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REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2017

SUBJECT Dog Waste in Regional Parks

ISSUE

Provision of dog-waste bags to manage uncollected dog waste in regional parks.

BACKGROUND

During consideration of the draft Island View Beach Regional Park Management Plan on June 21, 2017, the Regional Parks Committee directed “that the addition of doggie bag dispensers at the park be referred to staff to provide further information.”

Section 8 of Capital Regional District (CRD) Bylaw No. 3682 (*Park Regulations; Animals in Regional Parks*) subsection 6(a) requires that “a person with the care and control of a dog in a regional park must immediately remove any faeces deposited by that dog.” Noncompliance can result in a \$100 fine (Bylaw No. 3683, *Ticket Information Authorization*). Currently in regional parks, regulatory signs direct dog owners to pick up after their dog(s). Dog-waste bags are provided only at the Governor General Field at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.

Staff reviewed current dog waste management practices of other park jurisdictions, including Saanich, Victoria, Metro Vancouver, Vancouver, West Vancouver, Delta, Surrey, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Toronto, Calgary, Montreal, Boulder, Seattle, and Portland. Research demonstrates there is a wide variety of approaches to managing dog waste in parks. Some jurisdictions provide dog-waste bags and/or dedicated dog-waste-only bins, whereas others have discontinued provision of dog-waste bags due to high costs and draw on staff resources. All jurisdictions indicate that an effective dog waste management strategy combines educational programs with enforcement.

ALTERNATIVES

That the Regional Parks Committee recommend to the CRD Board:

Alternative 1

1. That no dog-waste bags be supplied in regional parks or trails, with the exception of the existing dog-waste bag dispenser at the Governor General Field in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park
2. That compliance with the existing Regional Parks bylaw be encouraged through increased education of dog owners by providing information on social media, on the CRD website and on park signage, and additional bylaw enforcement efforts focused on dog owners as proposed in the Regional Parks 2018 budget; and
3. That staff be directed to report back to the Committee with amendments to update current dog regulations and to increase the fine for “dog faeces not removed.”

Alternative 2

1. That dog-waste bag dispensers be provided at the entries to regional parks known to have high dog use (e.g., Island View Beach, Elk/Beaver Lake, Mount Work, Sooke Potholes, Thetis Lake, Witty's Lagoon)
2. That compliance with the existing Regional Parks bylaw be encouraged through increased education of dog owners by providing information on social media, on the CRD website and on park signage, and additional bylaw enforcement efforts focused on dog owners as proposed in the Regional Parks 2018 budget; and
3. That staff be directed to report back to the Committee with amendments to update current dog regulations and to increase the fine for "dog faeces not removed."

Alternative 3

1. That every regional park and trail be supplied with at least one dog-waste bag station.
2. That compliance with the existing Regional Parks bylaw be encouraged through increased education of dog owners by providing information on social media, on the CRD website and on park signage, and additional bylaw enforcement efforts focused on dog owners as proposed in the Regional Parks 2018 budget; and
3. That staff be directed to report back to the Committee with amendments to update current dog regulations and to increase the fine for "dog faeces not removed."

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Providing dog-waste bags in some parks, and not in others, may lead to increased problems with uncollected dog waste in those parks where bags are not provided. This is because visitors to parks where dog-waste bags are provided may expect that dog-waste bags are provided in every regional park, and they may therefore not come to the park with their own disposal bags.

Providing dog-waste bags only reduces non-compliance among those dog owners who do not remove dog waste because they forgot to bring their own bag. Education about appropriate behaviour and the adverse effects of uncollected dog waste, along with increased enforcement, are more likely to influence owners who do not comply for other reasons (e.g., incorrect belief that because dog waste is biodegradable, therefore it is harmless).

Increased public education and enforcement demonstrates an intention by CRD Regional Parks to increase compliance by dog owners, which can encourage peer-to-peer interactions about the importance of cleaning up after dogs. The combination of education, increased enforcement and not supplying dog-waste bags is consistent with the principle that dog owners should be responsible for cleaning up after their dog(s), rather than the general public or government.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

In addition to being unsightly and producing unpleasant odours for other park visitors, uncollected dog waste can be a source of gastrointestinal parasites (e.g., worm species, bacteria) that can cause disease in dogs, in wildlife and in people. Infected dogs pass eggs or cysts of these

pathogens in faeces, that, when exposed to suitable environmental conditions, develop into infective larvae and can contaminate soil, cement, grass, and water for up to 10 years.

Providing dog-waste bags in parks does not ensure that dog waste ends up in park garbage bins. Some owners collect the dog waste in a bag but then leave the dog waste-filled bag on the ground. Bagged dog waste has negative health consequences for people, for dogs and for the environment that are comparable to un-bagged dog waste. The bag acts to preserve the dog waste and thus perpetuate the negative impacts of uncollected waste.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The annual supply of 10,000 dog-waste bags for the one location at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park costs \$1,200. If a minimum of one dog-waste bag station is provided at each park (for consistency across all regional parks and trails), approximately \$40,000/year would be spent just on bags, although costs for lower-use parks may be less than at the Governor General Field of Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. However, additional costs would be incurred to purchase dispensers and signage for each station, and to pay staff to install the stations and to keep the stations filled. When inconsiderate users and vandals remove the entire supply of bags at dispensers, costs are further increased. To ensure a sufficient supply, multiple dispenser stations would be needed at large parks, at parks with high dog use and along regional trails.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

All other jurisdictions surveyed require dog owners to pick up after their dogs in parks. Most areas require owners to deposit waste into park garbage bins. Some provide dog-waste-only bins and/or dog-waste bags. Others are phasing out dog-waste bags (Saanich, West Vancouver and New Westminster) due to high costs and logistical constraints. Saanich has changed to a “leave a bag, take a bag” model. Portland provides containers in parks for community members to fill with bags.

Penalties for non-compliance with regulations among other jurisdictions surveyed include a fine ranging from \$50-\$2,000 and/or up to 6 months imprisonment. The CRD is at the lower end of the range of fines found among other jurisdictions, but is consistent with those applied in Saanich (minimum of \$100) and Victoria (\$100). Focusing on increased education and enforcement in CRD parks, as well as increasing fines, would be consistent with practices in other jurisdictions.

CONCLUSION

Uncollected dog waste in some regional parks is a source of public concern, and has the potential for adverse health impacts for people, for dogs, and for the environment. CRD Bylaw No. 3682 requires that “a person with the care and control of a dog in a regional park must immediately remove any faeces deposited by that dog.” A review of management strategies of other government jurisdictions reveals that the most cost effective and successful way to curtail noncompliance by dog owners is education and increased enforcement, rather than through increased provision of dog-waste bags.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional Parks Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That no dog-waste bags be supplied in regional parks or trails, with the exception of the existing dog-waste bag dispenser at the Governor General Field in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park
2. That compliance with the existing Regional Parks' bylaw be encouraged through increased education of dog owners by providing information on social media, on the CRD website and on park signage, and additional bylaw enforcement efforts focused on dog owners as proposed in the Regional Parks 2018 budget; and
3. That staff be directed to report back to the Committee with amendments to update current dog regulations and to increase the fine for "dog faeces not removed."

Submitted by:	Mike Walton, PhD, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
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