

Item .....	04
Manager's Report No. ....	26
Council Meeting .....	99/10/18

**TO:** CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 1999 OCTOBER 07

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES

**SUBJECT:** BYRNE CREEK OFF-LEASH AREA FOR DOGS

**PURPOSE:** To request Council to amend Burnaby Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609 and Park Regulation Bylaw 7331 to accommodate the two year trial off-leash area on the Byrne Creek dyke trail.

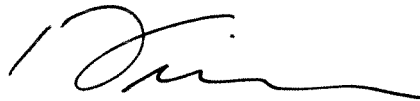
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT Burnaby Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609 and Park Regulation Bylaw 7331 be amended to accommodate the two year trial off-leash area on the Byrne Creek dyke trail.

**REPORT**

At its meeting of 1999 October 06, the Parks and Recreation Commission received the attached staff report on the above subject and adopted the three recommendations contained therein.



Kate Friars, Director  
PARKS, RECREATION  
AND CULTURAL SERVICES

tc  
Attachment  
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- cc: Director Engineering  
Director Planning  
Director Finance  
City Solicitor  
Byrne Creek Streamkeepers

## SUBJECT: BYRNE CREEK OFF-LEASH AREA FOR DOGS

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the Byrne Creek dyke trail system (as shown in Attachment #1) be approved for off-leash dogs for a 2 year trial period, commencing 2000 April 01.
2. THAT Council be requested to amend Burnaby Animal Control Bylaw No. 9609 and Park Regulation Bylaw 7331 to accommodate the two year trial off-leash area on the Byrne Creek dyke trail.
3. That a copy of this report be forwarded to the SPCA.

### REPORT

#### BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 1999 April 21, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved the establishment of a permanent seasonal off-leash area in Fraser Foreshore Park. The designated area exists in an open lawn in the park between Byrne Creek and Byrne Road and permits off-leash activity during winter months from October 01 to March 31 each year. In recognition of the demand to provide more year round facilities, the Commission requested staff to further explore possible additional locations for this use in South Burnaby.

#### BURNABY FRASER FORESHORE PARK & BYRNE CREEK DYKES

On 1972 March 27, the Big Bend Development Plan was adopted. The Plan included a linear park and trail to connect Burnaby Fraser Foreshore Park to Burnaby's south slope. In keeping with Council's policy of maintaining streams in an open condition, the Commission approved a plan to relocate Byrne Creek into the linear park corridor instead of piping the creek under the road. Engineering and the Parks Departments have assumed joint management and maintenance of the park corridor to oversee park amenity and storm water issues.

#### SITE SELECTION

Both the east and west Byrne Creek dyke service roads join with the Burnaby Fraser Foreshore Park seasonal off-leash area, as indicated in Attachment #1. The site is recommended as a year round off-leash area, for the following reasons:

- It connects with the existing seasonal off-leash area and is not in conflict with the more heavily travelled foreshore trail or scheduled park activities such as group picnics.

- The route is approximately one kilometer long, north to south, and offers a 2 km long route if both the east and west dyke service roads are used at least part of the way to the CPR right-of-way. The area is currently underutilized for recreational activity and is felt to be large enough to absorb a significant amount of off-leash activity. The south end of the route in Burnaby Fraser Foreshore Park provides public parking, washrooms and other park amenities.
- The dyke offers excellent surveillance. Concerns that were expressed for previously proposed South Burnaby locations regarding isolation, fragmentation, narrow path corridors with poor visibility, lack of alternate trail routes, and conflicts with other users are largely not present at this site.

Park sites and trails that were evaluated and rejected for use as an off-leash park in South Burnaby include: Willard Park (isolated, lack of support amenities, close to residential), the Patterson Trail (isolated, fragmented, poor surveillance, environmental concerns), the one kilometre segment of Burnaby Fraser Foreshore Trail east of Boundary Road (narrow, conflicts with other users, environmental concerns), Central Park (conflicts with other users, adjacent to heavily travelled roads, requires fences) and Byrne Creek Ravine (conflicts with other users, lack of alternate park path routes, environmental concerns). The above sites were noted in greater detail in previous reports to Commission.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION**

A report was prepared for the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department by an environmental consultant, assessing the environmental impact of the proposed off-leash area. Observations were made on wildlife habitat on and beside the dykes, wildlife species, adjacent land uses and evidence of dog use. It should be noted that field observations on this and previously proposed sites concluded that there is little evidence that dogs habitually leave a defined trail corridor and enter or disturb wildlife habitat access areas to a certain degree.

