

## **Attachment A**

### **STANDARDS FOR ARLINGTON COUNTY DOG EXERCISE AREAS**

**(May 4, 1999)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Arlington County recognizes the needs and desires of a significant portion of the community that supports the provision of off-leash Dog Exercise Areas (DEAs) within the context and priorities of the Arlington County Open Space Master Plan. (See Appendix A-DEAs Background Information) Arlington County provides many facilities and opportunities for children and adults to participate in outdoor recreational activities. Similarly, Dog Exercise Areas provide safe opportunities for dogs and their human companions to socialize and exercise together.

The Treasurer's Office, which is responsible for administering dog licenses, estimated that there were 8,000 licensed dogs in Arlington County in 1998. According to statistics provided by the Treasurer's Office, licensed dogs are evenly distributed throughout the County at the rate of about one dog per acre. In addition, Animal Control estimates that there may be up to 10,000 additional unlicensed dogs residing in the County. It is believed that many of these unlicensed dogs reside in the more densely populated areas of the County where homes, such as high-rise or townhouse communities, leave little or no open space for dogs to exercise.

In a 1998 County-sponsored survey, a majority of the 1,982 dog owners responding said they already use Dog Exercise Areas or would use them if they were safe, convenient, and properly managed and maintained. The recent dramatic rise in user demand for Dog Exercise Areas, coupled with limited open space resources, prompted a comprehensive approach to the provision of Dog Exercise Areas in Arlington County. The total 1998 Dog Exercise Area carrying capacity is approximately 360 dogs at any one time (see Carrying Capacity) or approximately 162,000 square feet (3.7 acres) of open space dedicated to Dog Exercise Areas. As a goal, Arlington County should provide a total carrying capacity for 500 dogs or approximately 225,000 square feet (5.2 acres) of open space by 2010. Henceforth, consideration shall be given to the inclusion of DEAs, as plans are finalized for new open space areas.

The following are the standards for the provision of the appropriate number, size and location of Dog Exercise Areas in Arlington County, and to ensure the appropriate maintenance and management of these heavily used facilities. The Standards are the guiding principals for Arlington County DEAs, but they are also intended to encourage flexibility and experimentation in their application. Sponsors and users, in collaboration with County staff, should continue to explore new and better ways of providing DEA services.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

To provide consistency in this document, the following terms will apply throughout:

*Handler(s)*: The person or people in control of a dog, be they the owner or someone else.

*Dog Exercise Area (DEA)*: Instead of dog run or dog park.

*County*: Arlington County staff or Arlington County Board, or both.

*Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*: Official agreement between sponsor(s) and County.

*Adopt-A-DEA*: Alternative agreement to MOU between sponsor(s) and County.

*Sponsor(s)*: Individuals or groups of residents and/or users, who sign an MOU with the County to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in this document.

*DPRCR*: The Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Resources; its staff and budget.

#### **SIZE**

The minimum size of a DEA shall be 10,000 square feet, as set in standards drafted by the National Parks and Recreation Association. Wherever possible, DEAs should be at least 30,000 square feet, with an optimal size of two to five acres.

#### **USE**

DEAs should be open 7 days per week, the legal hours for any Arlington County park, sunrise to one-half hour past sunset, except when lighted. Hours of lighted facilities would be worked out with affected residents/neighborhood and civic associations. DEA lighting can be diffused and minimal, with the appropriate level for safety, while not necessarily flooding the area with light. Restricting DEA operating hours where needed, in accordance with neighborhood input and approval may mitigate noise and parking issues, if any.

### **CARRYING CAPACITY**

The carrying capacity for a DEA is a user-monitored guideline, which recommends the number of dogs that can effectively utilize a given DEA at any one time. Each DEA will have posted the carrying capacity. Users are expected to enforce the posted carrying capacity. The carrying capacity is considered to be the maximum number of dogs that can be in a DEA at any one time without:

- Adversely impacting the surrounding neighborhood and open space.
- Causing ongoing conflicts due to overcrowding.
- Causing detriment to the surrounding environment.
- Causing irreparable damage to ground cover.
- Compromising the intent of the DEA to allow dogs and handlers to exercise and socialize in a safe area away from other park activities.

