

Re: Proposed Bassett Creek Dog Park along the North Branch of the Bassett Creek in Bassett Creek Park

Background on the Current & Proposed Dog Park area

Current Bassett Creek Dog Park: The current Bassett Creek Dog park is located in the corner on the south side of 32nd Ave N and West of Welcome Ave N beyond the residential area. It is 1 acre in size. Water and lighting are installed. Many of the trees that were planted early on have died. It is not located near Bassett Creek. Many people do not pick up their dog's poop. The poop eventually gets buried by wood chips or when it gets muddy. I go to the current dog park in Bassett Creek Park and in my opinion, it is rarely so full that there are too many dogs in the fenced area. The average stay is one hour or less, and the turnaround is high even during peak times, again this is my observation. Also, Valley Place Park is right down the road and has a Hockey Rink that is available for dogs from late March to early November. A fence and gate are added for an enclosed area. It is a little less than a half-acre from the current dog park.

Proposed Large Dog Park: The area that is being proposed for the large dogs is next to a natural wooded area with a bubbling creek and variety of wildlife. The entry from the north is off of 32nd Ave North. There is a small bituminous parking lot directly off 32nd Ave North with approximately 14 stalls, which is going to be enlarged with additional impervious surface. Bassett Creek runs underneath 32nd Ave North and flows through along the wooded nature area. The path along the creek is packed sand/clay and is well maintained all year for walking, running, skiing, or biking etc. The natural wooded area along the bubbling creek makes this a healthy, calming and meditative place to stroll. There is a small strip of woods on the other side of the creek and a cement walking path farther to the east. When the branches are full of leaves, strolling along the dirt path you can hear the water in the creek bubbling and the wildlife go about their activities in the woods. There is a series of walking paths throughout the woods. Sightings of owls, coyote, deer and other wildlife are frequent. People like to snowshoe and walk on the trails in this area.

Summary of Inadequate Project Planning

I disagree with the current plan to move the dog park to the 2.2 acres of wooded area along the North Branch Bassett Creek located in Bassett Creek Park. I also disagree with adding additional impervious surface to Bassett Creek Park. The specific Dog Park plan did not include numerous crucial project scope items. Critical items such as valid justification to move the large dog park to this location (a major waterway and wetland in the Bassett Creek Watershed), potential dog feces contamination to the North Branch of Bassett Creek, potential violation of Crystal city code as it relates to wetlands and required approvals from Bassett Creek Watershed Commission were not obtained prior to the Crystal City Council considering the project, equity and inclusion of various households, climate change in a natural wildlife area on public land and wildlife habitat destruction. Also, included MPCA's position on Dog Waste, however does not specifically mention management in a wetland area. Due to these important items not being included in the original plan and some of them being initiated only in March or not considered at all, renders the viability of the project to be questioned.

Details of Missed and Omitted items in the Proposed Bassett Creek Dog Park Plan

Justification for moving the dog park to this location in Bassett Creek Park. The location is a major waterway in the Bassett Creek Watershed and a wetland area. It is an encroachment and requires modifications to suit the dog park development. This is a critical area and appears to have been considered a roadblock only after an email was sent to the Crystal Park and Rec Director in February, 2022.

Absence of Adequate notification to the Public and reaching out to BCWMC in advance of selecting the Proposed Large Dog area. In February of 2022, a Crystal Park Rec sign was seen on the fence at the current Dog Park, indicating a park for large dogs was to be located along the North Branch of Bassett Creek in the wooded wildlife area.

Potential dog feces contamination to the North Branch of Bassett Creek. In February, 2022, an email was sent to the Director of Crystal Parks and Rec and copying BCWMC administrator and BCWMC Engineer inquiring about how the potential dog feces contamination would be mitigated. The Director of Crystal Parks and Rec responded with the following:

I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on dog waste. We agree that dog waste is unhealthy, and is why we require dog handlers at the dog park (and throughout the city) to “immediately pick up and remove any feces deposited on public property” (city code). The requirement to pick up after your dog is also posted on our website (<http://parksrecreation.hosted.civillive.com/cms/One.aspx?portalId=11785244&pageId=11911654>), is on fliers (attached) and is on signs in the dog park. In addition, we provide bags and garbage cans at the dog park to make it easier for handlers to pick up after their pet. Leaving pet waste behind is against our policies and is not something the city condones.

When used properly, the dog park should not contribute to fecal contamination. We will continue to work on educating dog park users and those that walk their dogs on a leash about the importance of picking up after their pets.

Thank you once again for your comments.

John

*****To recap, the only mitigation effort of contamination of dog feces at this time was to put up signs and place poop bags and garbage cans in the park. Please also note that the North Branch of Bassett Creek is listed as impaired. Animal feces will only make that worse.**

Potential violation of Crystal city code: Review of city code and potential environment issues were not included in the Proposed Dog Park plan until last month. March 25, 2022. (Regarding wetland impact and 100-year flood plain). Currently it is unclear if wetland requirements are met.

Required Environmental Approvals: As of the April watershed meeting the BCWMC tabled approval of this project. As noted in the City Council action, approval of the project is conditioned upon approval of the BCWMC which will not hear this project again until their May 19th meeting. Watershed engagement and approval (i.e., BCWMC and Shingle Creek Watershed) were not requested until late March and after the Crystal City Council had already considered to move forward.

