

**To:** Howard Levitt[Howard\_Levitt@nps.gov]; Frank Dean[Frank\_Dean@nps.gov]; Shirwin Smith[Shirwin\_Smith@nps.gov]  
**From:** Alexandra Picavet  
**Sent:** Wed 9/25/2013 2:03:18 AM  
**Importance:** Normal  
**Subject:** Fwd: NY Times: San Francisco Debates a Proposal to Limit Where Dogs Can Roam  
**Received:** Wed 9/25/2013 2:03:27 AM

Martha at her beast.

Sent from iPhone, please excuse typos and made up words my phone inserted.  
Alexandra Picavet

Public Affairs Specialist  
415-786-8021

Begin forwarded message:

**Date:** September 24, 2013, 5:21:47

**Subject:** NY Times: San Francisco Debates a Proposal to Limit Where Dogs Can Roam

[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/25/us/san-francisco-debates-a-proposal-to-limit-where-dogs-can-roam.html?\\_r=0&gwh=27654C1E4B9FE5134ABA35F301F146FE](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/25/us/san-francisco-debates-a-proposal-to-limit-where-dogs-can-roam.html?_r=0&gwh=27654C1E4B9FE5134ABA35F301F146FE)

New York Times

Tuesday, September 24, 2013

## San Francisco Debates a Proposal to Limit Where Dogs Can Roam

By [RICK LYMAN](#)

SAN FRANCISCO — The dogs scampering across East Beach, some on leashes but most running free and having quite a time of it, were getting along a lot better than some of the humans trying to figure out what to do about them.

“I think the National Park Service, at least in its upper management, is anti-dog,” said Martha Walters, a spokeswoman for the [Crissy Field Dog Group](#), which has been opposing a set of proposed [National Park Service rules](#) that its members feel drastically reduces the amount of space in the city for dogs to run off-leash.

“There is a strong sense of entitlement among some, not all, dog owners that they can run their dogs wherever they want,” said Mike Lynes, who, as the executive director of the [Golden Gate Audubon Society](#), is concerned about the impact of all these dogs on the wild creatures in the parks, not to mention the humans.

San Francisco is proud of its quirks. But when three of its dearest — environmentalism, political activism and dogs — come together, there is not a leash strong enough to keep them apart.

“There is a lot of passion about this issue in San Francisco,” said Howard Levitt, the spokesman for the National Park Service here. “Dog conflicts are among the toughest to deal with.”

The statistic is so often repeated that it has become central to San Francisco’s self image: there are more dogs than children in the city.

And there is only one part of the nation’s entire national park system — whose 401 units cover 84 million acres — that provides any area whatsoever for dogs to run off-leash: the Golden Gate National Recreational Area, spread across 74,816 acres of marshes, lagoons and 28 miles of shoreline from Marin County in the north to San Mateo in the south.

The bulk of the recreation area, though, hugs some of the prime spots on this dense, bustling city’s waterfront, where over the years, residents have gotten used to letting their dogs go without a leash in many parts of the park.

“We were stunned when we saw the second draft of the park service’s dog plan,” Ms. Walters, of the dog group, said as she watched her 8-year-old rescue dog, Grace, wade into the mild surf, the Golden Gate Bridge rising with improbable grandeur in the background.

“Despite all our work,” Ms. Walters said, “they ignored pretty much everything we recommended.”

Responding to what it said were rising complaints from park visitors and park officers, the National Park Service decided several years ago to come up with a new, detailed plan that spells out where dogs are allowed.

The first attempt, Mr. Levitt said, was a federal process called Negotiated Rule Making, in which stakeholders representing the various groups that use the park — families, older citizens, environmentalists, exercise enthusiasts and dog owners — tried to sit down and hammer out an agreement.

It did not work.

“People felt those with a different viewpoint were intractable while they were being flexible,” Mr. Levitt said. “Most people see the world through their own lens.”

The park service then turned to writing its own Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, and released its first draft in January 2011. Dog owners found it too restrictive, while some environmental groups found it too lenient.

A public comment period attracted more than 4,700 people, most of them agitated dog owners. So it was with some disappointment that the dog owners read the 1,500-page second draft, released this month.

There is now a 90-day public comment period for dog owners and others to make their displeasure known. Then a final plan will be unveiled, probably in early 2015.

The plan breaks down all 22 areas where dogs have been allowed throughout the park. In some of those areas, dogs will be banned. In others, they will be allowed if leashed. Dogs will be allowed without a leash in only seven areas of the park “where impacts to visitor experience and safety and sensitive resources would be minimized,” and even there the dogs must respond to their owner’s voice commands.

Several people walking their dogs in Crissy Field this week said they would probably just continue to bring their pets here, even if the rules change, and test the level of enforcement.

“Actually, I wouldn’t say test,” said Menden Kibera, a stay-at-home mother who says she brings her Rhodesian Ridgeback to the park pretty much every day. “I’d say protest.”

That is the way San Francisco is wired, people on all sides of the issue say. They are devoted to their dogs, to their parks and to the kind of freewheeling outdoors lifestyle that Northern California provides in abundance — and if they do not get what they want, they organize.

“I don’t think we’re spoiling our dogs — I think they’re living a wonderful life,” Ms. Walters said. “I mean, we all live here in the Bay Area for a reason. We don’t live in Chicago.”