

New Off Leash Dog Parks Opening

By Dr. Byron Maas

Several new off leash dogs parks are due to open or be expanded this spring in Bend. The benefits of these parks are numerous for our community but there are a number of important points to remember when using the parks. Your pooch will be able enjoy these open spaces and get out and run in a welcome environment. The continued success will depend on the good stewardship by the users.

Getting dogs out into these new parks will promote a better community for animals. It is known that guardians have better compliance to existing regulations. Research has shown that bad behaviors such as barking, chewing and anxiety can be helped with exercise. Dogs love to run and be social. These parks are a great way for people to get much needed exercise while interacting with others and their pets.

Seven parks are being added or expanded in the Bend area. Four of these parks will be completely fenced including the existing Big Sky Park while three others will have partially fenced areas for your dogs to run and play. The parks are due to open officially on May 30. The Bend Parks and Recreation District has been working diligently with DogPAC, a local non-profit, to establish these new parks in our community.

Until as recent as fall of 2007, it was illegal to have your dogs off leash in Bend. With many concerted efforts, law makers, dog advocates and the Parks district have developed a series of spaces to make Bend a great dog friendly community with open spaces dedicated to our dog loving families. The success of these parks will be dependent on good stewardship of the facilities.

Important points to remember are to follow all the rules in the park. These will be posted at the parks and on brochures. Volunteers called Dog Pack leaders will be available to assist people and answer questions and monitor problems at the parks.

Remember to have your dogs vaccinated for Rabies, Distemper, Parvo Virus and kennel cough before using the park. Parasite control is a must so get them dewormed. Also, all dogs must have a current license which is visible and well displayed. Proper etiquette includes removing your dogs waste. Bring a baggie and even though it is a specified off leash area always carry a leash for each dog you have. These facilities are not for all dogs. Make sure to remove unsocial dogs before conflict arises and always keep your dog within eye contact and voice control. Take responsibility for your pets. Dogs need to be well trained and have basic obedience skills to be handled. Leash walking is still an important part for training. Puppies should not be taken to the parks until they are at least sixteen weeks of age. This will give them enough time to develop an adequate immunity through vaccination. Off leash parks are not a place for poorly behaved or aggressive dogs. Do not attempt to work out these problems here. It will only lead to disaster. Immediately remove any unsocial dogs before problems arise.

Enforcement of rules and existing laws will be handled by the Bend Police Department and citations can be issued for dog related issues. Remember to keep pets leashed when not in the parks. On May 20 and 21 there will be a free informational session with local dog trainers to help dog owners make sure that their dogs are ready.

For more a complete list of the new parks, location or more information visit DogPAC.org , call at Bend Parks and Rec. at 541-389-7275. Look for Dr. Doug Evans with his dog at the Hollinshead Park opening on May 30th from 11:00 to 2:00.