



June 23, 2020

Dear Mayor Haynes and Saanich Councillors

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society are very impressed with Vancouver's holistic review of dog bylaws and owner responsibilities, but first some background.

Dog walking in Mount Douglas Park is very popular and there are many benefits to the dog owner and to the dog and this should be maintained. However, Our Society is very concerned about the increasing number of dog owners and walkers who are not ensuring their dogs are under control in the park and the negative impact of their behaviours and activities on the natural environment and on other park visitors.

Our members, many of whom have or had dogs, are in the park on a daily basis and observe unwanted and harmful activities. Other park visitors are expressing the same concerns. If these behaviours and activities continue the only outcome is more damage to the very areas we, and Saanich Parks are striving to preserve and protect for future generations as stated in the Council approved Park Charter and the [District of Saanich Park Natural Areas Management Guidelines](#).

The concerns are many, varied, ongoing and include the following:

- Dog owners ignoring signage and letting their pets splash and dig in recently remediated Douglas creek and the riparian areas damaging the banks, disturbing the invertebrates that are food for salmon fry and destroying spawning areas;
- Owners allowing their dogs to run free on the beach area, disturbing birds and other wildlife, "doing their business", leaving their excrement behind where children and others are walking and playing and disturbing other beach goers enjoying the area;
- Dog owners allowing their dogs to run free off marked park trails creating rogue trails, damaging native plants, spreading invasive species and destroying ground nesting bird habitat;

- Volunteers pulling invasives and planting native species having to deal with dog poop bags that are thrown in the bush in addition to unbagged dog poop;
- Commercial dog walkers letting large groups of dogs run free off marked trails;
- Park visitors being injured when knocked over by "friendly" pets;
- Dogs being aggressive and owners believing they are entitled to let their dogs run free and out of control in the park, even when signs are pointed out to them or reasons for keeping dogs on leash are presented to them.

These and more issues mirror the Saanich Pound ["Mt. Douglas Park and Dogs."](#) report of Sept 16, 2009, except the situation today is significantly worse than in 2009.

Our goal is to balance good opportunity for dog owners to walk their dogs, while ensuring visitor safety, trail inclusiveness for all users, protection and preservation of the natural environment and sensitive ecosystems for future generations. To that end, we have been in contact with other groups in Saanich who also volunteer in parks and natural areas and the concerns expressed are not unique to just Mount Douglas Park.

We would like to direct council's attention to a consultant's report for the City of Vancouver that addresses concerns of off leash animals:

<https://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/people-parks-dogs-strategy.aspx>

We are very impressed with the citywide, holistic approach Vancouver has undertaken to dogs in urban areas. Note it is the approach we like, but we are not endorsing any specific recommendation. If a similar approach were to be done in Saanich, the recommendations would likely be different to match our municipality's needs, especially for urban vs rural areas.

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society asks that Saanich Council undertake a municipal wide review of dog bylaws and owner responsibilities, rather than a beach by beach, park by park approach.

We look forward to a positive response to this request.

Sincerely

Darrell Wick, President

On Behalf of the FMDPS Board