

Fitch, Abby

From: Laura Kanopkin <laura.kanopkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 8, 2024 11:34 AM
To: Public Comment
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment July 8, 2024 - please save the dog park!

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City Council,

I regret I cannot attend the council meeting in person tonight. I have spoken a few times before regarding the environmental situation at the Westminster Hills dog park, doing my best to present an objective and accurate portrayal of what is actually going on there in terms of wildlife, vegetation, and the broader ecosystem.

Recently, I spent a good amount of time exploring the entire 1027 acres at WHOS and several other open spaces throughout Westminster and was surprised to notice that it is very difficult to find any native plants living in our open spaces. So much of our land is covered with invasive species like smooth brome, cheatgrass, and kochia, so why on earth are we picking on the dog park as the target of an intensive, expensive restoration project? Human impact has truly changed the shortgrass prairie landscape across the Midwest probably forever, due to agriculture, development, and the introduction of plants from all over the world which were able to outcompete the native species.

It's been disheartening for me as an environmental professional who cares deeply about conservation and mitigating human impacts to the natural world, to hear the "environment" so falsely used as a justification to hurt the community by shutting down the dog park. I know you all have so many different areas that you need to be educated on to do your jobs and don't have nearly as much time as someone like me to spend countless hours over the last six months researching every angle of how this dog park truly impacts the environment. I also want to be sure that we are doing the right thing here by maintaining the dog park, I just have not found a single good reason to shut it down.

Thank you endlessly for how much you've listened to this issue, and for your understanding in how important this is to our community.

Laura Kanopkin, Westminster resident