



**PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**, 3424 Meridian, Bellingham, Washington 98225  
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July 1, 2010

Anara Thomas, President  
Grateful Dogs Off-Leash Association  
504 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Anara,

This past winter we experienced a considerable amount of turf damage along the shoreline of Lake Whatcom at Bloedel Donovan Park. As the enclosed photos reveal, much of this damage was directly the result of over use by off-leash dogs. I'm not certain if there were more dogs than in previous years or if the extremely wet weather contributed to a saturated turf which was unable to withstand this use. As a result, the Parks and Recreation Department was warned by the City's Storm Water Division, as well as the Department of Ecology, that these "bare soil" conditions were contributing to sediment runoff to Lake Whatcom and an increase in the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of runoff to the Lake. We were cautioned that this condition cannot persist and, if it does, the Parks and Recreation Department will be issued a citation and subsequent fine for this violation.

We appreciate the presence of off-leash dogs and the work they do in hazing migratory waterfowl from the area. An enclosed photo shows migratory waterfowl, in particular Coot, as a considerable problem in the past, which not only contributed to turf damage but to the presence of E. coli in the proximity of the beach. We also acknowledge that dog owners enjoy water access for their pets and the social benefits that accrue to the off-leash use at Bloedel Donovan Park.

For this reason, I am asking for assistance from the Grateful Dogs Off-Leash Association. Can you suggest any practices or policies that can be implemented in an effort to minimize turf damage at Bloedel Donovan Park while still allowing water access for dogs? Should the times or days of use be modified? Should water access areas be periodically shifted along the shoreline? Any input you can provide in resolving this situation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Paul Leuthold

Director of Parks and Recreation