The capacity of a DEA shall be 450 square feet per 1 (one) dog. This guideline will be monitored and maintained by DEA patrons. Thus, a minimum-sized DEA of 10,000 square feet shall have a carrying capacity of 22 dogs inside the exercise area at any one time.

### **SPONSORSHIP**

The success of any DEA is based on the ability of users to self-monitor it, from cleanliness to funding to complaints. According to a survey of Internet information regarding DEAs around the country, citizen support groups sponsor the vast majority; some with and some without support from their local government agencies. Similarly, in Arlington County, the success of any DEA is based on user self-monitoring. DEAs shall be located on public grounds and monitored by citizen volunteers. Citizens are also expected to participate in ongoing maintenance/management of the site.

An identifiable sponsor(s) is required for new and existing DEAs. Sponsor(s) are County residents who are willing to organize, support and promote the DEA Standards. Prospective DEA sponsor(s) must apply to and be approved by DPRCR. In order to be approved, sponsor(s) must demonstrate their commitment, organizational skills and willingness to support and promote the DEA Standards.

Sponsor(s) will add credibility with neighborhood associations when establishing new DEAs and managing existing DEAs. Sponsor(s) can also raise the funding necessary to provide added amenities not provided by the County. Sponsor(s) will sign an agreement with the County accepting responsibility to represent dog handlers. The agreement includes monitoring DEA use, handling neighborhood complaints and coordinating maintenance/management. (See Appendix B: Model MOU and Appendix C: Model Adopt-A-Program-DEA)

### **RULES**

- All dogs shall be legally licensed and vaccinated before entering the DEA.
- No dog that is less than (4) months old shall be permitted in a DEA.
- Female dogs in heat shall not be allowed in the DEA at any time.
- Parents must be in control of their children at all times.
- No food is allowed within the boundaries of a DEA.
- No one (1) handler may bring more than three (3) dogs into a DEA at a time.
- Professional dog trainers may not use any DEA for the conduct of their business, unless sponsored by Arlington County.
- Animals must be leashed when entering and exiting the DEA.
- Handlers must be in possession of a leash at all times.
- Dogs shall be under the control of their handlers.
- Handlers shall keep their dogs in view at all times.
- Handlers are responsible for the removal of dog waste from the DEA and disposing of it in a proper manner.

- Dogs shall be removed from the DEA at the first sign of aggression. An aggressive dog is defined as a dog(s) posing a threat to human beings or other animals. Aggressive dogs shall not be permitted within any designated off-leash DEA. Handlers are legally responsible for their dog(s) and any injury caused by them.
- Handlers shall not allow their animals to bark on a continuous or frequent basis. It is unlawful for any person who owns, possesses or harbors a dog to permit that dog to create a frequent or continued noise disturbance across a real property boundary or within a nearby dwelling unit. (County Code)
- Handlers, prior to leaving the DEA, shall fill holes dug by dogs.
- Dog grooming shall not be allowed in any DEA, unless it is part of an Arlington County sponsored program.

The County will post the rules and carrying capacity at each DEA. Rules and DEA location maps will be made available upon request and/or mailed to every person who purchases a County dog license through the County Treasurer's Office. The sponsor(s) should also take on an educational role and assist the County by distributing DEA rules and other educational materials to park users.

Failure by a handler or visitor to comply with DEA rules will result in the following:

- (1) Public safety issues will be reported to Animal Control immediately.
- (2) In the case of other DEA infractions, the sponsor(s) will issue a verbal warning to the offender.
- (3) If the infractions continue, the sponsor(s) will issue a written warning to the offender with a copy to the Animal Control Warden.
- (4) Subsequent infractions will be referred to the Animal Control Warden who will investigate and take appropriate remedial action up to and including banning the offender from County DEA's.

