

Sandy Paws – Dog Beach Proposal

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1. Current State

Brevard County Municipal Code Section 14-60

No animals are allowed on any public park or beach in Brevard County except otherwise designated for animal use. With the exception of disabled persons, it is a violation of county municipal code to bring any animal onto any public beach or park not specifically designated for animal use.

2. Proposal

It is proposed that a dog beach be established between Canova Beach (or another area that is within County jurisdiction). It is proposed that dogs would be permitted on the beach without a leash during the hours of operation. Ideally, the park would be in a central area of the county but also in an area that is not heavily populated with homes or condos.

3. The Case for a Dog Beach

Prompted by the lack of a dog beach in Brevard County and the growing movement for off leash areas around the world, over 3,500 people in the local community have signed a petition requesting that Brevard County allow a small portion of its beach to be used by people with their dogs, as currently allowed by existing dog beaches in the State of Florida and elsewhere.

Over the last several months, we have had a large holiday event as well as significant local press (Florida Today, Central Florida Pets Directory, Animal Crazy Blog and more) and television news coverage (Channel 6, Channel 9 and News 13 local news) of the movement.

Off-leash dog beaches provide benefits but also pose concerns. Besides promoting exercise for dogs and their owners, advocates point out that communities benefit from well-socialized and exercised dogs that are less likely to be aggressive and/or create a public nuisance. An off-leash area provides a public space and opportunity for dog owners to meet, share information, and form community bonds; it promotes responsible dog ownership through social peer pressure; and it makes it less likely that dogs will be let loose in other areas.

In addition, dog beaches are good business. California has found that pet-friendly hotels, revenues from dog owners at beach parking meters, dog-friendly boutiques and restaurants have brought additional revenue in cities like Carmel. More and more, tourists are travelling with their pets. Even the Visit Florida website has an area dedicated to pet-friendly travel in our state. Brevard is missing an opportunity to reach these tourists and shoppers.

- Based on Brevard's population, an estimated 79,000+ dogs are in the county; their owners are a significant source of tax dollars, voting power and community involvement. (www.avma.org/reference/marketstats/ownership_calculator.asp)
- Tourism dollars - 72,114,000 dog owners in the U.S. More and more people are taking their pets on vacation and we are missing this target group.
- Fees and licensing for beach access for dogs.

Dog owners pay taxes to support our wonderful park system, but their needs are not being addressed at the present time.

The county must decide how to allocate available space and funds for recreation. This allocation, should strive to be equitable and must be responsive to the needs of all citizens. We think there is room for a beach where dog owners can take their pets.

We have laid out suggested guidelines and operating procedures as well as possible resources for the beach.

4. Support for a Dog Beach

Petition – 3,520 online, 149 paper (as-of May 15, 2011).

Selected comments

- Michael Kowalczyk, FL: We would love to be able to take our dog to the beach. It would be a wonderful experience for all of us.
- Rob Moore, FL: This would help with the local economy, many people travel to dog friendly beaches... I would come to Brevard beaches, spending money on hotels, restaurants, etc. if this passed. Police already patrol for no dogs, just have them patrol for irresponsible dog owners.
- Marlisa Fulop, FL: My dogs would LOOOOVE to be able to go to the beach! We took our golden retriever to the beach down by Sebastian and she absolutely loved it! Sand on her nose and all!
- Sharon Spiegelglas, FL: My dog loves the water - I take her all the time to New Smyrna to swim. I'd rather be paying my fees to my own county.
- Susie Bond, FL: I would love for my dog to be able to enjoy our beautiful beaches, and to walk with me as I stroll along the shoreline.
- Miriam Ruffolo, FL - the dog park at Lori Wilson shows responsible dog owners who pick up after their dogs and have social pets because of it...would love to see my dog romping through the waves!

5. Health Considerations

Dog beaches are environmentally sound. All of the 58 designated dog beaches in California surveyed show that they basically have the same levels of bacteria as do other beaches. All have excellent water quality that is monitored regularly by the local municipalities, counties and health departments where they are located. The levels of fecal coliform do not exceed the limits considered to be safe, except after rain and near storm drains.

