

Fred Clough
03/10/2007 01:18 PM PST

To: brian_o'neill@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: GGNRA Dog Policy

Dear Mr. O'Neill,

I am writing to express my support for a dog leash policy that puts the rights of people ahead of the "rights" of dogs. As a transplanted easterner, I'm having trouble understanding the politics of "off-leash dog rights." Only in California is there any support for the notion that dogs have the same rights as people in mixed-used public areas. I hope that the GGNRA has the backbone to stand up to the vocal dog rights activists when the new permanent regulations are proposed.

To me, the essence of the problem is this: While there are many well-trained dogs and responsible dog owners, there are many who are not. How can you tell the difference? You can't - and people who come to the GGNRA to relax should not be compelled to be "on guard" against uncontrolled dogs in order to protect their comfort and safety. The suggested policy that dogs have to be under the "voice control" of their owners is ridiculous. Under the guise of "compromise," it is actually a vague and unenforceable standard that gives license to all forms of behavior and feigns hollow remedy after any damage has already been done. Are people to take comfort in the fact that a dog owner might risk a citation if his dog runs across a picnic blanket, frightens a child, jumps on a hiker, or causes a horse to throw its rider? If a person has allergies, what right does she have to not have a dog brush up against her clothing? If a runner encounters an unleashed pit bull, should she continue running? Why should people be put in these positions? The "generic" National Park Service leash law that had been "unfairly imposed" by the GGNRA is actually a balanced, responsible rule that plays every bit as important a role here as it does elsewhere.

People should not have to compromise their relaxation, comfort, and safety because of "dog rights." Let's hope that the GGNRA sets aside some fenced open meadow space for dogs to run freely. But let's reserve the beaches and trails for people - and for dogs under leash control.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Fred W. Clough