It was concluded that the trails along the Byrne Creek dyke are accommodating the present level of unauthorized use by off-leash dogs with little detectable impact on wildlife habitat. With mitigation and effective management and monitoring, the trails could probably accommodate additional off-leash dogs on a permanent basis. Monitoring was a key recommendation, particularly during nesting season to confirm whether the predicted impacts are insignificant. The Byrne Creek corridor does possess valuable riparian habitat that is largely protected by impenetrable bank vegetation consisting mostly of Himalayan blackberry, hardhack and reed canary grass. To further protect the habitat and mitigate potential off-leash activity impacts, some steps would be:

- spot planting native shrub species to supplement the existing dense vegetative barrier on the banks of the channel,
- reduce the mowing strip on the channel banks adjacent to the service roads to allow an increase in the riparian cover/barrier to occur naturally,
- provide a method by which dog owners can dispose of dog waste,

- remove existing park benches placed on the banks of the channel and close these access points to the water with riparian vegetation.

On 1999 September 01, Mr. George Clulow and Mr. Al Grass from the Vancouver Natural History Society, Mr. Alan Whitehead Environmental Consultant, and staff walked the proposed off-leash trail to discuss measures to enhance the habitat, as well as ways to mitigate and monitor possible effects that dogs off-leash could cause to the corridor.

The concept of the proposed off-leash dog area was supported in principle, subject to the following measures:

- The locations of existing access routes into the riparian habitat will be mapped to establish a detailed description of baseline conditions. This map will serve as a basis for developing a detailed planting and fencing plan. The types of access routes to be mapped will include informal pathways or trails as well as areas of potential access where existing vegetation density is insufficient to provide an adequate barrier to off-leash dogs and people.
- The Byrne Creek dyke trails will be used as an off-leash dog area for a trial period of two years, during which time the site will be monitored for impacts by off-leash dogs on wildlife and habitat.
- All preventative and mitigative works, including the installation of temporary fencing, planting of native shrubs, posting of signs, installation of plastic bag dispensers (for dog waste), and garbage cans are to be completed before the start of the trial period.
- Native species including Red Osier, dogwood and Hawthorn, were recommended as vegetative barriers, and to enhance habitat, in addition to those recommended by the Environmental Consultant.
- Signs will be posted at strategic locations sites to educate park users. Suggested wording to be used was, "*Sensitive wildlife habitat - please help protect the creek area*".
- Following completion of the baseline map and remediation, monitoring will begin. Measures to be used in assessing the off-leash dog impacts during the trial period will include, but not necessarily be limited to the following:
  - periodic (at least monthly) inspection of the new vegetation barriers and fencing, evaluation of their effectiveness in preventing conflicts between off-leash dogs and wildlife,
  - identification (by comparison with the baseline map) of any new access routes or encroachments that may be created over time,
  - review of bylaw infraction statistics compiled for the area by the animal control officer,
  - on-going observations by the naturalist community and the City, before and after the start of designated off-leash dog use; this will include more intensive observations during the breeding season, as recommended in the preliminary environmental report,

- a new problem sites identified during the monitoring period will be promptly remediated with temporary fencing and/or shrub plantings, and signs, as needed,
- monitoring of any public feedback on the new off-leash facility.

At their meeting of 1999 September 14, the Environment and Waste Management Committee approved a report and verbal update of the environmental assessment, mitigation and monitoring proposal for managing the two year trial off-leash use along Byrne Creek dyke trails. A report from the Committee is forthcoming.

The GVRD have also launched a similar program to assess the impacts of dogs in parks as part of their initiative to support off-leash activities. Staff will participate in their planning meetings to develop further criteria to assess possible impacts, consider other possible mitigation and monitoring techniques and share supplementary data on the possible impacts of off-leash use.

The Bryne Creek Streamkeepers Association has been asked to assist with monitoring and evaluation.

### CONCLUSION

It is recommended that trail and habitat mitigative works be completed in 2000 April 01. Following trail and habitat mitigation, it is recommended that a two-year off-leash trial period be conducted along the Byrne Creek dyke trails, until the fall of 2002. The two-year trial period will be monitored to assess the impact on wildlife, and to determine the feasibility of designating the site as a permanent off-leash site in the future. The two year trial period will be ended if monitoring work identifies negative environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated.