In addition, the water reports for Florida counties also show no abnormalities that can be attributed to dogs on the beaches.

6. Suggested Measures for the Establishment of the Dog Beach

- Appropriate signs
- A gate could be placed at the entrance to the platform on the boardwalk over the dunes. A second gate could be at the other end of the platform. After entering the gate, the dog's leash could be removed and the dog could go through the second gate onto the stairways leading to the beach. This double gated arrangement would also help people leaving the beach with their dogs. It would help to prevent someone else's dogs from accidentally getting out and running in the parking lot.
- A bulletin board could contain a copy of the rules and any pertinent dog-related information.
- The beach should also include a shower where dogs and humans could rinse off and a source of drinking water should be provided.
- The Parks and Recreation Website would need to be adjusted to reflect that dogs are permitted at the selected beach. Also, if necessary, Animal Services and Enforcement would need to add any new fines that might be added as a result of the dog beach.
- Only two dogs per adult.
- No aggressive dogs.
- Dog beach volunteers will help monitor and clean the beach regularly.
- Water quality should be tested regularly.
- Signs with boundaries and rules clearly marked.
- Brochures with rules and regulations available.
- "Incident report" forms available for people with suggestions or problems.
- All dogs must be healthy, fully immunized, de-wormed, vaccinated and shall wear a visible dog license and ID tag at all times.
- Puppies under four months and female dogs in heat are prohibited.

- Dogs **MUST** be leashed in the parking lot. Dog's leashes could be removed after entering the dog beach gate.
- Dogs must be under the control of their owners and in view of their owner at all times. Owners must carry a leash and always remain with their dog.
- **Owners must bag and dispose of pet waste in the containers provided. Owners must keep their dog from leaving the designated dog beach area. Owners must keep their dogs from disturbing turtle nests.**
- Owners must stop dogs from digging and immediately fill holes with sand.
- Excessive barking is prohibited. Dogs barking uncontrollably must be removed.
- **Dogs with a known history of dangerous behavior are prohibited.** If your dog becomes aggressive toward people or other dogs, leash and remove the dog immediately.
- **Users of the facility would do so at their own risk.**
- Owners who violate the rules will be subject to removal from the park and their dog beach privileges will be suspended.
- The dog beach would open at sunrise and close at sunset.
- Signs with directions, restrictions and details should be posted clearly at each entrance to the dog beach.
- Clean-up bags and waste cans should be clearly marked and their use enforced.
- Clean-up stations with bags and trash areas could be provided. Several local businesses have offered to sponsor these stations.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

What is an off-leash dog beach?

It is a designated beach area where dogs can legally and safely run, play, exercise and swim off leash while under the supervision of their guardian.

What are the benefits to dogs, dog owners, and the county?

Dog beaches provide many benefits to dogs, dog owners and to the community as a whole:

- A dog beach is a social hub. Going to the beach teaches dogs to socialize with other dogs and it allows humans to socialize with other humans.
- Dogs are less aggressive off leash than when they are on a leash. They also do not act territorial at a dog park or dog beach because they view it as neutral territory.
- Dog parks and dog beaches promote responsible dog ownership because the rules would require that dogs must be licensed and inoculated in order to enter the premises.
- At the present time, dogs are prohibited in most public areas, including the beach. Having a dog beach would give owners a place to take their dogs for exercise.
- People who don't like dogs can easily avoid the dog beach area or go to another beach.
- There are websites and publications that track areas that are dog friendly. People who like to travel with their dogs consult these sources before deciding on a vacation destination. If Brevard County had a dog beach, it would help our county to be considered dog friendly. The county would benefit from additional dollars being spent by tourists who bring their dogs.

