

Dogs on the Coast (Sonoma Coast State Park)



General Impact of Dogs on Wildlife

- Being direct descendants of gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) are perceived by wildlife as predators.
- The presence of dogs creates predator-induced stress, causing animals such as nesting birds to flee and to increase vigilance behavior. This reduces time and energy necessary for birds to forage and find shelter. Disturbances by dogs during breeding season can cause nest abandonment and increase risk of nest predation.

Impacts: Wildlife/Water Quality*

- **Physical and Temporal Displacement**
 - *Physical Presence and Scent (spatial: reduces available habitat, temporal: less active during day; scent persistent)*
- **Disturbance and Stress Response**
 - *Short/Long Term Impacts (reduces energy necessary for foraging/breeding; repeated stress: reduced reproduction/growth, increased risks of disease)*
- **Indirect and Direct Mortality**
 - *Disease/Direct Killing (distemper/rabies; loose dogs – chasing wildlife)*
- **Human Disease and Water Quality Impacts**
 - *Water Pollution/Zoonotic (dog waste - pollution; transmit parasites/diseases)*

* Lori Hennings<Metro Parks and Nature, April 2016

Relative Disturbance Levels of People/Dogs on Trails to Wildlife*

Figure 1. Conceptual illustration of the relative impacts on wildlife due to people without and with dogs.



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California Law, Re: Wildlife Harassment

- California Code of Regulations Title 14, Subdivision 2- Chapter 1 Section 251.1.
“... harass is defined as an intentional act which disrupts an animals’ natural behavior patterns ...”

Locally Impacted Wildlife

Dog impacted wildlife at Bodega Head, Salmon Creek Beaches and KT/Goat Rock/Russian River

- Western Snowy Plover (federally/state protected) and other shore birds that nest/forage on beaches; SNPL: North/South Salmon Creek Beaches
- Ground nesting birds (trails/prairie): Northern Harrier, Burrowing owl, California Quail
- Burrowing mammals (trails/prairie): Long-tailed weasel, American badger, Botta's pocket gopher, fossorial insectivores
- Harbor Seals (particularly at locations where they are likely to "haul out", such as Goat Rock/RR)
- Native plants (trails/prairie)

Recommended Volunteer Attire, Accessories, Supplies

- Required: California SP Volunteer Vest
- Recommended:
 - *Long Sleeve Solid Color Shirt
 - *Cell phone w/Cal State Park Dispatch/Ranger Nos.
 - *Maps: “Where Can I Take My Dog?”/“Dog-Friendly Trails Outside SCSP”
 - *Misc. Maps/Brochures, e.g., Fishing Locations
 - *Bins
 - *Camera
 - *Jumper Cables (public assistance patrol)
 - *Rangers’ Mobile Radio - possible option (location dependent)

Sonoma Coast State Park Dog Policy

Dogs Allowed On Leash

Marshall Gulch
Carmet Beach
Schoolhouse Beach
Portuguese Beach
Duncan's Cove
Wright's Beach
Furlong Gulch
Shell Beach
Blind Beach
Russian Gulch

No Dogs Allowed

North Jenner Beach
Goat Rock Beach
Arched Rock Beach
Coleman Beach
Miwok Beach
North Salmon --
--Creek Beach
South Salmon --
--Creek Beach
Bodega Dunes Beach
Campbell Cove*
Bodega Head
Kortum Trail

Besides the negative impact that dogs have on wildlife, dogs can transmit disease and parasites to humans (and other dogs). Additionally, some visitors are intimidated by dogs ... even friendly ones.

* "No-Dog" Status Pending

Dogs Allowed On-Leash @ Coastal Regional Parks

- Doran Regional Park, 201 Doran Beach Rd., Bodega Bay
- Pinnacle Gulch Coastal Access Trail, 20600 Mockingbird Rd., Bodega Bay
- Birdwalk Coastal Access Trail, 355 Hwy. 1, Bodega Bay
- Coastal Prairie Trail (CA-1, entrance to Bodega Dunes Campground)
- Jenner Headlands Preserve, 12001 CA-1, Jenner (Great Alternative to KT)
- Stillwater Cove Regional Park (north of Fort Ross), 22455 CA-1, Jenner
- Gualala Point Regional Park, 42400 Leeward Rd. Sea Ranch