### **SITING PROCESS**

In general, users and neighbors, and/or a sponsor(s) should bring the initial request to site a DEA to the DPRCR. DPRCR shall acknowledge and/or respond within 30 days to any citizen request regarding the establishment of new DEAs, or adding/repairing amenities at existing DEAs. Siting a DEA shall follow a community-wide planning process, which includes public notification and opportunities for input from users and neighbors, sponsor(s), DPRCR, relevant civic association(s), and appropriate County advisory commissions.

At a minimum, DEAs will be located in well drained open grassy areas, or other approved surfaces, and should include a bench(es) and trees or other shade. DEAs should include, or be relatively close to, a County provided drinking water source. There must be parking identified close by or dedicated to a DEA. DEAs must be accessible or able to be made accessible under the regulations set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Siting shall also take into account the following:

- DEAs should be conveniently located throughout Arlington County, within feasible walking or driving distance of every potential handler.
- Handlers should be encouraged to walk their dogs to DEAs and/or directed to the designated or available parking.
- DEAs shall be sufficiently distant from residences so that noise and activity levels are no more disruptive to neighbors than typical park uses. Some noise is expected and should not be used as a reason to disallow the establishment of a DEA.
- DEAs should contain or be near to, when possible, a public telephone.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

At a minimum, DEAs will be located where they will not negatively impact active areas of human recreation, and where they minimize potential problems for wildlife and habitats. The siting of DEAs is subject to normal environmental assessment procedures followed by the County, including but not limited to, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and the application of Best Management Practices to mitigate negative impacts. Trash receptacle(s) should be made of a solid material, such as plastic; be lined (trash bags) and have a tight-fitting lid so as to ensure proper and complete disposal of dog waste. Receptacles also should be located conveniently for users (such as by the gates) and be located out of the 10-year floodplain, if possible.

The congregation of dogs in groups may increase the possibility of transmitting diseases and parasites. Handlers, and not the County, are responsible for following veterinary guidelines and maintaining the health of their pets.

## **CONTAINMENT**

The use of boundaries and containment systems such as existing features and fencing, is a means of maintaining the benefits of DEAs. By containing activities within a DEA, dogs may exercise off-leash and run freely in relative safety. The clear demarcation of DEA boundaries and containment of the activities therein, enables the siting of DEAs near other park uses (such as playgrounds, tennis courts, soccer fields, etc.) without being disruptive to or impacted by those other uses. Fences and existing features establish a visible boundary for the DEA, which allows enforcement of off-leash rules and guidelines. Fencing and gates ensure that DEAs can be secured to enforce operating hours and to allow ground cover management and other maintenance to proceed unimpeded by users. Fencing is also used to protect adjacent natural/cultural resources.

Therefore, DEAs shall be fully contained. A fence may accomplish this, unless the existing features of the site provide the same level of service as those provided by a fence. When fencing is considered the appropriate means of containment, the sponsor(s), in conjunction with DPRCR and taking into account neighborhood sentiment, will decide the appropriate styles/heights of fencing for DEAs. When possible, double gates shall be provided for safety and to provide a neutral zone for dogs to be leashed or unleashed.

## **GROUND COVER**

The preferred ground cover for DEAs is grass (turf). However, maintaining grass in a DEA may be resource prohibitive, and/or unsuccessful even with reasonable resources. Alternative ground covers may present a better option if they are compatible with DEA use and dog welfare, and have been tested and proven to be easier or less expensive to maintain at a site with the same or similar uses. Alternative surfaces include but are not limited to pea gravel, wood fiber/mulch, sand/soil, and bluestone or clay dust.

Where appropriate, DPRCR and sponsor(s) shall develop a turf management program for DEAs. DEA grass surfaces may be maintained at a lesser standard than for other open space, such as playgrounds and sports fields. DPRCR and the sponsor(s) in accordance with a turf management plan will decide DEA grass standards. The plan may include:

- Research and development opportunities.
- Maintenance and renovation schedules.
- Environmental partnerships with private businesses and/or academia.
- DEA rotating use/non-use schedules.
- Long-term plans (Capital Improvement Program) to fund and implement resources.