What would it cost to start a dog beach? Some of the items required, like the gates and signs, would probably have to be provided by vendors who have arrangements with the county. As a result, it is difficult to accurately predict the total cost. When the cost of a dog beach is compared to the cost to build other recreational facilities offered by the county, however, it is extremely low. A large percentage of people who live in the county own dogs, for a very small amount of money, the county could provide a form of recreation that would benefit a large number of people. Furthermore, if the cost involved was a problem, dog beach supporters could be asked to help by doing fundraising to offset some of the costs. Several businesses have also offered to support the beach by sponsoring clean-up stations and bags, among other items.

What rules would be established to maintain safety?

A strict set of rules should be established in order to protect the dogs and their owners. Of course, the rules would be determined by the appropriate county agencies.

How is a dog beach maintained?

One of the most obvious rules is that owners must always pick up after their dog. In most dog beaches throughout the country, the city or county departments responsible for the dog beaches' overall maintenance provide any required grass cutting, fertilization and other large scale maintenance. Dog organizations and other dog lovers could sponsor a monthly clean up day, if warranted.

Do owners pick up after their dogs?

As a general rule, dog owners are very responsible and do pick up after their dogs. There are always some irresponsible dog owners, just like there are some irresponsible people throughout all aspects of our society. As with dog parks, dog beaches usually have "regulars" and, if necessary, they use peer pressure to encourage other dog owners to clean up after their dogs.

What else could be done to ensure that owners clean up after their dogs and follow the rules?

The Brevard County Sheriff's Department operates the Citizens Observer Patrol. Certain volunteers receive additional training and they are authorized to issue parking tickets. Perhaps a similar citizen volunteer program could be set up with Animal Services and Enforcement. A volunteer beach patrol could be organized and could do random checks of the beach. They could receive training to issue citations to people who fail to clean up after their dogs. They could also monitor activities at the beach to make sure the rules were being followed. These volunteers could wear special Caps or T-shirts identifying that they are affiliated with Animal Services and Enforcement.

How do dogs behave at a dog beach?

The most often asked question is "what about dog fights?" There are over 600 dog parks and a large number of dog beaches nationwide. There are very few incidents of true "fights" each year. Of course care must be taken to reduce acts of aggression and break up any fights that may occur. Dogs will generally play and swim for hours on end without incident.

Aggressive dogs are on the increase precisely because suburban and city dogs are not receiving enough exercise. Dog parks and dog beaches give dogs an outlet for spending their energy before or after a long day at the house!

Have other dog counties experienced canine aggression at their dog beaches?

Attachment I is a letter dated April 4, 2003, from David M. Demaraest, Operations Supervisor from the Sarasota Parks and Recreation Department. As you will note, he has indicated that he has not heard of any problems with aggressive dogs at their beach (an off-leash beach).

What if a dog fight does occur?

Dog fights are rare according to the experience of dog parks and beaches nationwide. However, should a fight occur, it is important that all participating dogs be separated quickly and removed from the dog beach.

What does FL law state about dogs?

Title XLV, Chapter 767 of the Florida statutes deals with Damage by Dogs. Basically, dog owners are legally and financially responsible for the actions of their dogs. The suggested beach rules could include a statement to that effect. All dog owners assume some risk when they use a dog beach; however, this is no different than the risk taken when they walk their dog down the street.

Do dogs catch contagious diseases at a dog beach?

The park rules would state that dog owners should be sure their dogs have all their canine inoculations. The spread of disease can be prevented if each dog has all of the necessary shots

each year. Again, according to David Demarest from Sarasota County, their county Health Department has checked the area after their dog beach opened and found no contamination of any kind. Also, he states that there have not been any reports of contamination of people or other dogs.

How many dog parks and dog beaches are there in the United States?

Dog parks are not a new concept but have been successfully operating all over the country for some time now. The number of parks is growing at an amazing rate. Dogpark Miami reports that over 1,200 off-leash dog parks are in the U.S. Although some websites list beaches where dogs are permitted, no organization tracks the exact number.

Are there any dog parks and beaches in Florida now?

Yes. Many sophisticated and progressive cities and counties in Florida have already recognized the need for dog parks and dog beaches.

Who are the supporters of off-leash dog parks and dog beaches?

