



Happy trails for dogs

Canines and their owners have plenty of places to walk

By Chris Bergeron
 Daily News Staff

FRAMINGHAM — Sniffing and scratching, a Great Dane named Katie led seven dogs leashed to Meghan Grabau through Callahan State Park on a bright Thursday afternoon, heading toward nearby Eagle Pond.

The owner of Beantown Hounds, which provides "outdoor adventures for dogs of all ages and sizes," the Framingham resident said her hometown state park provides one of the best local spots for dog walking because after passing an earthen dam they can run free.

Walking by a post with a green box offering plastic "mutt mitts" for canine waste, Grabau said, "We try to pick up everything we see. Most dog walkers appreciate what a great spot this park is."

Across MetroWest, dog owners have a fairly wide range of parks, trails, gardens and farms to walk their leashed pets with the understanding they will clean up after them.

Now they have another choice after Tower Hill Botanic Garden announced it is opening certain trails through the 132-acre Boylston site to leashed dogs for a fee.

Spokesman Robert Burgess said the new policy allows Tower Hill to welcome a "new segment of visitors whose dogs are part of their families."

Members can purchase Tails 'n Trails Dog Memberships

for \$25 for the first dog and \$10 each for two more with a maximum of three dogs that will give access to the woodland trails on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 to 11 a.m. and Tuesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. "It's a perfect way to introduce dog owners to our property," said Burgess.

Visitors with leashed dogs are welcome on the trails and in the woods of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (MHS) at Elm Bank, totaling 152 acres in Natick and Wellesley.

Since May this year, MHS prohibits all canines except service dogs in its upper campus and in the Elm Bank gardens, totaling about 30 acres.

However, only service dogs are permitted at Garden in the Woods, the Framingham headquarters of the New England Wild Flower Society.

The news for dog walkers is generally better at several popular state parks managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) across MetroWest sites, including Callahan in Framingham, Elm Bank, Ashland State Park, Cochituate State Park in Wayland and Whitehall State Park in Hopkinton.

Spokesman William Hickey said most DCR sites allow dogs on a leash not exceeding seven feet with the requirement that owners remove all waste.

"However, there are a few exceptions. From April 30

to Oct. 1, even leashed dogs aren't allowed in any DCR designated swimming areas for reasons of sanitation and water quality," he said.

Hickey said dogs or any pets are forbidden at Walden Pond, Sudbury Reservoir and Quabbin Reservoir in Belchertown.

At Mass Audubon's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary in Natick, Director Elissa Landry said the Natick site has a "no dog" policy except for service dogs.

"Dogs are predators that are descended from wolves and even the scent of dogs can affect the behavior of wild animals. Even leashed dogs can be a problem on narrow trails for people who are fearful of them," she said.

Landry added, "There are places that permit dogs and places like Broadmoor that don't. It's good to have both kinds. We're working really hard to get Broadmoor into as wild a state as possible."

At Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, chief curator Michael Volmar said leashed dogs have been permitted on trails with the expectation owners will remove their waste.

"Dog owners have generally been courteous to other visitors and respectful of the grounds. It's not a big deal," he said.

Sometimes disputes occur between dog owners and people who feel they don't clean up all their waste.

Bettina Abe, natural resources assistant in Acton, said some conflicts have arisen

because town bylaws require dogs in the Acton Arboretum to be "under the complete and effective control of said owner ... by means of a leash or otherwise," which some have interpreted to mean "voice control instead of a leash."

"We've been dealing with it for a while. Dogs get friendly and jump on people," she said. "There have been calls for stronger leash laws."

Keeping trails free from dog droppings can be expensive, said Pat Rosenthal, president of the Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail.

While local bylaws permit leashed dogs on the 6.7 mile trails stretching across Milford from Hopkinton to Holliston, the nonprofit Friends spends between \$1,500 and \$2,000 a year supplying the three current "dog stations" at trail heads with the plastic "mutt mitts" used to transport and dispose of waste. With two more stations expected, she expects those expenses will go up.

Rosenthal said Friends members and trail regulars have snapped photos of people who don't clean up after their dogs and sent them to Milford's animal control officer to encourage compliance.

Sometimes dogs aren't the only problem.

Robert Weidknecht, who chairs the Holliston Upper Charles Trail Committee, said in some cases horse riders weren't cleaning up after their steeds along the 6.7-mile stretch of trail.

He said some Eagle Scouts earning their badges will be building "dog stations" along the trails, funded by donations from the Friends and other sources.

And while town bylaws

require owners to prevent their dogs "from running at large," some people weren't cleaning up for their pets along the trail, leaving lots of canine waste along with the horse droppings on the stone dust surface that required volunteers to clean it up after the winter show melted.

"There's always a learning curve," said Weidknecht. "People have to learn to be responsible."

Chris Bergeron is a Daily News staff writer. Contact him at cbergeron@wickedlocal.com or 508-626-4448. Follow us on Twitter @WickedLocalArts and on Facebook.



Kim Webster of Framingham hikes Callahan State Park in Framingham with 18-month-old Drew on her back and 3-year-old Owen and Leonbergers Futa and Allie alongside. DAILY NEWS STAFF PHOTOS / A AN JUNG



Professional dog walker Karen Goldstein of Natick takes video as she and Wayland resident Stewart Maws and his dog, Pebbles, enjoy a sunny day walk at Greenways conservation area in Wayland.