically state the importance of compliance with regulations.

- (ii) **Education for Voice and Sight Privileges**

(Important Note: This provision is contingent upon the creation and ready availability of a video as described below and agreement to the additional proposals/revisions by FIDOS to the VMP which follow.)

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- (1) OSMP will collaborate with FIDOS and others on the development of the video. The video will depict realistic and enforceable dog management behaviors to meet the dog management regulations. This allows dog guardians to determine whether their dog currently can meet the standard, requires training, or, in the absence of training must be leashed.
- (2) Upon completion of watching the voice and sight dog management video, the dog guardian would be asked to affirm in writing the following:
  - I have watched the video and understand the OSMP voice and sight dog control requirements.
  - I agree to keep my dog under control in all situations while on OSMP lands (through adequate voice and sight control or leash control).
- (3) After signing this affirmation, dog guardians will receive evidence of compliance that indicates that their dog is presumed to be Voice and Sight controlled.
- (4) Dogs without evidence would be required to be on leash in all OSMP areas.
- (5) Make video readily available for viewing by the public via multiple outlets, such as OSMP, Boulder County Humane Society, Channel 8, retail outlets, and others so that dog guardians can obtain Voice and Sight privileges easily and without overwhelming the OSMP or Humane Society and so that users can readily comply when OSMP and the Humane Society are closed.
- (6) Any fees collected for this process would be minimal and would be used solely to maintain this program.
- (7) Once the video is available for viewing, provide a grace period before phasing in enforcement of the educational video requirement to allow dog guardians time to comply with this requirement.

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- (8) Dogs with evidence would be presumed under Voice and Sight control by rangers in the absence of evidence to the contrary, at which point the dog guardian would be subject to enforcement as described below.

**b) Enforcement**

(This provision presumes that the necessary tools, such as the video and education system described below are established and readily available to the public)

- (i) Violations for Voice and Sight:
  - (1) Establish a graduated system of fines for violations, i.e. formal warnings or tickets, documented in OSMP electronic system possessed by rangers, followed by tickets with increasingly expensive fines for subsequent violations.
  - (2) Dogs receiving three tickets within two years would lose their Voice and Sight privileges in all OSMP areas until achieving compliance with voluntary certification as described in (ii) below.
- (ii) Voluntary Certification for voice and sight privileges:
  - (1) A dog receiving a third ticket within two years would be required to obtain voluntary certification in Voice and Sight to regain Voice and Sight privileges.
  - (2) OSMP shall establish, with input from FIDOS, a Voice and Sight testing and certification system that involves readily available testing and certification either through the Boulder County Humane Society or, through dog trainers certified by OSMP or the Humane Society.
  - (3) Dog guardians may opt for voluntary certification to identify their dog as Voice and Sight certified.
- (iii) Violations for Waste Regulations:
  - (1) Establish a graduated system of fines for violations similar to those for Voice and Sight violations.

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- (2) The second ticket would result in a summons where the penalty imposed by the court would include a significant number of hours of community service picking up dog waste, either with FIDOS as part of their monthly waste pick up program or via some other program

**4. FIDOS Advocates Sound Data Collection**

**a) Pilot Studies with collaboration between FIDOS and OSMP**

- (i) General approach is the same as that employed in Marshall Mesa waste study:
  - (1) Establish a baseline of compliance
  - (2) Employ educational techniques to increase compliance
  - (3) Monitor compliance after sufficient time for education
  - (4) Standards similar to approaches taken in Leave No Trace study.
  - (5) Studies should focus on impacts to resources as well as compliance
- (ii) Voice and Sight Pilot Studies. Based on results showing compliance implement voice and sight in corridor in these areas.
  - (1) Big Bluestem/South Boulder Creek (west of 93)
  - (2) Sage Trail (north part of the Boulder Valley Ranch loop)
- (iii) Trailhead Leashing Pilot Study
  - (1) Locations: Mt. Sanitas (to the kiosk); Chatauqua (from trailhead and along road behind cottages until end of cottages); Marshall Mesa; Dry Creek; and Dowdy Draw (as proposed).
  - (2) Imposing permanent trailhead leashing requirements is contingent upon a specific time commitment by OSMP to complete the pilot studies in a “timely manner”;