Naturally, the idea is also supported by dog owners and dog lovers in general. Even fair minded non-dog owners often support a designated dog beach area because would give dog owners "a place of their own" which would be segregated from the other beach facilities. Since Brevard County has 72 miles of coastline, with 46 miles of public beaches, people who don't like dogs could easily circumvent the dog beach area.

How could the citizens of Brevard County have a say in matters pertaining to the dog beach?

As is the case with many other dog parks, a citizen's advisory committee could be formed to work with the appropriate county agencies on establishing a dog beach and ensuring that it runs smoothly.

Why Spessard Holland (S.H.) North Park & South Park Beach?

- the stretch between the north and south park areas will create a clear delineation of where the dog beach starts and stops
- parking lot and facilities
- restroom and showers nearby

8. Models that Work

Duval County

- Access: Dogs are only allowed on the Atlantic Ocean beach between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 a.m.
- Rules:
 - Owners must keep their dogs on leash all times.
 - Dogs must be on a leash no longer than 8 feet long.
 - Owners must carry proper clean up materials.
 - Each dog must be registered with the City of Jacksonville Beach.
- Fees/Costs: Annual License \$15.
- Amenities: None, owners are required to bring proper clean up materials.

Pinellas County

- Access: During normal park hours.
- Rules:
 - All dogs must be legally licensed, have current vaccinations and wear a visible license tag.
 - Dog owners are solely responsible for the actions of their dogs. Please ensure that dogs do not escape the fenced area.
 - Owners must clean up after their dog and bring their own materials for clean up.
 - Dog owners must immediately fill any hole their dogs dig.
 - Dogs are allowed off-leash on the dog beach.

- Fees/Costs: Annual license \$20.
- Amenities: Water/hoses available. Off-leash dog park available.

Franklin County

- Access: During regular park hours.
- Rules:
 - St. George Island, Dog Island and Carrabelle Beaches are open to owners and their well-behaved pets. For those dogs on-leash or under direct voice control (and with clean-up required), the public beaches of St. George Island, Carrabelle Beach and the secluded and remote Dog Island welcome dogs of all sizes.
- Fees/Costs: None.
- Amenities: None that are dog specific.

Jupiter Beach

- Access: The beaches are available to dogs any time of the day, all year long!
- Rules:
 - Owners must keep control of their dogs at all time, making sure not to allow their dogs to "invade" the space of other people.
 - Owners are responsible for cleaning up dog waste, making sure *not* to bury said waste, throw it in the dunes or into water, etc.
 - Only allow dogs off-leash when there are no others around so that other people will not complain.
- Fees/Costs: Accept tax-deductible donations.
- Ammenities: Clean up bags provided.
- Friends of Jupiter Beach promised the Town that there would be no cost to the Town in continuing the dogs on the beach. They have poop bags dispensers at each beach crossover that maintain and stock. They are currently providing approximately 300,000 bags annually. They also organize a monthly beach cleanup on the first Saturday of each month that attracts 170-350 volunteers.

New Smyrna Beach

- Access: During normal park hours (sunrise to sunset).
- Rules:
 - Dogs are not permitted on boardwalk (a special path is provided for dogs).
 - Pets must be leashed at all times.
- Fees/Costs: \$5 per vehicle, \$1 per person for vehicles with more than eight passengers. Fines are imposed if dogs are found to be off-leash.
- Amenities: Dog washing area, clean-up bags are provided.

9. Alternate Proposals

While it is sincerely hoped that the county will approve a dog beach as proposed, the following alternate proposals are also options:

- A dog beach could be established at Canova Beach but dogs would only be permitted on a leash.
- A dog beach could be established in a different location as recommended by the County.
- Dogs could be permitted on the designated dog beach only during certain limited hours such as from sunrise to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to sunset.
- Whatever is approved could be done on a trial basis for 6 or 12 months and the situation would be reviewed again at that time.

