

Who's excited that its finally beach season again in Massachusetts! I went to Revere Beach this weekend with my dog. She's sixteen years old now, and she reminds me of the senior citizens who are a fixture of the beachscape, coming to breathe the ocean air, watch the waves, and gaze at the horizon.

Good evening, my name is Michele Biscoe. I live in Somerville, and I did not come here to talk about going to the beach.

Mr. Briere, Ms. Deitz, Ms. Geigis, and Ms. Overton; Fellow citizens:

I corresponded recently with the President of the Friends group at a DCR—formerly DEM—property. He told me that, under the DEM rules, 304 CMR 12, visitors may have dogs under voice control at their facility with the exception of some posted areas where dogs must be on leash.

I am familiar with this site: It is well managed and well signed.

The Friends-group President sees the proposed new park rules and regulations as reflecting a change of policy for former DEM lands: Voice control will no longer be acceptable. He feels that, on the contrary, voice control should become the standard policy at DCR properties, and I agree.

Most people who visit DCR properties with dogs maintain effective voice control over their pets, and they have a leash on their person as a backup to voice control and for conditions under which physical restraint is required or desirable.

The DCR property that I visit most frequently is a former MDC property, the Middlesex Fells Reservation. In a survey conducted for the Fells Resource Management Plan, the DCR counted one dog for every two people visiting the reservation and found that 85% of dogs at the Fells are off leash.

Why is the DCR not actively striving to bring its parks rules and regulations into accordance with their longstanding customary use?

Instead, the DCR is pursuing a policy that intends to put a stop to what is arguably the most popular outdoor recreational activity in the public open spaces of our Commonwealth.

The DCR is pursuing a policy that will corral the largest user group of state parks into "designated and posted" areas, and, moreover, it will be necessary for those users to lobby for our corrals.

In 2012 people who visit the Middlesex Fells with dogs participated in the Fells Resource Management Planning process. We attended at least eight public meetings.

We wrote over seventy letters. We submitted a petition with over three hundred unique signatures, to obtain accommodations to enjoy the trails of the Middlesex Fells with our dogs under voice control. There are over 100 miles of trails in the Middlesex Fells. Do you know how many miles of trails have been designated and posted to allow dogs to be under voice control? That's right. Zero.

There is not one inch of trail in the Fells for people with dogs under voice control. Yet, for every two people visiting the Fells there is one dog, and 85% of dogs in the Fells are not restrained by a leash.

To conclude, there are three problems with the DCR's Park Rules and Regulations with regard to the formal codification of a "leash law":

1. They ignore longstanding customary use of DCR facilities.
2. They are also unenforceable.
3. They provide no guidance as to the process by which users may petition the DCR to designate and post areas where people may have our dogs under voice control.

I respectfully request that the DCR recognize persons with dogs under voice control as legitimate visitors in our Massachusetts Parks and bring its parks and recreation rules into accordance with this longstanding customary use. And please don't shorten beach season!