

Dog Policy Recommendations to Dane County Parks Commission from the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, March 2018

Background

The Dane County Parks Division requested recommendations from The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy (FOPBC) regarding the current dog use policy in the County portion of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. The reasons for the request were prompted by concerns for potential negative impacts on ground nesting bird populations in the Conservancy. The current dog policy allows dogs on a six-foot static leash on all paths in the County portions of the Conservancy (this is the same policy as most of the City portion except for some narrow trails which don't allow dogs at all).

A Dog Policy Action Team was commissioned by the FOPBC Board. The Team conducted their work in January through March 2018.

Board Recommendations

Based on our research, the Dog Policy Team believes there is a basis to the concern regarding current dog access and negative impacts on ground nesting bird populations. We further believe that there is support from the FOPBC membership for a revision to the current dog access policy.

The FOPBC Board requests a change in the dog access policy in the County portion of the Conservancy to: **No dog access allowed north of the main limestone trail. Dogs on static, 6' leashes would still be allowed on all other trails (except as restricted by the City) with enhanced signage, informational campaigns and enforcement efforts.**

Time is of the essence. The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Board recommends that Dane County Parks Commission implement the policy in spring 2018. Further, the Board feels the following actions are essential in implementing a change to the dog access policy:

1. The new rules only apply to the County-owned section of the Conservancy.
2. To be effective, the policy change will need a substantial public education campaign by the County. The Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy is willing to support the County in this effort as appropriate.
3. Enforcement of the policy is the responsibility of the County.
4. A follow-up multi-year monitoring effort should be conducted to measure the impact of the policy on ground nesting bird populations.

FOPBC Board approved these recommendations at their meeting on March 19, 2018.