

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overall, research found that FCPA's dog park maintenance standards and practices are consistent with the practices employed by other jurisdictions; however, research also identified a gap in some maintenance task frequency due to a corresponding gap in funding for labor and material resources. Increasing the frequency of these tasks would address many of the concerns expressed within the survey, although would require additional funding for resources and potentially two additional full-time maintenance employees. Revised maintenance task frequencies have been provided within the Recommendations portion of this section.
- The survey indicated that dog waste bag stations were often empty, due to heavy use of the dog park and visitors taking bags for non-park use. The study recommends setting a standard of restocking pet waste bags once per week and installing signage discouraging visitors from taking more bags than needed while at the dog park. Signage at the dog park should prominently display contact information to report any maintenance issues that need to be addressed.
- Trash receptacles are currently placed inconsistently throughout FCPA dog parks. This study recommends placing trash receptacles within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence in all FCPA dog parks. Consistently placing trash receptacles in these locations will encourage visitors to dispose of dog waste and allow maintenance staff to empty the receptacles without entering the dog area.

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Dog parks require oversight and routine maintenance to function properly and ensure a safe environment for visitors. The study evaluated existing dog park operations, reviewed maintenance costs, and analyzed best practices utilized by other jurisdictions.

The intent of the analysis and benchmarking of other jurisdiction's maintenance regimes was to determine if FCPA's current practices and frequency of maintenance is sufficient and meets the expectation of park visitors.

EXISTING DOG PARKS OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

FCPA has maintenance procedures for dog parks to ensure safe use by both humans and dogs. These maintenance standards were developed to provide sufficient service levels with current funding. Routine maintenance activity includes the following procedures:

Current FCPA Maintenance and Operations Tasks

- Routinely inspect gates, fencing, and site furniture for integrity and cleanliness.
- Annually inspect water sources and repair as needed.
- Regularly inspect surface materials within dog park area to ensure the proper depth. Add new materials at least once a year if needed. Maintain a desired edge around the surfacing where applicable.
- Repair paved walkways leading to the dog park and the entry coral as needed.
- Remove all garbage, debris, weeds, and dog waste from use area as needed.
- Inspect and maintain trees within dog park use area.
- Empty trash receptacles two times per week.
- Check dog waste bag stations two times per week and replenish as needed.
- Work with volunteers to oversee proper usage, rule enforcement, and posting of information on kiosks.
- Inspect and repair shade shelters annually.
- Maintain and ensure proper visibility of rule and safety signage as required.
- Report any incidents such as vandalism, safety issues, or misuse of the dog park.

Current FCPA Dog Park Volunteer Maintenance and Operations Tasks

- Empty dog waste bins (e.g., buckets) daily (if applicable).
- Report any dog park violations or observed issues.
- Maintain and replace any authorized volunteer-provided dog agility equipment.

Annual Average Maintenance Costs Per Dog Park

The study examined FCPA's current dog park maintenance costs and compared them with other jurisdictions around the country. Research showed that FCPA's annual maintenance costs for dog parks are within the typical range of what other jurisdictions spend. *Figure 29* below provides a breakdown of FCPA tasks per dog park on an annual basis.

ANNUAL AVERAGE MAINTENANCE COSTS PER FCPA DOG PARK			
Task	Labor Cost	Materials/ Equipment Cost	Total Cost
Trash Removal	\$1,500	\$300	\$1,800
Inspections	\$100	\$0	\$100
Dog Waste Bag Restocking	\$300	\$1,200	\$1,500
Landscape Maintenance	\$1,000	\$100	\$1,100
Surface Maintenance	\$1,300	\$500	\$1,800
Fence/Gate Repair	\$300	\$300	\$600
Tree Trimming	\$200	\$0	\$200
Site Furniture Maintenance	\$100	\$0	\$100
Water Source Fees & Maintenance	\$900	\$500	\$1,400
Sign Maintenance	\$200	\$100	\$300
Trash Receptacle & Waste Bag Station Maintenance	\$400	\$100	\$500
Totals	\$6,300	\$3,100	\$9,400

Figure 29: Annual Average Maintenance Costs Per FCPA Dog Park

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS BENCHMARKING & ANALYSIS

The study analyzed FCPA’s current dog park conditions and maintenance procedures to identify avenues for potential improvement. The following resources and tools were utilized to acquire insight:

- Site visits and online research of dog parks in neighboring jurisdictions, including Arlington, Alexandria, Montgomery County and Prince George’s County.
- Telephone interviews conducted with staff in other agencies with direct responsibility for dog park maintenance.
- Documented complaints and comments received over the years related to dog parks.
- Industry literature, webinars, and prior dog park studies (internal and external).
- Multiple team members’ experience with managing public dog parks.
- FCPA dog park survey analysis and results.

Overall, research found that FCPA’s dog park maintenance standards and practices are consistent with the practices employed by other jurisdictions. However, research also

identified a gap in some maintenance task frequency due to a corresponding gap in funding for labor and material resources. The following are documented challenges in FCPA's dog parks that could be addressed with increased maintenance frequency:

- The primary surfacing type used within FCPA dog parks is crusher fines/washed stone dust. The survey results indicated that the surfacing condition is a concern for many park visitors. Several FCPA dog parks have slopes over two percent and lack a containment edge around the dog use area. These two conditions can cause crusher fines/washed stone dust to migrate. These two factors coupled with a high volume of use can contribute to less than ideal surface conditions.
- Trash receptacles often become full quickly and require more frequent emptying than the current practice of two times per week.
- Dog waste bins (e.g., buckets) that are inside the dog areas of some FCPA dog parks are not consistently emptied by volunteers. These waste bins were added by volunteers in some FCPA dog parks for the added convenience of avoiding exiting the dog area to deposit waste in the trash receptacles, which are currently outside the dog area.
- Keeping the dog waste bag stations stocked can be a challenge due to visitors taking bags for use outside of FCPA dog parks.
- Gates often need repair due to becoming misaligned from frequent use.
- Water sources can break from use or cold weather. In addition, water tends to pool around the base of water sources due to the current drainage configuration. The addition of insulation around the plumbing for these fixtures is needed to reduce the possibility of breaking.

