

MEMORANDUM

TO: Open Space Board of Trustees

FROM: Michael D. Patton, Director, Open Space and Mountain Parks
Mark Gershman, Environmental Planning Supervisor
Steve Armstead, Environmental Planner

DATE: January 26, 2012

SUBJECT: Summary of January 11, 2012 Open Space Board of Trustees Study Session

The Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) held a study session on potential enhancements to the Voice and Sight Tag (Tag) Program on January 11, 2012. At the study session, the OSBT discussed the Tag Program related to the following topics:

1. What are the overall goals for the Tag Program?
2. What problems can be identified related to the Tag Program?
3. What potential changes or enhancements could be considered?
4. Information Needs
5. Strategies to improve dog excrement removal

The staff summary notes for the discussion are available in Attachment A.

The discussion helped staff understand problems and goals that the Board considers relevant for staff to address when evaluating changes to the program. Of particular benefit was the concept of considering how changes might be distributed between pre-program participation requirements (front-loading) and increasing consequences for violations (back-loading). The OSBT also raised considerations about how program changes influence accountability, personal responsibility, access to the program, and the availability of training and skill building which staff will integrate into the program analysis. Staff has highlighted the following issues raised by the Board.

- Determining the best balance for enhancing pre-program participation requirements (testing/classes) and consequences for violations.
- The lack of compliance with excrement removal requirements is a very important issue.
- Applying an adaptive management framework for program objectives and modifications with incremental monitoring.
- Phasing implementation especially if there are testing and or training pre-program participation requirements.
- Collaborating with the community to develop training opportunities.
- Emphasizing program changes that are likely to increase the degree to which visitors take personal responsibility for controlling their dogs and removing excrement.
- Considering the costs for the city *and* program participants.

The OSBT also identified several changes for consideration as part of the program evaluation. The Board provided the following feedback on 12 potential improvements listed in the study session memo.

Changes to consider further:

- Linking the Tag Program with a requirement for ensuring dogs are vaccinated (licensed).
- Require testing to demonstrate that a guardian and dog have the ability to comply with voice and sight control requirements
- Require attendance at a information, demonstration, or skill class before program participation
- Increase in fines and consequences for violations
- Rescind privileges after first violation and require testing to renew privileges
- Provide and support additional education, outreach, training and peer to peer outreach programs
- Increase the cost of participating in the program retaining a lower cost for city residents
- Limiting voice and sight control to trail corridors

Changes that may be unnecessary if compliance improves:

- Establish city or county residency requirements for participation
- Limit voice and sight control to:
 - specific management areas (i.e., only in Passive Recreation Areas)
 - specific trails
 - specific days or times of day

In addition to the overarching issues identified by City Council, the Board expressed significant concern over poor compliance with dog excrement removal requirements, and took time to identify strategies aimed at improving compliance. The strategies are included in the attached study session summary. Staff will use the Board's ideas to identify immediate actions to increase awareness and reduce the amount of dog waste left on Open Space and Mountain Parks. Staff will be reporting back to the Board on this topic.

Attachment A

Discussion Notes from Open Space Board of Trustees January 11, 2012 Study Session Potential Enhancements to the Voice and Sight “Green” Tag Program

Discussion Topics:

1. What are the overall goals for the Voice and Sight Tag (Tag) Program?
2. What problems can be identified with the Tag Program?
3. What potential changes or enhancements to the Tag Program should staff consider?
4. Are there additional information needs?
5. What strategies might be considered to improve dog excrement removal?

Goals for the Voice and Sight Tag Program

- To have a program where there is compliance
- To have a program that the community believes is fair and appreciated by dog guardians
- Significantly reduce the poop bags along trails
- To protect the quality of the visitor experience and to protect the resources
- To protect the safety of visitors and dogs
- Root actions in the objectives and criteria of management plans including the Visitor Master Plan, resource management plans, and other plans to meet plan objectives and performance measures.
- To keep program changes cost and resource effective for the city and for dog guardians.
- Instill a sense of responsibility that voice and sight is a privilege and partnership and peer to peer outreach is important to achieving improvements and changes.
- To improve the clarity of the expectations for voice and sight control.
- Provide pathways for guardians to build skills and meet expectations.
- Find solutions that make requirements simpler if possible or minimize new complexities.

Problems to Address with the Evaluation of the Tag Program

- Lack of compliance with:
 - excrement removal
 - keeping dogs on-leash where required
 - voice and sight control requirements
- There is no demonstration of capability or testing that dog guardian and dog have the ability to conform to voice and sight rules.
- There is no accountability that guardians have actually watched the video.
- Lack of fairness for people who do control/manage their dogs well when there are guardians with poor control.
- Impact to resources and drawing connections with relevant research and monitoring done by staff.
- City Council’s interest in the program is reflecting concerns heard from the community.
- There is no proof of vaccination (or license) currently required. Identified by City Council as an important change to integrate into the Tag Program.
- Compliance objectives established in the Visitor Master Plan have not been achieved.
- Unable to adequately track the individual dogs and guardians actively participating in the Tag Program along with regulation violations by participants.

- Improve the ability of relevant information to be available to staff in the field.
- Penalties for noncompliance may not be sufficient or matched to the nature of the violation.
- City of Boulder spent a significant amount of time and resources on the program and compliance with voice and sight control is not increasing
- Improve communication with all OSMP visitors and dog guardians about opportunities and issues.
- Find solutions for identified problems.

Potential Changes or Enhancements

- Require the dog and guardian to demonstrate the ability to comply with voice and sight requirements.
- Require completion of a voice and sight control information session or class which could include the video, a presentation on program participation responsibilities, and possibly a test on the program requirements.
- Promote and communicate pathways for training opportunities to help people get their dogs trained (no cost self directed resources, professional training, private trainers).
- Integrate a renewal for participation in the Tag Program which allows ongoing communication with participants.
- Increase fines and consequences for violations
 - Require guardian to go through training or testing after first violation
 - Rescind tag privileges as a consequence
 - Consider penalties that fit the nature of the offense
- Requiring performance testing for violators to regain privileges could provide an opportunity to see how testing works so that there's more information about integrating it as an initial requirement for program participation.
- Increase both the pre-program participation requirements (front end acknowledgement of responsibility) and consequences of violating requirements.

Additional Information Needs

- Discuss with dog training professionals about what training and performance testing may require.
- Collect more information from community.
- Explore ways to find out how many “active” dogs and participants are in the program.

Improving Dog Excrement Removal

- Add trash receptacles not only at trail access locations but further down trails.
- Provide biodegradable poop bags.
- Increase Tag Program fees to help offset costs for trash receptacles and bags.
- Increase education, communication, and peer to peer encouragement of compliance.
- PR program to increase awareness.
- Consider additional focused patrol/enforcement options such as limited commission enforcement staff.
- Tie excrement removal expectations to Tag Program responsibilities.