Dog Allowed Off-Leash @ Coastal Park

- Dillon Beach (Private), 1 Beach Ave.,
Dillon Beach (Marin County)

Interacting With Dog Owners

- Conversing with (violating) dog owners
- Offer reasons for No-Dogs-On-Beach/Trails policy
 - ** Threats to wildlife
 - ** Safety/Health concerns



- Present possible consequences for non-compliance
- Dog owners' attempted justifications: "... under perfect voice command", "... never bitten anyone", etc.
- Even with difficult dog-owners, best to make good lasting impression. Remember that you are representing California S.P.
- Last resort: If dog owners are non-compliant, then let them know that a ranger can/will be contacted ... and that citations ...
- Even where they are permitted, all dogs (even legitimate service dogs) **MUST** be on a leash (Rangers: ... beaches without visitors)

The Assistive Animal Divergation: *ESA Incursion Conundrum*

- Proliferation of Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) has resulted in increase in dogs misrepresented as service dogs
- Differences between ESAs and Service Dogs: ESAs are “comfort” animals; Service dogs have been trained to provide a service relating to their owner’s disability (physical or psychiatric)
- Service dogs allowed in all places owner is allowed, NOT so with ESAs
- Service dogs must NOT exhibit aggressive behavior!
- Communicating - verbal or written (handout) - with questionable “service” dog owners
- *According to the Americans for Disability Act (ADA), if someone has doubt regarding a dog’s assistive status, they can only ask two questions:*
 - #1: Is the dog required because of a disability?*
 - #2: What work/tasks is it trained to perform?*

“Distinguishing ESAs from Service Dogs” Statement

In lieu of a two way conversation with owners of questionable service dogs, consider reading the following statement:

- Start by saying that you want to briefly talk to them about their dog. Tell them that you understand that there’s often confusion about whether an assistive animal is an emotional support animal (ESA) or an actual service dog. Then tell them that service dogs are trained to provide a service relating to an owner’s disability - a fact that distinguishes them from ESAs. Then inform them that ESAs are not provided the same protections that service dogs are and thus, they are not allowed on prohibited trails/beaches. Then say something like “I’ll trust you to make the correct decision as you’re the one that should know if your dog is an emotional support animal or a legitimate service dog; I can only say that the presence of dogs has a negative impact on resident wildlife, and if you’re dog is not a legitimate service dog, I would appreciate it if you would remove it from this location”. Then offer alternative locations.
- By making a statement in this fashion, you won’t have to ask any questions. After making the statement, you have the option of just walking away ...

Service Dogs and Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) in Public Places

(Optional Handout)

To help clear up confusion about Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) and Service Dogs, the following ADA/State of California regulations/rules are presented:

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- Generally, trained “service dogs” are allowed to accompany their owner everywhere that the public is allowed. However, “California law, like federal law, doesn’t require that ‘emotional support animals’ be allowed in public places”. California law allows persons with disabilities to bring trained service/psychiatric dogs, but not emotional support animals, to all public places.
- *The Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA) requires reasonable accommodations by public entities for “service animals” (any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.) However, this accommodation explicitly does not apply to “emotional support animals”. 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.104, 36.104, 35.136 (i) (2010)*
- *“Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) do not qualify as service animals under the ADA, the California Unruh Civil Rights Act nor the Disabled Persons Act”.*
- *According to the ADA, if someone has doubt regarding a dog’s assistive status, they can only ask two questions:
#1: Is the dog required because of a disability?
#2: What work/tasks is it trained to perform?*
- *Service Dog documentation or proof of certification or licensing cannot be requested. 28 C.F.R. & 35.136(f) (2010)*
- *California State Law: Makes falsely claiming an animal to be a service animal a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for six months or a fine up to \$1000, or both. California Penal Code & 365.7 (1994), California Food and Agricultural Code & 30850(b) (2004)*

Suggested Measures to Reduce SCSP Dog Infractions

- Improved/additional trail access signs, esp. at Bodega Dunes (Day Use Area) and Campbell Cove*
- *NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS*, especially at beaches like N&S Salmon Creek Beach (dogs-on-beach), Bodega Dunes (dogs-on-beach), Dog-acceptable beaches (dogs off-leash), K-Trail (dogs-on-trail)
- Increased enforcement of dog infractions, i.e., citations!

* *"No-dogs allowed" status pending*

“Impacts of Dogs on Wildlife” References

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