



People for Off-Leash Recreation

# Spring 2007 Newsletter

## Mar 31st, 2007

### MIDOG hosts First General Meeting of Dog Owners

On Jan 19th, 2007 POLR and it's local affiliate, the Mercer Island Dog Owners Group (MIDOG) hosted their first meeting of dog owners. The status of the funding and future plans for the Luther Burbank OLA were presented with a discussion of several options for fencing and surface treatments. The attendees completed a survey form on their preferences.

The results showed that patrons overwhelmingly desire secure fencing that is at least 42 inches in height, however they are very much opposed to black chain link. Preferences were evenly split between treated wood vs. rough cedar, but a clear majority preferred livestock "welded" wire instead of chain link for keeping the fence secure.

A single entry gate, at the current location was chosen in preference to a double gate at that spot. The concept of an enclosed pathway forming an elongated type of double entry was the second choice, should the entrance be relocated. Black chain link was the first choice for the service gate, followed by custom made treated wood gates. Most people thought that the shoreline gates should be serpentine gates, but this style preference is in complete contradiction to the expressed need for "secure" fencing. Several people stated they had no preference on type of fencing and gating, as long as it was secure! They didn't select any gating or fencing options, so the serpentine gates were the first choice only of those who voted on the fencing and gating options.

People overwhelming favored retaining the Hawthorn trees and fruit trees, but wanted them pruned, and fallen fruit picked up (by volunteer work party). Most people wanted at least 2 deciduous shade trees planted along the western edge of the OLA. Most did not want to gain open space by removing the rose bushes, although nearly half said they would support removing some of the roses.

Our patrons almost unanimously felt that our central "high use" zone should be either raised gravel & sand or the "all weather sports field" type surface that is currently at Grandview or Genesee OLAs. The remainder wanted hogfuel. No one believes that grass is a viable option for that area. People were about evenly divided on trying to have rough, pasture type grass along the edges verses having a non-living surface everywhere. Most people were opposed to the idea of the park expanding irrigation lines northward to serve the OLA.

People were generally supportive of voluntarily restricting our water access to help preserve the shoreline. Most felt that there should be 2 to 3 access points in addition to our main beach. People do not favor the previous "preferred concept" plan of 2 highly structured beaches.

A clear majority felt the following amenities were not needed: storage cubbies, hitching posts, new tables, climbing or jumping obstacles, or a first aid kit. Many people expressed concern that tables and benches create socializing which causes people to ignore their dogs, not "pick-up" or monitor poor behavior. Removing the one table we currently have was not presented on the survey, but I suspect that most people do not want it there. Most people did want 3 new benches, however, and most wanted them permanently mounted. The attendees also strongly agreed that we need bag dispensers in or very near the parking lot and we all agreed that the dog wash should be in the parking lot.

The top 6 priorities were, in order of importance: improved drainage and surface treatments; secure fencing; posted rules; shoreline restoration; double gated entry; and more seating, i.e., benches and tables.

The results of the survey will be used to guide POLR in its immediate discussions with the MI Parks & Recreation (MIPR) as this process begins. However, MIPR plans to hold public meetings to give anyone who is interested the chance to participate.

## **Luther Burbank OLA: What's the Plan?**

Last December, the MI City Council approved a budget of \$210,000 to be spent on the OLA for capital improvements in 2007. On Mar 21, three representatives of POLR and MIDOG met with the MI Parks & Recreation Department (MIPR) on the implementation of the renovations funded for 2007. The funds are allocated for fencing, drainage improvements, surface treatments, signage and minor shoreline repair.

The newly hired project Manager, Mr. Eric Gerber of Whidbey Island, also attended the meeting. He will coordinate the subcontractors involved in the project. The next task will be to select a landscape architect to gather public input and create a design (largely based on the one presented in the Master Plan). MIPR has invited a representative of POLR to participate in the selection process. The architect will be conducting one or two public input sessions. The scope of these sessions will be strictly limited to the improvements prescribed by the Master Plan, meaning that there won't be discussions of leash law issues, relocation of the OLA or major size or configuration changes.

The good news is MIPR intends to expand the OLA southward between the chestnut trees and the walkway. This is intended to "improve access" as defined in the Master Plan by increasing the separation between the OLA and the Dairy Barn Ruins, and moving it somewhat closer to the parking lot. It has not been determined how far the extension will reach, and it does not involve any new shoreline for the OLA.

"Minor beach improvements" could help reduce the muddy situation by the steps until the more major shoreline renovation materializes. We discussed filling in behind the boulders with various sizes of rock and gravel to produce a temporary improvement that would not involve special "water permits".

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## **Other News:**

### **POLR launches its website!**

Check it out!

**[www.off-leash.org](http://www.off-leash.org)**

### **Agreement on Luther Burbank OLA Stewardship is Reached**

POLR and MIPR are one step closer to formalizing a stewardship agreement for the OLA at Luther Burbank. MIPR has given preliminary approval of our revised version of the "Adopt-a-Park" agreement concerning the OLA at Luther Burbank.

