

Fitch, Abby

From: Britten, Hugh <hugh.britten@usd.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2024 8:58 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Westminster Hills Open Area Off-Leash Dog Park

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Dear City Council Members:

I wish to provide comment about potential changes to the management of the Westminster Open Area Off-Leash Dog Park. I am a recent transplant to the area having bought my home in October 2022. My house is on West 105th Drive; I can see the Simms Street parking lot for the dog park from the end of my driveway. The location of the open area along with Standley Lake and the NWR were key to us buying this particular property. It is a beautiful place and all the open space is an invaluable resource for the people of Westminster, Jeffco, and beyond. I should also note that my family owns a dog and that we take advantage of the off-leash park to walk our dog there once or twice each day.

The “Westminster Guardians” are a motivated, well-organized, and vocal group advocating for no change in the management of the off-leash area (as I am sure you are well aware). This does not mean that they are right or that they speak for anyone but themselves. The park, as the study the City Council commissioned notes, is over-used and ecologically damaged. The leading cause is people and their dogs. I am asking that you continue to consider alternative management approaches to the park including shrinking the off-leash area (maybe to 200 acres) and increasing enforcement of posted rules for use of the park. I am not against a fee system requiring visible IDs when at the park and enforced by City (or some other entity) personnel paid through the fee system. Many park visitors are not Westminster residents as evidenced by license plates in the parking lots and conversations with individuals, so they do not financially support the park. The “Guardians” are well-aware of this situations and will down-play its significance, but the fact remains that Westminster citizens are subsidizing others to diminish the value of our park. One wonders how many of the “Guardians” live in Westminster and pay taxes to support the park. The park is being loved to death and will soon be unable to fulfill its original purpose of maintaining wildlife habitat and as open space for many uses (e.g., bicycling, bird watching, jogging).

My family and I saw a fox foraging around in the park just off of Simms Street last evening. The sky was glowing deep red as the sun set behind the mountains to the west. It was a special moment for us. The value of this open space is incalculable. Please consider ways to manage the park that meet the needs of people with and without dogs as well as the native plants and animals that live there.

Thank you for your consideration,

Hugh Britten

Westminster, CO