## **FUNDING**

The County has the primary responsibility for providing the resources necessary for the establishment, maintenance and management of DEAs. Potential sources for DEA resources include but are not limited to:

- Capital Improvement Program funds for development and Operating Budget funds for maintenance and management.
- The revenues from the more efficient collection of dog license fees and fines.
- Sponsor initiated funding alternative sources such as the Small Parks Program, Neighborhood Conservation Program, donations and fundraisers.
- Cooperative agreements with other jurisdictions and/or the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.
- Grants and public-private partnerships.

At a minimum, the County will fund the initial establishment of the DEA, including:

- Fencing and gates.
- One trash receptacle for every 10,000 square feet of park.
- Bench(es) and/or picnic table(s).
- Appropriate signage.
- A water spigot, should one not be available nearby.
- Grading, drainage, and BMP's.
- Storage facility.

- A bulletin board, a kiosk or other means to distribute literature and information.

Optimal DEAs should include one dog-waste bag dispenser for every 10,000 square feet of DEA. The County, in conjunction with the sponsor(s), should provide dog waste bags on a schedule appropriate to the carrying capacity of the DEA. The users of the DEA shall provide any other amenities deemed appropriate by DPRCR, and should be encouraged to fund such amenities through private or member donations, public/private partnerships, the Small Parks Grant Program, the Neighborhood Conservation Program, or by request from the general budget through normal channels. The County will help sponsors identify and request funding through these other channels.

### **MAINTENANCE/MANAGEMENT/SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES**

Sponsor(s) will enter into a formal agreement with DPRCR to share the responsibility for maintaining, managing and evaluating the DEA. In general, the agreement should include the following:

#### **Sponsor(s)**

- Ensures the DEA is kept free of animal feces.
- Alerts DPRCR staff to maintenance needs, and helps DPRCR establish priorities for repairs and renovations.
- Acts as liaison between users, local residents, and relevant citizen associations.
- Addresses complaints.
- Passes unresolved complaints on to DPRCR.
- Provides education of park rules and regulations to users.
- Maintains liaison with Animal Control.
- Schedules cleanups and fundraisers for extra amenities based on users' needs.
- Maintains DEA security as per the agreement.
- Provides dog health information/education.
- Provides dog-training information and opportunities.

#### **Arlington County**

- Maintains and repairs ground covers.
- Repairs or replaces fencing and other County amenities.
- Provides informational signs in appropriate locations.
- Empties waste receptacles on a daily basis, from approximately mid-April through mid-November, and 2-3 days per week from mid-November through mid-April.
- Maintains liaison with Animal Control.
- Schedules the hours of operation for the DEA.
- Uses Best Management Practices to reduce pollution.
- Animal Control provides education/enforcement of the Animal Code.

### **COMPLAINTS**

It should be well advertised to neighbors and park users that the sponsor(s) is the first point of contact for complaints and concerns arising inside the boundaries of the DEA. The sponsor(s) acts as liaison between users and local residents. Should a complaint come to the County's attention first, the County must refer the complaint back to the sponsor(s), or at least inform and keep the sponsor(s) apprised of its resolution. If after 30 days the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, the sponsor(s) and the complainant will meet with the Parks and Natural Resources Division Chief to mediate the situation to solution.

### **EVALUATION**

DEA evaluations should be carried out one year after a DEA is first sited, established, and/or there is a change in sponsorship. After that, DEAs should be evaluated on every three-year anniversary. An evaluation should be held in the interim if users, the sponsor(s), the neighborhood association or the County determine that conditions warrant an interim review.

DEA evaluations will be conducted by a committee comprised of representatives from DPRCR, the sponsor(s), the neighborhood, Animal Control, and relevant citizen association(s). At a minimum, DEA evaluations should include environmental impacts, utilization, community and fiscal impacts. The evaluation should also include a satisfaction survey of users and neighbors, and consider the number, severity, and resolution of complaints and issues raised during the evaluation period.

The Standards for Arlington County Dog Exercise Areas will be reviewed as part of the overall review of the Open Space Master Plan.

Appendices