FCPA's Park Operations Division (POD) is allocated a finite amount of financial and labor resources each fiscal year and those resources are spread amongst all FCPA facilities and amenities. The available budget detailed in *Figure 29* allows for maintenance procedures to be performed only at the current frequency referenced earlier (under "Current FCPA Procedures"). An increase in maintenance frequency would require additional funding to be identified.

Research showed that many jurisdictions close their dog parks at specific times each week or for a full day per month to perform more in-depth maintenance tasks. To add an additional day per week or month to perform the above tasks at additional frequencies, such as increased trash removal or more frequently addressing surfacing conditions, at least two additional full-time maintenance employees as well as additional financial resources to go towards purchase of additional materials would be required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FCPA's maintenance standards are consistent with nearby jurisdictions, although additional maintenance frequency would address many of the issues identified within the Analysis and Findings section above. An increase in maintenance tasks would require identifying additional funding to support additional maintenance staff and/or working with individual volunteers, Volunteer Teams, and/or Friends Groups to facilitate additional volunteering duties and donation opportunities.

MAINTENANCE TASKS & FREQUENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and analysis done as part of this study have informed the following recommendations for maintenance tasks and frequency for FCPA Dog Parks.

Landscaping & Mowing

This study recommends increasing the mowing frequency to manage weeds and invasive species within the dog park and along the fence perimeter to once every two weeks. Previously, mowing was done on an as-needed basis but based on survey feedback and research, the study is recommending this new standard. Note that larger issues of invasive species removal are managed by the Natural Resources Branch and should be coordinated between departments.

Pet Waste Bags Replacement

The study recommends setting a standard of restocking pet waste bags once per week. FCPA recognizes that some visitors may take several bags at a time for use outside of FCPA dog parks. This is a difficult practice to prevent but could be addressed through appropriate signage and volunteering oversight.

Surfacing

The survey results identified surfacing conditions as a primary concern expressed by park visitors. This study recommends reducing the surfacing slope and installing containment edges in specific dog parks as detailed in the *Suggested Alterations to Existing Dog Parks Table* below. Additionally, the current practice of routinely inspecting the surfacing and replenishing as needed should continue.

Trash Receptacles

The placement of trash receptacles is currently inconsistent throughout FCPA dog parks. Some trash receptacles are placed inside the dog area while other parks have the trash receptacle located outside the dog area. This study recommends placing trash receptacles within the entry corral area or immediately adjacent to the outside of the dog park fence in all FCPA dog parks. Consistently placing trash receptacles in these locations will encourage visitors to dispose of dog waste and allow maintenance staff to empty the receptacles without entering the dog area.

The study also recommends increasing the frequency of emptying trash receptacles from the current frequency of two times per week to a frequency of three times per

week in select dog parks that receive heavy use. This will require identifying additional funding to support the additional labor.

SUGGESTED ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING DOG PARKS

The survey results, paired with in-house assessments of FCPA existing dog parks, have identified several alterations and improvements that can be made in each of the existing dog parks, as shown in the Figure 30. These improvements would require additional funding. Funding potentially could be acquired from several sources, including park bonds, membership programs/user fees, partnerships, dog license revenue, and sponsored improvements/donation opportunities. Potential funding is discussed in greater detail in the Funding Sources, Partnerships and Donation Opportunities section of this report.

SUGGESTED ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING DOG PARKS

Dog Park Name	Primary Improvement Recommendations
Baron Cameron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regrade surface and install edge containment • More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use • Convert hose bib to dog/visitor drinking fountain
Blake Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regrade surface and install edge containment • Install crusher fines/washed stone dust surfacing after regraded • Install dog/visitor drinking fountain • Install a shade structure and/or protected trees to provide a shade source
Chandon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install edge containment and maintain grass/natural surface. Crusher Fines/Washed Stone Dust can be considered in the future if it is determined that the grass/natural surfacing causes maintenance or usability issues • Improve accessibility from parking area to dog park entrance • Reduce stormwater runoff from other park features into dog park • Convert hose bib to dog/visitor drinking fountain
Dulles Station Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install edge containment and improve drainage
Grist Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert areas of existing trees into protected beds with incorporated seating • Redesign a portion of the park to be separated for smaller/older dogs
Lenclair/Blackjack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install edge containment and improve drainage • Install a shade structure and/or protected trees to provide a shade source

<p>Mason District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert areas of turf to stone dust and install edge containment • More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use • Convert areas of existing trees into protected beds with incorporated seating • Redesign a portion of the park to be separated for smaller/older dogs
<p>Monticello</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install edge containment • Install dog/visitor drinking fountain • Install benches within the perimeter of the park • More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use • Install a shade structure and/or convert areas around existing trees into protected beds with seating
<p>Rock Hill District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install edge containment and improve drainage • More frequent maintenance of surfacing due to high use • Install dog/visitor drinking fountain • Install a shade structure and/or convert areas around existing trees into protected beds with seating
<p>South Run District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install edge containment and improve drainage • Install dog/visitor drinking fountain
<p>Westgrove</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve turf surface through partitioning sections of the park with fencing and rotating usable sections for reestablishment of turf • Install dog/visitor drinking fountain • Install dog park wayfinding signs • Improve accessibility of dog park entry

Figure 30: Existing Dog Park Improvement Recommendations