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- (3) Results of study must demonstrate nature of problems and efficacy of leashing requirement as well as the distance from the trailhead of the leashing requirement.
- (iv) Prior to and during the trail corridor pilot studies, the Big Bluestem/South Boulder Creek (west of 93) trails are to remain voice and sight in corridor with seasonal leash, and the Sage Trail is to remain voice and sight in the trail corridor. These studies are to be completed in a timely manner. Other management strategies shall take effect as proposed with any modifications agreed upon in the CGF Report, with the exceptions of the trails noted in 6.b, 6.c and 6.d.
- (v) Compliance of dogs with voice and sight control will be established in all pilot studies. Then, FIDOS and OSMP will work to attain the desired compliance level:

Initial studies will establish a baseline compliance level.

**85-90%**--is the desired compliance level, for acceptability in the long term (within three years of the start of the initial baseline studies)

This range of compliance is geared to phased implementation of the enhanced dog management initiatives. The initial baseline compliance threshold reflects current dog management practices. The 85-90% desired compliance threshold reflects improved dog management practices that result from new initiatives.

- (vi) Based on study results showing compliance, implement additional Voice and Sight opportunities where appropriate. Consider appropriateness of Voice and Sight in trail corridor as part of the assessment of management strategies for HCAs and AAs. Seasonal leash restrictions or incrementally more restrictive requirements would be available to preserve values for HCAs, Natural Areas and Passive Recreation Areas using the criteria for each area as agreed upon in the group if shown necessary.

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- (vii) For compliance rates below the standard in any pilot study, incrementally use least restrictive means to achieve desired results, i.e. leash requirement in trail corridor.
- (viii) Periodically, perform additional pilot studies in HCAs to determine whether compliance rates may increase based on system-wide educational efforts and enforcement.
- b) **Collaborate with FIDOS** and other interested groups and individuals in performing studies and improving timely monitoring, collecting and improving quality of data regarding compliance with dog rules and regulations.
- c) **Collaborate with FIDOS on emerging issues pertaining to dogs** before they become problems, i.e. seek to avoid, minimize, mitigate or restrict (as a last resort) use of OSMP lands by dogs.

**5. FIDOS Supports Dog Free Opportunities:**

- a) OSMP will establish and publish on website and elsewhere a list of “family friendly” and “no dog” trails to avoid conflicts and provide dog free opportunities;
- b) Incorporate dog free trails as a balanced part of the mix of new trails established both in currently owned properties without trails and all future acquisitions.

**6. Miscellaneous Practical Revisions to the VMP**

- a) In HCA's and AA's, where off trail use or a trail corridor is allowed for other user groups, dogs are allowed in a trail corridor, which is defined as twenty feet on either side of the trail. If no off-trail use is allowed by any user groups, dogs must also remain on the trail.

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- b) Provide options for trail corridor voice-and-sight dog control to the Bear Peak, South Boulder Peak and Green Mountain via the Shadow Canyon Trail, Bear Peak Trail, and Ranger Trail (to Green Mountain summit) as agreed upon by the community groups forum.
- c) Retain current status on Bobolink (natural surfaced) with specified access points to the creek and on Doudy Draw trail with a pilot trailhead leash study.

**7. FIDOS Supports Maintaining Voice and Sight on Additional Selected Trails**

Regarding four trails that are designated as "leash required" in the draft Visitor Plan, FIDOS "agrees to disagree" with OSMP. Our explicit understanding is that FIDOS will pursue independent review of the status of these trails with City Council. FIDOS thinks that voice and sight control should be permitted on these trails. We look forward to presenting the evidence that voice and sight control within the trail corridor is reasonable and appropriate.

a) Green Mountain West Ridge

This is the easiest route to one of the peaks above Boulder. FIDOS thinks that older and less fit people and their dogs should be able to access this with voice and sight control.

b) Green Bear and Bear Peak West Ridge

These trails connect Green Mountain and Bear Peak. Runners should be able to access this with their dogs under voice and sight control.

c) Skunk Canyon

The neighborhood loves this trail. It is only in a riparian area where it crosses the creek. They should be able to access this trail with their dogs under voice and sight control.