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REPORT SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL COMMUNITY COMMISSION MEETING OF Thursday, July 10, 2025

SUBJECT **Rainbow Recreation Centre Off-Leash Dog Park**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To review user concerns with the location of the Rainbow Recreation Centre off leash dog park.

BACKGROUND

Dogs are welcome on CRD trails and community parks within the Salt Spring Island Parks and Recreation system excluding those community parks with playgrounds. Dogs need to be “under control” meaning within an owners direct eyesight and returns immediately when called. Owners are asked to always carry a leash and leash their dog if their dog is young or has a mind of its own or when you are at a trail head or intersection or when approaching other dogs or wildlife.

The Dog Park located at the Rainbow Recreation Centre opened in April of 2011 following a number of monetary and in-kind donations. The small park was envisioned as a place for recreation and social interaction among both dogs and owners. The park features separate fenced areas for small and large dogs, two trees providing shade, a picnic table and a covered shelter. Currently the Rainbow Recreation Centre dog park is the only fenced public dog park on Salt Spring Island. This dog park is well used by some in the community but has experienced conflict with other visitors and regular users in recent months.

The Rainbow Recreation Centre and grounds have developed in recent years to include a modular classroom for our preschool and a multipurpose room for our infant and toddler daycare. Two new fenced play areas were also added with the addition of these facilities. As the programs and services that we provide onsite increase we are seeing increased traffic to the facility and parking lot as well as continued growth in the attendance for our drop-in activities and programs.

The increase in visitors has also been noted for users of the dog park. Unfortunately, the dog park has not always been used for its intended purpose with campers set up close by, users smoking and or drinking and the fencing being used to hang and dry blankets and clothing. These users are asked to move on or to use the dog park for its intended purpose, however responses to these types of complaints are not timely.

In recent months staff have received patron complaints regarding dogs not under control and dogs that have escaped control and or the dog park on more than one occasion. The perception is that dogs appear more aggressive and patrons are reporting that the dog parks proximity to programs with small children is a concern (Appendix A).

CRD Bylaw/Animal Control has been informed of the concerns, but response times are often delayed resulting in the visitor leaving the site before they can be educated on keeping their dogs under control or the animal(s) can be assessed to determine if further action is needed. Staff are continuing to assess the situation and notifying Bylaw when the park is being visited by users who do not appear to have control over their dogs.

The Rainbow Recreation Centre Site Master Plan does not include a dog park on site as the plan includes the addition of a new playground (Appendix B). Despite this development not currently being the five-year capital plan consideration should be given to the current and future uses and potential for conflicting uses as the site develops.

Alternative locations for the dog park have not been explored. When considering alternative locations, consideration should be given to environmental and archaeological implications as well as the proximity to Ganges Village.

To address immediate concerns staff are looking into additional signage to educate users on what keeping your dog under control means as well as signage to potentially limit the number of dogs one person can bring to the dog park.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Relocating the Rainbow Recreation Centre off leash dog park would require funding to support community consultation, site assessments, demolition and construction.

Social Implications

Dog parks provide many benefits including: improving dog socialization, boosting your dog's physical health, promoting active lifestyles, providing a safe space for exercise and socialization. Dog parks also provide social interaction among both dogs and owners.

CONCLUSION

The Rainbow Recreation Centre off leash dog park opened in 2011 following community donations to support construction costs. Facility and program offerings on the site have expanded over the years to include preschool and daycare opportunities. Concerns have been received in recent months following a number of incidents where dog owners did not maintain control of their dog.

Staff are continuing to assess the situation and notifying Bylaw when the park is being visited by users who do not appear to have control over their dogs.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation, this report is for information only.

Submitted by:	Dan Ovington, BBA, Senior Manager, SSI Administration
Concurrence:	Stephen Henderson, MBA, BSc, General Manager, Electoral Area Services

ATTACHMENT(S)

Appendix A – Gulf Island Early Learning Society Letter, Dated June 23, 2025.
Appendix B – Rainbow Recreation Site Master Plan – Revised September 10, 2024