10. Additional Resources

Dogs on the Beach: A Review of Regulations and Issues Affecting Dog Beaches in California
<http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/06/06/06-006.pdf>

Fort Desoto Dog Beach http://www.pinellascounty.org/park/05_ft_desoto.htm

Dog Etiquette for the Dog Friendly Beach
http://www.housepetmagazine.com/June/Dog_Beach.htm

Pet Tourism – 2011 <http://www.petrelocation.com/second-annual-summer-pet-travel-survey>

Lee County Dog Beach http://www.leeparks.org/facility-info/facility-details.cfm?Project_Num=0036

Friends of Jupiter Beach <http://friendsofjupiterbeach.com/>

Listing of dog-friendly beaches in the U.S. http://www.petfriendlytravel.com/dog_beaches

Unleash the Beach – California <http://www.unleashthebeach.org/UnleashExecSummary.pdf>

Florida Tourism - http://www.visitflorida.com/Pet_Friendly_Florida

Dog Park Miami - <http://www.dogparkmiami.com/faq.htm>

Press –

Florida Today -

<http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20100824/NEWS01/8240315/1086/Rockledge+petition+aims+to+get+dogs+a+beach>

Central Florida Pets Directory - <http://bit.ly/cDHLRP>

Animal Crazy Blog - http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/features_lifestyle_animal/?p=6719

News 13 - <http://www.cfnews13.com/article/news/2010/september/150422/No-dogs-allowed-on-Brevard-County-beaches>

11. Attachments

- David Demaraest, Operations Supervisor from the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department via email explains his experiences with the dog beach in Venice, FL.
- Louis Gosson – MHE, RS Environmental Specialist II – Department of Health. Florida responded that U.S. beaches are tested weekly for bacteria and no significant increase of bacteria have been found in areas where there are existing dog beaches.
- Lee County Health Department – No public health issues have been connected with their dog beach. Testing for bacteria does not reveal higher bacteria counts than other Lee County beaches.
- Jupiter Beach – Joan Ross – Shared guidance on how the Friends of Jupiter Beach was started and how they maintain the dog beach.

Contact:

Barbara Arnold

sandypawsbrevard@gmail.com

May, 2011



Mrs. Fran Gorecki
1628 Sun-Gazer Drive
Viera, Fl. 32955

Mrs. Gorecki

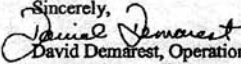
First let me introduce myself. I am Dave Demarest and I designed and constructed the Four Paw parks for Sarasota County. I am an employee of the Parks and Recreation Division of Community Services. I hope I can give you the correct answers to your questions.

1. Brohard Dog Beach was dedicated on May 12, 2001. This was built in cooperation with the City of Venice. It was done on a trial basis for one year and as far as I know has been approved for a permanent installation.
2. The Dog beach is 300 feet long and we are now making plans to expand this by at least another 200 feet.
3. I have not heard of any problems with aggressive dogs. The people who frequent the beach act as the police and pretty much tell people with aggressive dogs to leave. We have the same groups who go all the time and they police themselves.
4. We have not had the first lawsuit or problem with the dog beach or paw parks. The rules speak for themselves.
5. Every now and then, we do get a dog leaving the area and running the full length of the beach area, but their owners usually have no problems rounding them up. We do not allow dogs on other parts of any beach in the County so the cross over from other areas has not been a problem.
6. There has not been any impact on insurance because of either the dog beach or any of our dog parks. We are self-insured. We only have paid one claim where a person stepped on a piece of glass at the 17th st dog park. There have been instances of dogs getting hurt in fights, but everyone takes responsibility for that and the County is not libel for these problems. We have signs to that effect.
7. This stretch of beach is probably the cleanest of any in the County. The patrons who use it do a tremendous job in picking up after their dogs. The County provides the Mutt Mitts, which I believe, helps a great deal.
8. The County Health Department has checked this area after the beach dog park came open and found no contamination of any kind. Also there has been no contamination of people or other dogs.

