



## Updated Dog Policy and the Importance of Leashes Education Talking Points June 2019

### The Updated Dog Policy

Dogs on leash are now allowed on turf trails and in picnic areas, in addition to paved and regional trails, campgrounds and group camps. Dogs off leash are only allowed in designated off-leash areas.

Dogs are still not allowed in the following locations (with the exception of service dogs): Gale Woods Farm, Kingswood Park, Noerenberg Gardens, buildings, beaches, play areas, golf and disc golf courses, archery ranges, winter downhill areas, cross-country ski trails, and singletrack trails.

### Why did the dog policy change?

Survey and informal feedback from park users indicated an increasing desire for more canine-friendly opportunities.

Discussion among the staff committee concluded that *dogs on leash, on trail and properly picked up after do not impact the natural resources any more than a person does*. The updated policy is also similar to other regional and state agencies.

### Education

Education means explaining the **"why" aspects of the policy**. Answering questions with **"Because it is the Park District's policy"** or **"Because the ordinance says so"** is not educational and does not create buy in from the park guest.

### How you can help

If you see a dog that is on leash, thank the owner!

**If you spend time in the parks in your free time, don't let the education stop!** As a fellow park user, you can be extremely effective in helping with this effort. If you're out for a hike and notice a dog that is off leash, mention the leash policy to them.

### What to say when you encounter a person with a dog that should be on leash but isn't:

- **"While your dog is allowed in this area, I wanted to remind you that Three Rivers requires all dogs be kept on a six-foot, non-retractable leash on trails and in the parks. This is to protect the natural resources, park visitors and the dogs."**
- **"Dogs off leash are likely to impact wildlife in the area and could get into plants that are harmful to them. Additionally, some park guests are not comfortable with dogs approaching them. We appreciate your help protecting our natural resources and ensuring everyone has a good time in the park by keeping your dog on leash. If you're looking for an opportunity to let your dog run freely, check out one of the nine designated off-leash areas Three Rivers has to offer."**

Once the guest leashes **their dog, be sure to thank them and hand them a "Dogs in the Parks"** informational card, which includes a coupon for a free day pass to our off-leash areas.

Other talking points of why dogs should be on a leash:

- Wild parsnip and other plants toxic to dogs are found in the parks. Using a leash keeps the dog away from these plants.
- **We share the park with ticks, which can carry Lyme's and other diseases. Using a leash keeps the dog on the trail where ticks are less prevalent.**
- No matter how friendly the dog is, some people are afraid, allergic or just not comfortable around dogs. Using a leash ensures the dog does not approach people who may not want dogs near them.
- The prairie took years to restore and supports a variety wildlife, including some endangered species. Using a leash keeps the dog from disturbing sensitive areas and wildlife.
- Dogs that are off leash are more likely to cause stress to nesting birds or get injured by other animals. Using a leash ensures your dog does not disturb sensitive wildlife and keeps your dog safe.
- Not all dogs like other dogs. Using a leash keeps everyone safe by preventing potential unfriendly interactions.

*If the guest gets confrontational, Public Safety is always available to assist by calling 9-1-1 and asking to speak with a Three Rivers Park District Police Officer.*