

Fitch, Abby

From: carol gosenheimer <cgosenheimer@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 24, 2024 11:51 AM
To: Public Comment; Ezeadi, Obi; McNally, Nancy; Carmelia, Claire; Ireland, Kristine; DeMott, David; Nurmela, Sarah; Hott, Amber
Cc: Freitag, Mark
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Westminster Hills Open Space

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Dear Westminster City Council,
I am writing to you with two concerns related to Westminster Hills Open Space:

- 1.
2. Surveying the citizens of Westminster so you
3. have accurate data for informed decision-making
- 4.
- 5.
6. The deleterious effects of dog urine on the
7. land
- 8.

Surveying and getting accurate information for decision making

I contacted the city manager's office, and they confirmed that there was NO statistically valid Westminster resident survey related to WHOS or the dog park.

City Council should be making informed decisions based on valid data and unbiased and valid citizen input, none of which you have at this time.

To that end, I ask that City Council request staff to conduct a statistically valid and unbiased survey of Westminster residents. By not surveying, you are choosing to be uninformed about what residents of Westminster want.

If city council refuses to do that, I suggest refreshing yourselves on the data below to more accurately represent preferences for residents. This information is based on data from the Jefferson County Open Space Conservation Greenprint 2020–2025 <https://www.jeffco.us/3960/References>

This report asked the following question of Jefferson County residents: “Why is public open space and parkland important to you?”

78 percent of respondents selected “Wildlife and wildlife habitat.”

Additionally, the report indicates that Jefferson County residents strongly support:

92%: stay on trail requirements

90%: developing/managing trails for minimal impact

88%: seasonal/temporary closures for wildlife

86%: closing sensitive areas

87%: increasing trail development with sensitivity to plants / wildlife

As you can see, none of this aligns with off-leash dog park usage.

It's critical to use unbiased and valid data when making a decision of this magnitude. Please use accurate and unbiased survey data and make a decision that represents the desires of the majority of your citizens and voters, not just one very loud segment.

A decision to keep the space as it is (470 acres for off leash dog use), discriminates against and prevents fair accessibility to the majority of Westminster citizens, and your voter base, while favoring only the off-leash dog owners.

Dog urine

Dog owners focus on promising to pick up dog poop during clean up days, because many dog owners are irresponsible in not picking it up immediately. But dog poop is a small part of the problem. Dog urine is extremely detrimental to Westminster Hills Open Space trees and plants, and this is not being talked about. Are dog owners going to run around following their dogs into the rattlesnake-infested grass to collect urine with a cup?

The chemicals in dog urine can soak through tree bark and damage the cambium, a vital layer of tissue that helps trees grow in diameter. This damage can impair the tree's growth or even destroy it. Dog urine can also break down and lead to acidification, which can weaken tree bark. When combined with other stresses, like poor soil quality or physical damage, this can make it easier for bacteria and fungi to cause disease in trees.

Dog urine can harm plants and disrupt the entire ecosystem. Dog urine significantly increases soil nitrate, ammonium, and total nitrogen concentrations, and significantly decrease soil pH. This over-fertilization from dog urine reduces biodiversity by allowing a few invasive, noxious, and non-native plants to thrive, while driving out native species, and the wildlife that depends on them.

It is critical to contain off-leash dogs to a small area, as originally suggested by city staff, to prevent the destruction of this short grass prairie. Over 1 million dogs (750,000 people visit annually, and many of them have multiple dogs) urinating and defecating throughout this expansive area is causing irreparable damage. This is in addition to the harassment of wildlife, and destruction of habitat for ground-nesting birds, etc.

As a reminder, the Area Management Plan is to ensure that Westminster Hills Open Space is being managed to meet the purposes for which the land was acquired: conserve and protect the shortgrass prairie along with the animals and plants that call it home while providing appropriate recreational opportunities.

The objective of the open space program is to promote quality of life for citizens (*not just dog owners!*) of Westminster through the preservation and protection of the quality of the natural environment that has given Westminster much of its character. This natural environment includes many spectacular views to the foothills and mountains, which can be enjoyed from the hills and sloping sites that make up the City's predominant land form. The natural streams and man-made canals and ponds and related plant and animal communities complement the scenic vistas and remind us of the area's early history. These natural areas, water bodies, tremendous vistas and panoramas, characteristic terrains and native flora and fauna are intended to be preserved and protected for the enjoyment of this and future generations by the judicious use of those sales tax dollars designated for the open space program. 13-5-1. - Policy Statement.*

I ask that you please become informed about the facts, and engage in informed decision-making to represent all Westminster residents in this important matter.

Thank you,
Carol Gosenheimer

*From

<https://www.westminsterco.gov/WHOS#:~:text=BACKGROUND%20INFORMATION,1995%20from%20the%20Brauch%20Family.urpose>