



PROPOSAL: Mammoth Lakes Dog Park – Mammoth Creek Park East

Proposal Date: June 11, 2021

Proponent Name: Town of Mammoth Lakes

Line Officer: Gordon Martin

District(s): Mammoth Ranger District, Inyo National Forest

County: Mono

Anticipated Implementation: 2022

General Location: Mammoth Creek Park East (see Exhibit A).

** Managed under Special Use Permit with Inyo National Forest MLD 100207R)*

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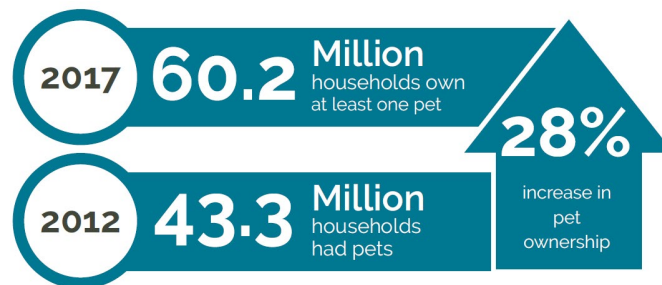
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Background, Purpose & Need

Off-leash dog parks are one of the fastest growing type of parks in municipalities across the nation. According to The Trust for Public Land, in its annual survey of the 100 largest cities, the number of dog parks has grown by more than 40 percent since 2009. The National Recreation and Parks Association's 2018 Agency Performance Review data show that 55 percent of park and recreation agencies now have established dog parks, and, in conversations with directors of park and rec agencies, most agencies are either building a dog park or in the planning stage for one.

The National Pet Owners 2019-20 Survey by the American Pet Products Association reports Sixty-seven percent of U.S. households, or about 85 million families, own a pet. This is up from 56 percent of U.S. households in 1988, the first year the survey was conducted. With ever-growing dog ownership by American households, park agencies across the country, including Mammoth Lakes are seeing growing demand for off-leash dog areas.



Dog parks are sought after by pet owners for multiple reasons. They provide socialization for both pets and their owners. They bring people of all walks of life together in a space where they can form bonds and friendships based on their shared love of dogs. For dogs, especially ones whose owners work long hours, regular dog park visits can provide an outlet to expend stored energy. In addition, dog parks provide a contained space for dogs to play, while minimizing environmental issues for the community and health risks for the many children and adults who frequent many of the Town's parks.

While demand stems from a growing number of individuals owning a pet, the value and benefits of these spaces extend beyond pets and their owners — making a statement about a community's commitment to offering amenities that attract a richly diverse and active population. As populations grow, and leash laws become more restrictive, many municipalities see dog parks as a way to allow pets to play without impacting traffic, infringing on private property, or potentially creating unwanted litter on public streets and public lands. While dog parks are certainly welcomed by dog owners, the value and benefits of these spaces extend far beyond the dog community.

Currently there is no off-leash dog park in Mammoth Lakes to serve the approximate 8,000 residents and thousands of year-round visitors.

The problem

The prevalence of dogs off leash at Shady Rest Park and the overwhelming amount of dog waste is not only a major safety concern for Town staff, but an escalating environmental issue for the community and a significant

health risk for the many children and adults who frequent the park. In essence, Shady Rest Park has become the community's de facto dog park, with many dog owners blatantly ignoring the law and shunning their moral and legal responsibility to keep their dog on a leash and pick up after their pet.

Mammoth Lakes itself is only about 4-square miles with a Municipal Boundary that encompasses the Lakes Basin, Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, the Sherwin Mountains and many popular developed recreation areas. Impacts from dogs off leash and dog waste within these smaller, popular areas is becoming not only an environmental and health risk, but a safety risk for both owners and their animals.