Equity and inclusion of various households: According to the American Veterinarian Medical Association Pet Demographics only 38% of households own dogs, generally. Approximately 7 to 9 % of the population has an extreme fear of dogs. (WEBMD) Many people do not take their dogs to a dog park, because there is no specific supervision and dogs are not required to be vaccinated for worms, kennel cough etc. ONLY a very small percentage would enjoy the Proposed dog park. The Proposed dog park is on public land and in a natural area with a natural flow of Bassett Creek. We talk about equity in all its forms, in all places and we brainstorm on how we can improve, but it seems even a small commitment to equity eludes us. The natural wooded area along the Bassett Creek provides healthy, calming and meditative human benefits on public land and should be available to all people, not just a select few.

Climate Change: We know that Climate Change is here and is causing extreme variability in the temperature and weather patterns. The proposed dog area requires a permit for the 100-year flood plain and city code requirements. It is a fact that Permitting standards that were created when rainfall and sea level were relatively constant are no longer adequate. Someone said the 500 years soon to become the 100-year estimate. We know Climate change is real, we talk about it, but it is as though we don't see it as our responsibility to take action.

We talk about the Concrete Jungle, where everything is covered in heat emitting surfaces, yet we continue to allow impervious surfaces to be added to our city. In this case a Public City Park.

Please also consider MPCA position on Dog Waste, however does indicate wetland management

[MPCA SSTS Bulletin \(govdelivery.com\)](http://govdelivery.com)

[MS4 fact sheet - Reducing Pet Waste - Minnesota Stormwater Manual \(state.mn.us\)](http://state.mn.us)

MS4 fact sheet - Reducing Pet Waste



Dog waste sign

Pet waste left uncollected is unsanitary and disagreeable for users. It contains pathogenic bacteria and other parasites. When pet waste is washed into our lakes and rivers it decays in the water, depleting oxygen levels and releasing ammonia, which can be harmful to fish and other aquatic organisms. Pet waste also contains nutrients that foster weed and algae growth. Elevated bacteria levels in lakes and rivers caused by *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) can cause unsafe conditions for swimming and recreational activities.

This fact sheet provides guidance on developing a community pet waste management program.

Benefits and pollution reduction

Pet waste management results in cleaner parks and neighborhoods, with improved aesthetics and lowered potential for diseases to spread. Reducing the amount of uncollected pet waste reduces a significant cause of stormwater pollution.

Program development and implementation

Programs designed to combat poor management of pet waste fall into three broad categories. Municipalities often create programs that overlap these categories for optimal results.

Awareness campaigns (pet owner-based)

Programs are designed to overcome educational barriers. Owners are educated about the health risks and natural resource impacts associated with not cleaning up their animal's waste and are informed of their responsibility for finding suitable methods to pick up after their pet. The [City of Minneapolis](#) has implemented the "Canines for Clean Water" awareness campaign. Throughout the summer, the city sponsors dog oriented activities and education about keeping their waterways clean.

- *Brochures/fact sheets* Informational sheets are mass-mailed to educate residents of the health risks, natural resource impacts and applicable ordinances/fines. The brochure should also outline the proper handling and disposal of pet waste. Brochures could be provided at public kiosks or city offices, attached to park signage (see image above) as well as displayed at pet supply outlets and veterinarian offices.
- *Park signage* Located at park entrances to alert residents of the proper disposal techniques and/or park design features for pet droppings.

Pet waste control ordinances (management-based)

A municipality may introduce a law that requires pet owners to pick up after their pets or risk receiving a fine.

- [Pet Waste Ordinance Model Language](#) - Model ordinance language for municipalities to prohibit pet waste

Park design features (management-based)

- *Collection systems* - The simplest addition to a dog-friendly park are pet waste collection systems, which hold plastic bags for owners to use to pick up waste, and which have garbage cans placed in close proximity to bag dispensers and park exits. Bag dispensers should also include educational signage.
- *Doggy loos* - Pet feces disposal units are placed in the ground, which operate by foot-activated lids. Decomposition is quick, and messy cleanup is avoided.

- *Pooch patch* - Upon entrance into the park, the dog is introduced to a telegraph pole, surrounded by a scattering of sand. Dogs are encouraged to defecate on the patch, and bins are close by for owners to dispose of their dog's waste.
- *Long-grass principle* - Parks can have areas where grass is not mowed where pet owners can take their dogs to defecate. A height of around 4 inches is necessary for the feces to disintegrate naturally without stormwater runoff. Long grass areas, however, should not be placed in close proximity to overland flow paths, stream channels, lakes, drinking water wells, and stormwater drainage inlets.

Maintenance considerations

- Collection Systems: Regular refuse collection and resupply of pickup bags.
- Doggy Loos: These disposal units are installed in the ground and decomposition occurs within the unit. Minimal maintenance is required (occasionally add water and non-toxic digester powder for continuous break down of waste).

Typical cost

The cost of reducing pet waste varies on the intensity of the program and control activities implemented. The most popular control method is via ordinance, but municipalities must consider the cost of enforcement, including staff and equipment requirements. Awareness campaign costs are determined by the quality of materials produced and the frequency and method of distribution. Park signage may have higher initial capital costs, but can last for many years. Signs may also be more effective, since they act as on-site reminders to dog owners to clean up in parks. Collection systems can cost anywhere between \$60 and \$400. The pickup bags purchased in bulk cost 5¢–15¢ each.

Interesting websites

- [The Poop Problem: What To Do With 10 Million Tons of Dog Waste \(Op-Ed\)](#) - LiveScience
- [Dog Poop – Its Environmental Impact](#) - Green Blizzard
- [Do You Scoop The Poop?](#) - RI Stormwater Solutions
- [Toxic Dog Waste](#) - Doody Calls Pet Waste Management
- [Pet Waste:What's the problem?](#) - Pacific Shellfish Institute
- [The Scoop on Dog Waste](#) - Ecological Landscape Alliance