

Off-Leash Bulletin



News from People for Off-leash Recreation

POLR

advocates for dog owners in
Mercer Island, Bellevue, & the eastside

August 2008

Luther Burbank OLA to Close for Renovation

The long awaited redesign of Luther Burbank OLA is finally done and the work will begin in the next couple of weeks! During the renovation, a temporary enclosure will be set up just to the west of the existing OLA.

Work on the shoreline must be completed before the Fall Salmon migration so that phase of the project will be done first. The upland portion will follow, and if all goes well, the new OLA should be ready by the end of the year. The key features of the new OLA are more usable water access at the main beach, improved drainage with a sand/aggregate surface in the most heavily used areas, and the addition of a separate area for small, shy, senior, or convalescing dogs. New 4ft high fencing of split rail with wire mesh will be installed, and the OLA will be shifted southward. The overall size will be the same, but the new area will be nearly 100% usable space. Currently nearly one third of our area is lost to rose bushes, heavy brush and other vegetation.

We have worked very hard to get the funding spent on a proper, mud free surface treatment. The MI Parks Department and the Berger Group, who were the architects of the plan, took our concerns seriously and increased the capacity of the drainage design. Compromises were made in many areas to free up funds for the surface treatment. The Parks department will remove and re-use the benches we already have. Split rail fencing was chosen for its esthetics and cost effectiveness. Much of the landscaping will have to be added later, using donations and volunteer labor. Please visit the POLR web site for more details.

Bellevue Dog Owners Struggle to Keep Off-leash Activity at Boeing/Eastgate



Neighbors and dog owners unite to ward off excessive development into a major “sports complex”, a concept being pushed by the city and multiple athletic groups. The new park is designated as a “community” park and therefore will be designed to meet perceived community needs. This site’s location and physical characteristics make it ideal for several competing and conflicting activities. Historically, people have been using it as an off-leash area for 20 years. This is Bellevue’s best chance of ever getting a reasonably sized OLA of 5 acres.

Everyone must help to make this happen! Here is how you can get involved:

Go to www.bellevuewa.gov/eastgate_area_properties_master_plan.htm

Select the button for automatic “e-mail alerts” when this page is updated the city will alert you and you can fill in new surveys and keep current on the process.

Select the “survey” button and fill in your responses. It is OK to say you haven’t visited the site. Be sure to state in your comments that you support an OLA of at least 5 acres in size at this location. Say whatever else you feel about the need for OLAs in Bellevue

Fill out any new surveys that come online! Contact polr@off-leash.org or visit our website www.off-leash.org for more information and other things you can do to get involved.

What have we been up to?

Our last Newsletter was March 2007!

POLR began its Bellevue activities early in 2007, when we decided to start supplying waste bags to the meadow at Eastgate/Boeing. Then on April 24, 2007, POLR met with Bellevue Parks staff to introduce ourselves and to discuss the possibility of creating an Off-Leash Area

(OLA) at Eastgate, to protest the current use of that area for construction “staging” and to request improvements at the Robinswood OLA.

Robinswood users suggested that a close by water source, provision of a shade structure and lighting to extend the usage hours were improvements they would like to see. We presented these requests/recommendations to Glen Kost, the head of Bellevue parks Planning, along with recommendations based on national standards of dog park design. These included placing bag dispensers, and trash cans inside the OLA and developing posted rules. We also suggested creating some type of visual screening around the gated entry box to reduce the amount of “charging up to arriving dogs” and that cedar “hog fuel” (used at Marymoor) be used in place of the yard waste type of wood chips.

The Parks Department informed us that there is no budget for the OLA. At that time, they felt there was no money available for costly improvements like lights, shade structures or hog fuel. We agreed to work on identifying a closer water source than the faucet at the teen barn. Then in late April, the Parks Dept came up with funding for a direct water line into the OLA! The new faucet is a wonderful design, and has greatly improved the OLA. We are continuing a dialog regarding the bag dispenser and waste can issues. Currently, Jerry Nissley of the parks department is working on developing a set of rules. We have offered our services in obtaining user input into the rules, and hopefully that will happen soon.

We started organizing the dog owners well in advance of the Master Planning Process for the new park at Eastgate/Boeing, and we have a petition with just shy of 200 signatures requesting that Bellevue provide more off-leash opportunities for its residents. Our effort to engage Bellevue dog owners in the Master Planning process which is now underway continues. Several people have made presentations to the City Council or the Parks Board, others have sent e-mails, and many people are reaching out to their friends and neighbors to bolster support for a good size OLA at Eastgate.

Feb 12, 2008, Mercer Island Parks Department and POLR sign a “Memorandum of Understanding”

After more than 2 years of negotiations, we finally are recognized as the official representatives of the dog owners using Luther Burbank OLA. In that capacity, we have worked closely with the park staff in responding to user complaints and particularly in working out the details of the redesign. POLR director, David Witus, deserves much of the credit for getting the agreement finalized. His patient perseverance behind the scenes was the key. The agreement will make it much easier for POLR to achieve 501c3 status with the IRS.

POLR Director T.K. Jones and MIDOG representative, Norm Scott served on the Mercer Island Parks Planning Stakeholders Committee. We were delighted that the city recognized dog owners as major stakeholders in the future of the MI parks. Included in the over all plan for the future is a small breed only dog park somewhere close to the downtown area in MI.

In Mercer Island, we held our last Luther Burbank Work party in Oct 2007, doing more erosion control work to the stairs, removing fallen fruit, and filling in holes. POLR volunteers put in over 100 man-hours in 2007.

A Busy Future!

The future has many projects pending, including work parties at Luther Burbank to put “the finishing touches” on the renovations there, filing for 501c3 status, and fund raising to pay for improvements at Robinswood. POLR hopes to be involved with the creation of an urban dog park in downtown Bellevue, and the selection of other sites around Bellevue for neighborhood sized corrals. Who knows, it may be another 18 months to the next Newsletter, but I hope not!