To ensure that our parks, trails and many treasured developed recreation areas are safe, cleaner and healthier for us all, the Town implemented several key initiatives. These include the following:

1. Enhanced infrastructure – installed new fencing at Shady Rest Park, additional dog waste dispensers and distinctive and increased signage in parks and on trails/MUP's throughout Town.
2. Public Outreach - increased education and awareness utilizing print publications, social media (new [Town Critters and Code Compliance Facebook page](#)) and a dedicated dog resource, education and enforcement [website](#) hosted by the Mammoth Lakes Police Department.
3. Community Pride – generate community support to encourage community pride for our parks and trails. This included partnering with local organizations to schedule regular clean-up events such as the "POOch Patrol." The more people seen cleaning up dog waste and being part of the solution to the problem will ultimately translate into change for the better.
4. Enforcement - community policing is a major element of the program. The goal of enforcement is to gain compliance. Enforcement can be as simple as a friendly warning or may escalate to a citation, just like all the other laws enforced by the MLPD. Enforcement of the leash law will hopefully reduce the occurrence of dog's biting people or other dogs. In 2020, 10 incidents were reported (3 dog on dog), while in 2019, 21 incidents were reported to the Mammoth Lakes Police Department.
5. Revised Ordinance – on May 5, 2021, Town Council adopted an ordinance amending Municipal Code Chapter 6.12 – Dogs (please refer to Exhibit B). The update was a comprehensive overhaul of the Ordinance, bringing it up to date on current laws and local practices, including the addition of rules and regulations for designated off-leash areas (6.12.210).
6. Dog Park Concept – The work program of the Recreation Commission for 2021 includes the coordination with Town staff on the feasibility, opportunities and costs for the construction and operation of a dog park. Town staff have been working with "Pawsitively Mammoth," a group of dog owners who live in and visit Mammoth who are united in demanding responsible dog ownership, clear guidelines on where to legally run dogs off leash, and a dog park that can be accessed by all.

Site Selection

Town staff in collaboration with Pawsitively Mammoth, developed a list of park design elements to determine an appropriate site for a functional and user-friendly dog park. In addition to design elements, staff also considered access to existing infrastructure, such as parking, restrooms, water fountains, trash and the ability to add lighting, seating, and fencing with minimal land use conflict or cost. One of the main design elements was access and visibility, critical to the success of a sustainable dog park. Taking into consideration consultation with the Mammoth District Ranger, the design and site goals of the project, existing park amenities being developed

at Mammoth Creek Park West and existing amenities along the multi-use path, the preferred site for the installation and operation of a community dog park is Mammoth Creek Park East – *managed by the Town of Mammoth Lakes under Special Use Permit (MLD 100207R)*.

Proposal

The Town is proposing to install and operate a free, pet-friendly dog park that encourages community inclusion, socialization, and public safety, while promoting proper dog ownership, etiquette, pet wellness and an enhanced quality of life.

Park details: Approximate size 1 acre. Includes 5-6 foot perimeter fencing, enhanced parking along Mammoth Creek Road (number of spaces TBD) including paving of the existing Mammoth Creek Park Road to provide year-round access to the dog park; irrigation (natural turf @ ½ acre), benches, dog waste stations, trash receptacles, high-low water fountain to accommodate both dogs and their owners, ADA access, and signage. See proposed, preliminary site plan, Exhibit A - attached.

Key Design Elements:

- The Town will install complete fencing around the perimeter of the area to prohibit dogs from leaving the area.
- A standard feature is a double-entry gate system with a gated waiting area for the dog and human to enter, remove the dog's leash and then open the gate to the main off-leash area, reversing the process for exiting. This ensures that "unplanned escapes" will be kept to a minimum as well as allowing for leashing and unleashing in a separate area that allows dog owners to manage the transition into and out of the dog park.
- The park will have separate small and large dog areas. This allows for dogs of different sizes and ages to avoid interacting and causing possible conflicts. Puppies and shy dogs have the opportunity to interact and get used to the high level of activity that can occur in a dog park.
- The Town will continue to research appropriate surfacing for the park. The goal is to program a portion of the area with either natural or synthetic turf, while maintaining much of the natural landscape and native understory. The Town is not proposing to remove any trees. Artificial turf is great, but it may require cleaning and built-in irrigation and sanitizing systems. For example, some manufacturers have developed turf specifically designed for the unique needs of dog parks. Grass is softer and more popular but requires a lot more care – including a need a plan for renewal and increased water usage.
- Dog park rules will be posted prominently at the entrance to the dog park. A successful and well-functioning park needs guidelines that are easy to understand and are located in a visible area to help communicate the expectations of dogs and their owners. Review the recently adopted Town of Mammoth Lakes ordinance for designated off-leash areas in Exhibit B.