### **Directors of POLR agree on recommendations for Wildwood OLA**

After listening to comments from our members living near the Wildwood OLA (WW), and from nearby residents surveyed by POLR volunteers, the Board of Directors decided to recommend to MIPR that the WW OLA not be fenced in. We will suggest that funds approved for fencing be used to fence off the side of the park that borders Island Crest Way, and to fence off the swampy and wet areas only. It is our belief that creating a fenced "dog corral" would bring more users than the neighborhood could tolerate. The inadequate parking, and adjacent residences require that this OLA remain a lightly used neighborhood resource for very well trained dogs only. Keeping it unfenced will allow other uses as well.

### **Spring Work Party at LB OLA Sat, April 21st!**

Much less rock moving this time, but people with tree pruning skills will be needed! The gravel pile will be spread out and some small native plants put in by the steps. We might begin some restoration work south of the stairs as well. MIPR will supply the tools, so just plan to drop by and join in!

("The Plan" continued from page 2)

The proposed schedule is to conduct the hearings and planning this summer, then start actual work in the late summer/early fall. We advised that fencing should be done as early as possible to reduce conflicts between park users. We also discussed phasing the work while keeping the OLA at least partially open, but no definite decisions were made.

The Kiosk is coming! But because the entrance location will change, MIPR is planning to set it up with temporary bracing, so that it can be moved later. The Kiosk will be used by MIPR to post notices of the public meetings and the OLA rules. POLR will also have access to the enclosed box for posting signs and notices. The rear of the Kiosk will be used for general public posting.

Visit our website: [www.off-leash.org](http://www.off-leash.org) for information and announcements!

## Construction-destruction Continues at Eastgate/Boeing Park



Local residents and displaced dog walkers wonder if our field will ever recover! Bellevue obtained this land from Boeing in 2003 and intends to develop it into a park including adjacent School District Property. Local residents have been running their dogs there for almost 15 years while Boeing owned it. Boeing was supportive of this activity: after 9/11 they installed security booths, but directed the dog owners to alternative access points. Prior to this construction mess, a group of nearly 60 people regularly walked their dogs there. Most are hoping the city will establish an official OLA here.

Boeing sold an adjacent portion to a developer who is building three 7 story high offices. In exchange for the construction of an access road and other modifications, Bellevue has permitted the developer to use about half of the field for "staging" of equipment. Glen Kost, the head of Bellevue's Park Planning Department, has said that the construction materials will be removed by summer and the construction company will be required to return the field to its former condition. Bellevue dog owners have been in regular contact with the parks department regarding what appears to be excessive damage caused by the contractors. Clearly this previously well draining field will need substantial drainage improvements after being compacted by this heavy equipment.

(Eastgate/Boeing continued from pg 3)

POLR has identified this parcel as our best hope of ever establishing an OLA of appropriate size in Bellevue. The open field is about 6 acres, there is existing paved parking, and it is suitably separated from residential areas. This is the only place we know of in Bellevue that meets all of the criteria for OLA development.

Bellevue Dog owners are urged to become involved if they want to retain this for off-leash use. Master Planning for this park should begin by this summer. POLR's initial contact with the P & R department regarding plans for this park have been open, and encouraging. Other user groups will be focusing on this site for their special interests: baseball, soccer, and skateboarding groups are just some of the interested parties! The dog owners can not afford to be complacent.

Visit our website: **[off-leash.org](http://off-leash.org)** for more details, and to get involved!

## Can't Take It Anymore? Here are the Mud free OLAs!

**Grandview:** Managed by S.O.D.A., this nearly 40 acre OLA has 3 former all-weather soccer fields that are mud free! Including the grassy zones, there are three distinct areas which allow users to find their own space. The park is isolated from traffic, but fencing has openings, only dogs under reliable verbal control should go there.

**Directions:** Take I-5 south to Exit 149, the Kent-Des Moines Rd (Highway 516) Exit. Make a left at the light at the end of the exit. Make a left onto Military Road. Go a couple of blocks then make a right at S. 228th (there is a blue City of Seatac sign & one for Grandview Park).

**Genesee:** Managed by C.O.L.A., this 3 acre OLA also has a central zone of sportsfield type surface, with grass around the periphery. The grass areas are muddy, but can be avoided. It is securely fenced and double gated. Parking is on the side street.

**Directions:** From I-90, exit onto southbound Rainier Ave. Go about 1.5 miles, then turn left onto Genesee St. The OLA is about 1/2 mile down on the right side. Parking is on Genesee or 46th Ave S.

## How About RAIN Free?

Next time you go "downtown", take your dog to C.O.L.A.'s **I-5 Colonnade OLA**, located under the freeway in the area between Howe street and Lakeview Blvd. The surface is crushed rock, which dogs don't like to run on, but they still have fun climbing on the large cement blocks that form the terraced layers. Securely fenced and gated, with potable water onsite, this place offers a unique experience free from the winter downpours or the blazing heat of the summer sun!

**Directions:** From I-5, take the Mercer St Exit, turn right onto Fairview Ave, go 2 blocks, turn right onto Aloha, go left at the next street, which is Eastlake Ave E and then in just one block, turn right onto Howe. The OLA is under I -5. On street parking is tight, but usually available nearby.