



April 12, 2021

Dear Councillor Brownoff, Chair Parks, Trails & Recreation Advisory Committee,

**Re: It's Time: Dog On-leash Requirement in Mt Douglas Park**

Dog walking in Mount Douglas Park is very popular and there are many benefits to the dog owner and to the dog. However the increasing number of dog owners who are not ensuring their dogs are under control in the park and the negative impact of their behaviours and activities on other park visitors and on the natural environment needs to be addressed.

**The Friends of Mount Douglas Park requests Saanich Council to amend the Animals Bylaw to include Mt Douglas Park as dogs on non-extendable leash only, to limit the number of dogs under a person's control to a maximum of two dogs at any one time and to consider dog only parks within the Municipality.**

Our members, many of whom have or had dogs, are in the park on a daily basis and regularly observe unwanted and harmful activities including heated arguments with off-leash dog owners with the looming threat of escalating violence along with disregard to the natural areas they have come to enjoy. If these behaviours and activities continue the only outcome is more damage to the very areas we, and Saanich Parks are striving (and obligated) 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](#).

*A natural park is dedicated to the preservation of indigenous wilderness while allowing access for the enjoyment of the natural conditions therein without appreciably detracting from them<sup>1</sup>.*

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1 This definition reflects the consensus of a meeting between representatives of the Outdoor Club of Victoria, the Friends of Knockan Hill Society, the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and the Saanich Greenbelt Association, held on November 4, 1991.

The concerns are many, varied, ongoing and include the following dangers to visitors and to the park:

- The recent tragic attack on a leashed dog and owner by an out-of-control off-leash dog is a sad testament of dogs being aggressive and owners believing they are entitled to let their dogs run free and out of control in the park. Many simply reply “this is a dog park”.
- On-leash dog owners continue to express concern about the safety of their pet.
- Trails are no longer inclusive for youngsters, for those with mobility issues, and the elderly. Friendly dogs run up to young children to greet them terrifying the child to the point that parents can no longer bring them to the Park. Similarly we constantly hear concerns from elderly having been or afraid of being knocked over by large friendly dogs bumping them, or worse, greeting them by jumping up on them.
- Many people now feel the park is simply not a safe place and have stopped visiting it.
- 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.
- More than one volunteer while pulling invasives as been bitten by an off-leash dog.
- 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.
- Off-leash off-trail dogs threaten ground nesting birds. Hunting instincts in some dogs cause them to “take off” following a scent trail threatening wildlife despite their owner's calls.
- Off-leash dogs playing off-trail can cause serious environmental damage. As an example, a Parks crew had just finished spending the morning restoring an area with new plants when two large dogs started to play there. In fifteen minutes the morning work was destroyed.
- All the beautiful low hanging branch on almost every beach parking lot cedar tree has been ripped and twisted off by an off-leash dog. (video available!)
- Commercial dog walkers letting large groups of 6, 8, 10, 12 dogs run free off marked trails.
- 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. Should an entire flock of birds be forced to take flight for the pleasure of one dog?

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

We can say over the past thirty years the Park preservation efforts have been roughly constant while the threats to the Park have significantly and steadily increased. It is now questionable whether the Park Charter and Park grant obligations are being upheld.

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.

**The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society asks the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee to endorse a recommendation to Council requiring all dogs to be on-leash (Maximum 2 m length) within Mount Douglas Park and that individuals be limited to walking a maximum of two dogs at any one time.**

We look forward to a positive response to this request.

Sincerely,

Dr. Darrell Wick, President,  
Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society  
Cc: Mayor Fred Haynes