

12. STYX MILL CONSERVATION RESERVE DOG PARK PROPOSAL

RR 9436

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The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's support for the development of a dog park area at Styx Mill Conservation Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Styx Mill Conservation Reserve is a large tract of land (55 hectares) incorporating the Styx River basin area that extends from the Main North Road to Husseys Road. The reserve encompasses substantial wetland areas of ecological significance and is zoned Conservation 1 in the proposed City Plan.

Since 1989 the reserve has been progressively developed which has included the provision of passive recreation areas at the Husseys Road end of the reserve incorporating tracks and picnic facilities. Work carried out in the balance of the reserve has included the formation of three lakes along with tracks and planting. A recent report on wildlife habitat has identified 41 birds species on the reserve. There is also up to 12 wetland bird species known to be nesting in the reserve.

Some areas of the reserve are leased for grazing and it is intended to continue this practice for land management purposes in accordance with the grazing regime prepared by Landcare Research.

The reserve was officially opened for public use on 7 February 1999. With the reserve now open to the public there is a concern that wildlife and stock may not be afforded appropriate protection from dogs. The Dog Control bylaw currently allows dogs on the reserve, but they must be kept under effective control at all times by means of a leash. To address this issue, it is proposed to provide a fully enclosed dog park within the reserve and prohibit dogs from the balance of the reserve areas.

DOG PARK PROPOSAL

An area (approximately 5 hectares) at the Husseys Road end of the reserve was previously leased for deer grazing. This lease has now been relinquished and an increased area for public use is available, which presents an opportunity to provide a specific area for visitors with dogs. This would create an area similar, though considerably larger, to that provided at the Groyne which works very well. The benefits of this proposal would be:

- Segregation of dogs into a specific zone to avoid conflict with other park users.
- Protection of wildlife and grazing stock by having dogs in a fenced off and controlled area.
- Provision of an additional designated area for dogs in the city.
- A purpose built area with facilities specifically designed for dogs.

DOG PARK DESIGN

It is proposed to develop the dog park within the existing deer fenced portion of the reserve. This would involve shifting the deer fence back to provide an area of approximately 3.5 hectares. The dog park will comprise a main exercise enclosure, a training area and a car park and rest area. Landscape treatment will be undertaken and facilities such as picnic tables, bins and signage will be installed. It is also proposed to create a small pond in the exercise enclosure.

The balance of the area reclaimed from the lease termination will be developed as a picnic area and as open space for casual games. This area is on higher ground compared with much of the reserve and offers more year-round recreational opportunities. A plan showing the design and layout for the dog park is attached.

DOG CONTROL BYLAW AND POLICY

As stated previously the Dog Control Bylaw adopted by the Council identifies Styx Mill Basin Reserve as an area where dogs may be taken but must be kept under effective control at all times by means of a leash. In consideration of the reserve's high wildlife values, grazing regime and the proposal to establish a dog park it would be appropriate to prohibit dogs from the reserve apart from the designated dog park area. This would provide a similar situation to that currently in place at the Groynes Recreation Reserve.

However, to effect this proposal an amendment to the Council's Dog Control Policy, which identifies dog prohibited and dog exercise areas, is required. Such amendment is subject to Section 10 of the Dog Control Act 1996 which requires that special consultative procedures prescribed by Section 716A of the Local Government Act 1974 are followed. This means that every registered dog owner in the City would need to be notified of the proposed amendment. As a one off exercise this would be relatively expensive and it would be more cost effective to notify the proposed policy change when dog registration notices are sent out in early June 1999. Note that there is a one month submission period from the date of notification.

Once submissions are received and assessed the policy change can be considered by the Council. If approved, the Council can resolve to declare the defined dog park area to be a dog exercise area and the balance of the reserve to be a prohibited dog area pursuant to Clause 8 of the Dog Control Bylaw.

FUNDING

Initial costs in establishing the basic dog park area are not high as this can be achieved by relocating some existing fences and the provision of gates and signage. Further enhancement of the area will could be undertaken progressively and accommodated within the annual capital expenditure programme for Styx Mill Reserve. The total estimated cost of the proposal is \$27,000. This includes approximately \$15,000. in landscape treatment that would have been carried out whether the area was a designated dog park or not.

SUMMARY

There are already a number of dog parks established on reserves that operate very successfully. The proposed facility at Styx Mill Conservation Reserve will provide a further location for dog owners to exercise their dogs in an exclusive and purpose built area. The proposed prohibition of dogs in the balance of the reserve will help to ensure the significant wild life values on the reserve are protected.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council support the establishment of a dog park at Styx Mill Conservation Reserve.
 2. That the Environment Committee be requested to give favourable consideration to amending the Dog Control Policy to enable a dog exercise area to be established and the balance of the reserve to be a prohibited dog area.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:**
1. That the above recommendation be adopted.
 2. That the Parks Manager report back on the opportunities for the establishment of further dog parks in other parts of the city