Environmental & Heritage

The Inyo National Forest Authorized Official will determine the NEPA process to evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of the proposed action. It is expected that heritage (archaeological review), wildlife biology, botany, and hydrology consultation will be required. Heritage and water quality are anticipated concerns given the proximity of the proposed project site to Mammoth Creek.

References:

- A. UNLEASHED, Off-leash Dog Park Design Trends & Planning Tips™ playcore.com
(<https://www.playcore.com/programs/unleashed>)
- B. NRPA Designing and Managing Innovative Dog Parks (<https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/november/designing-and-managing-innovative-dog-parks/>)
- C. NRPA Dog Parks (<https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/november/dog-parks/>)
- D. Dog parks 101, 2019, The Trust for Public Land – Center for City Park Excellence
(https://www.tpl.org/sites/default/files/Dog%20Parks%20best%20practices%202019_R2.pdf)
- E. Canine Comforts, Implement Best Practices, Deploy New Ideas in Dog Parks
(<https://recmanagement.com/feature/202002FE01/3>)
- F. 2019-2020 APPA National Pet Owners Survey
(https://www.americanpetproducts.org/pubs_survey.asp)

Exhibit A

Conceptual Site Plan

Mammoth Creek Park (East) - Dog Park Proposal Under Permit From Inyo National Forest



Approximate size 1 acre. Includes 5-6 ft. perimeter fencing, expanded parking along Mammoth Creek Rd., irrigated turf and native understory, benches, dog waste stations, water fountain, ADA access, and regulatory/etiquette signage. Accessibility to existing amenities - under permit from Inyo National Forest

Exhibit B

Revised Ordinance

6.12.220 - Designated off-leash areas.

Notwithstanding anything in this chapter to the contrary, properly licensed and tagged dogs which are not vicious dogs within the meaning of Food and Agriculture Code Section 31603 or potentially dangerous dogs within the meaning of Food and Agriculture Code Section 31602 may be exercised without a leash in the designated areas established by the parks and recreation director or designee subject to the following rules and regulations:

- A. No dog is permitted in the off-leash area unless it is under the care, custody and control of the owner.
- B. Dogs are permitted off-leash in the designated areas only during the posted hours of operation.
- C. All dogs must be vaccinated for rabies and have a current dog license. No dog that is sick, in heat, vicious, potentially dangerous or has previously bitten any person is permitted in the off-leash area.
- D. All dogs must be under the voice control of their owners at all times. The owner must remain present within the off-leash dog area at all times, must carry a leash, and must leash the dog at the first sign of aggression.
- E. The owner must promptly remove and properly dispose of the dog's waste in a waste receptacle. The owner bears full responsibility for filling any holes and repairing damage to the park created by the dog's defecation.
- F. No animals other than dogs are permitted in an off-leash area.
- G. No dog obedience classes may be conducted in an off-leash area.
- H. The use of an off-leash area by a dog and its owner will constitute the owner's agreement to comply with the rules contained in this section as well as those regulations posted by the parks and recreation director or designee with respect to the use of such off-leash areas.
- I. The use of an off-leash area by a dog and its owner will constitute the owner's agreement to protect, indemnify, defend and hold harmless the town from any claim, injury or damage arising from or in connection with such use.
- J. Signage shall be posted by the town at the entrance to any designated off-leash area stating these rules and any applicable hours of operation.