9. We have had some inquiries into cleanups being considered, but no one has acted on it. I believe that there are national cleanup days coming sometime this month or next month but I really do not see it happening at the dog park because of the cleanliness of the beach now. Everyone is doing a great job.
10. Judging by the comments we have received, it is a huge success. People want to see one in the Sarasota area, but we just do not have the room at this time.

I believe the dog beach is probably the best venture I have ever been associated with in my 27 years in Government. This holds true for the dog parks also. It is so great seeing the dogs romp in the Gulf and everyone seems to be having a great time. I know of several dog parks in Florida that are building water amenities for the dogs to use. We tried here in Sarasota County but were stopped by the County Health Department for fear of dog diseases being spread to humans.

I am going to send you a packet we have made which has some information that might prove helpful to you and your presentation. I also would be willing to talk to the commission if you feel it would help. I hope I have given you information that will help in your presentation. Don't hesitate to call or E-mail me if you need more information. My address is 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota, Fla. 34241 and my telephone number is 941-316-1269 Ex. 274. My E-mail address is ddemarest@co.sarasota.fl.us

Sincerely,

David Demarest, Operations Supervisor
Sarasota County Parks and Recreation
Community Services

September 20, 2010
Louis Gosson (louis_gosson@doh.state.fl.us)

Ms. Arnold,

It is difficult to report if the dogs present a health hazard on our Florida beaches, when all canines are closely tied to their owners.

Warm blooded animals, mammals and birds, which are free roaming, produce through their excrement bacteria which can be related to people getting sick, or a health hazard. For example, whales, dolphins, raccoons, mice, humans, etc.

All USA coastal counties test for bacteria weekly, to meet federal guidelines for coastal monitoring. I have sampled, weekly, for the last 6 years, 23 miles of Flagler County beaches. Criteria includes lab analysis for two bacteria which are endemic to warm blooded animals digestive tract (Enterococcus and fecal coliform).

The counties of the state of Florida can be reviewed @
<http://esetapps.doh.state.fl.us/irm00beachwater/default.aspx>.

I reviewed Honeymoon Island results in Pinellas county. There is a portion of the beach designated as DOG BEACH. I can report it has been that way since I have been in Florida, over 30 years now. There were a few bad samples over the last 6 years, but nothing significant.

I would agree with your statement " I have seen no evidence that dogs who are cleaned up after pose any health risk."

Louis Gosson MHE, RS
Environmental Specialist II
208 S. Lemon ST.
P.O. Box 847 C
Bunnell, Fl. 32110
386-437-8260 OFFICE: 386-437-7358 FAX: 386 437 8287

September 20, 2010

Lee County Health Department (leechdfedback@doh.state.fl.us)

We haven't seen any public health issues that we can connect to the dog beach. The beach access for humans is not adjacent to the dog beach area. Testing of water at the human access beach generally doesn't reveal higher bacteria counts than other Lee County beaches.

August 27, 2010
Joan Ross (joanrossesq@yahoo.com)

When the Friends of Jupiter Beach came into existence, we were in a very different situation than you are facing. At that time, dogs were allowed on the beach, and the Town of Jupiter was considering banning them from the beach.

I am assuming that the ordinances where you are prohibit dogs being off leash, other than on the owners' property. If that is the case, and assuming you want the dogs to be able to run on the beach, the ordinance will have to be changed to permit dogs off leash on the beach. As many signatures as you can get, and as many people willing to show up at council meetings supporting this initiative will be your greatest asset. The Council members need to to be convinced that dogs on the beach are desired by a large number of the voting public.

Friends of Jupiter Beach promised the Town that there would be no cost to the Town in continuing the dogs on the beach. We have poop bags dispensers at each beach crossover that we maintain and stock. We are currently providing approximately 300,000 bags annually. We also organize a monthly beach cleanup on the first Saturday of each month that attracts 170-350 volunteers. You might want to join us next Saturday, September 4, to see our operation.

We also try to educate the public on proper etiquette with dogs on the beach. This endeavor is not always successful, but we keep trying.

The more you can offer the Council in the way of citizen initiatives, the more interested the Council will be.

We wish you the best of luck - Joan Ross