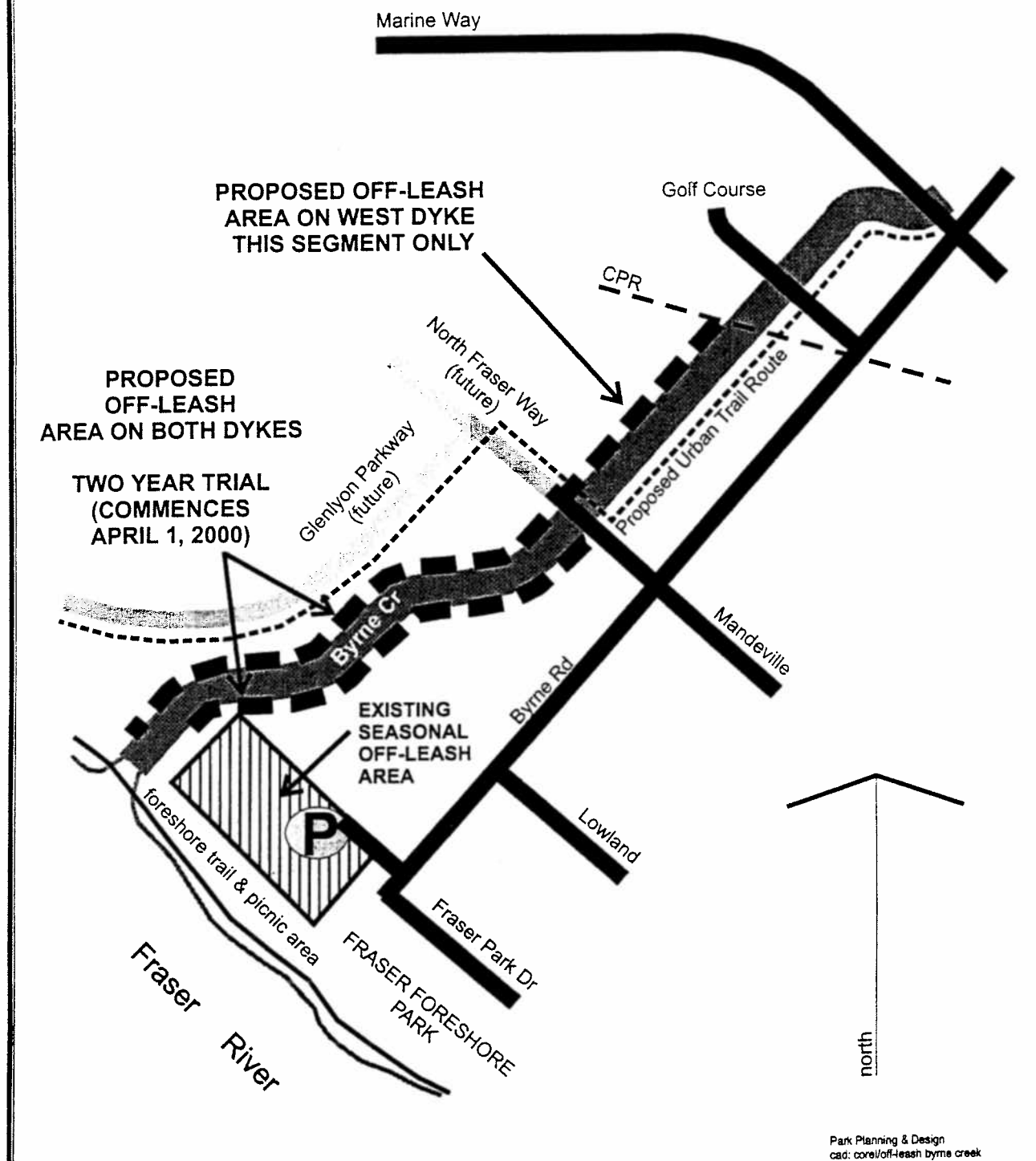
The Commission's 2000 Capital budget currently allocates \$25,000 for off-leash dog facilities. It is intended to use these funds to implement this project next year.

HIB:tc *H.M.*

Attachment (1)

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cc. Director Engineering  
Director Planning  
Director Finance  
City Solicitor  
Byrne Creek Streamkeepers



Park Planning & Design  
cad: core/off-leash byrne creek



**Proposed One Year Trial  
BYRNE CREEK DYKES  
OFF-LEASH AREA**

DRAWING: OP 23-4-64s  
DATE: 99/05/12  
SCALE: NTS  
DRAWN: MB