



Information Item

Date: November 14, 2011

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Barbara Stinchfield, Community and Cultural Services Director
Subject: Status of Dog Beach

Introduction

This report describes the recent discussion with California State Parks and Recreation Department (State Parks) staff about the feasibility of moving forward with a pilot dog beach program on Santa Monica State Beach.

Discussion

On [October 25, 2011](#), Council directed staff to work with the State to establish, on a pilot basis, an off-leash area for dogs on the beach and down to the waterline. The pilot program would include monitoring the beach and water for any environmental effects. Staff was directed to work with interested stakeholders, including Unleash the Beach, Heal the Bay, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Surfrider Foundation, and others to establish the parameters of the pilot program.

As the first step in the process, staff arranged a telephone conference with key members of State Parks, Deputy Director of Operations Tony Perez and Southern Division Chief Ronny Clark. State Parks staff acknowledged that while the issue of whether to allow off-leash dog areas on state owned beaches is a statewide issue, there has been no change in the State Parks' policy and State Parks remains opposed to permitting any off-leash areas on State beaches. City staff engaged in a thorough and frank discussion with State Parks staff, exploring a range of possible options that might allow a pilot program in Santa Monica by exception. As a State agency, State Parks

maintains a consistent policy for all State parklands and this applies to the current position of no off-leash dog beaches. The concerns remain the same as those stated during the previous attempt to establish a dog beach in 2005: the risk to threatened species, such as the snowy plover, and to sensitive ecosystems, the possible threat to the safety of visitors, wildlife, other dogs, interference or displacement of recreational users, and health issues related to dog feces and dog urine in the water and sand. State Parks staff offered to continue discussions with the City about this issue; however, in light of staff reductions and budget cuts at the State level, it was made clear that there was no chance for a pilot program to move forward at this time.

While this is disappointing news for dog beach advocates, staff have determined that further work on this issue will not result in a positive outcome as directed by the Council, given the State's frank assessment of the likelihood of establishing a pilot dog beach.

Prepared By: Judith Meister, Beach Administrator