

[Ollie Mettel](#), North Lake

## No Dog signs in Pheasant Branch Conservancy

Please contact Darren Marsh, Dane County Parks Director 608-224-3766 if you are unhappy with a decision to remove dogs on leashes from all trails north of the main gravel trail, including the trail up to the top of the hill. I spoke with him, today, about the signs (which appeared Friday). The decision was made primarily after discussions only between the Friends of Pheasant Branch and the park ranger, Dawn Grey. Mr. Marsh admitted that things had moved “too quickly” and is willing to revisit this issue. He welcomes input from park users (and dog owners!) so please let him know if you are in favor of another solution to the small minority of unleashed dogs in the park. I was the first person who had called to complain about banning dogs from all areas north of the gravel trail.



1d ago · 23 neighborhoods in [General](#)

[Thank](#)

[Reply](#)

4 Thanks · [17 Replies](#)

[Ollie Mettel](#), North Lake · 1d ago

Darren Marsh gave me his direct number 224-3766 for comments but here is some additional contact information including a 24hr number and an email.

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks

[Ollie Mettel](#), North Lake · 1d ago

More contact info



Dane County Land & Water Resources  
Department  
Parks Division  
201 Fern Oak Drive, Room 208  
Madison WI 53718-6827  
Phone: 608-224-3730  
Fax: 608-224-3745  
4-Hour Information Line: (608) 242-5791  
Toll-Free Wisconsin Relay: 711  
Email: [dane.parks@countyofdane.com](mailto:dane.parks@countyofdane.com)

[Thank](#)

4 Thanks

[Patty Montgomery](#), Middleton Ridge · 1d ago

I just left a message for Darren asking if this decision can be revisited. I walk my dog (on a leash) at the PBC regularly and would hate to lose this beautiful natural area as a walking route with my pup.

Thank you for the heads up!

[Thank](#)

3 Thanks

[Jane Richard](#), Bishops Bay/Fox Bluff · 1d ago

I've always felt that there isn't enough time or effort given to have ownership of problems. I know the the dog owners who don't leash feel their dogs often feel their dogs are under control so they don't need to put them on a leash. They don't understand that even a little wandering off of the trail can disrupt nature. I think there should be educational signs put up next to the no dog signs for awhile and then try dogs again with the educational signs still up.

[Thank](#)

1 Thank

[Lyn Wible](#), North Lake · 1d ago

This was not a request from FOPB Board. The just-formed committee on this is 6 days old, has never met, and was open to consider many different courses of action. There may be members who had concerns, but that would not represent our position until due deliberation. (I am on the Board)

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks

[Lyn Wible](#), North Lake·1d ago

Lyn is not on the Board, but her husband Lyman is, and wrote the note above.

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks



[Camela Decaire](#), Baskerville Park·1d ago

C&J here - so we are disappointed, and think it's a rubbish idea because more and more places are restricting dogs to dog parks only, and seriously - city dogs are weird enough and have enough problems without removing their one or two places they can enjoy a good sniff and a pee on the grass. HOWEVER, irresponsible owners are responsible for this - and you reap what you sow. The number of dog poop bags I have seen thrown into bushes, and up into trees, and almost knelt in because NO BAGS AT ALL is astonishing. It's a sad day when we have to restrict dogs because of their humans. We love walking our dog all over the Branch, but we can understand the decision.

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks

[Brenda Skaar](#), Baskerville Park·1d ago

Extremely disappointed in this decision..we have two dogs that we love to walk the trails with... always on leash...it is a great way to get whole family out moving. Hope this is reversed asap.

[Thank](#)

3 Thanks

[Michelle Storm](#), Baskerville·1d ago

I am against your ban of dogs on leashes. What should not happen is a fat bike competition through the pheasant branch along walking/running/gentle biking trails. All very exciting to have and watch, but very nerve wracking when you have high speed bikes speeding by on a gentle walk.

[Thank](#)

4 Thanks

[Mary Miller](#), Baskerville Park·1d ago

I am very sad that this decision has been made. Walking the trails with our dogs has always been my special one on one time with my daughter.

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks

[C. Jill Poarch](#), Parkside Heights·1d ago

I am very disappointed in this decision. I enjoy walking my dog on these trails and am a responsible dog owner (I keep my dog on his side of the trail and always pick up his poop). What is the issue? I

think some of the FAST bike riders who do not give notice that they are behind you or are passing are dangerous!

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks

[Ollie Mettel](#), North Lake·1d ago

Just talked to park director Darren Marsh (after he held a meeting with his staff this morning). The No Dog signs are coming down! He had heard from eight or nine people and encourages all to help police those who are not keeping their dogs on leashes. Thanks for voicing your opinion!

[Thank](#)

7 Thanks

[Patty Montgomery](#), Middleton Ridge·1d ago

I received a message today from Darren at the Parks Department regarding the above info. The signs are coming down!

[Thank](#)

4 Thanks

[Patrick Meyer](#), Middleton Hills·21h ago

Thanks to whoever called and got this decision changed. Dogs on leashes in this area are better than on gravel paths since no bikes and less foot traffic. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

[Thank](#)

3 Thanks

[Lyn Wible](#), North Lake·20h ago

Lyman Wible ([lymanwible@gmail.com](mailto:lymanwible@gmail.com)) writing here: The signs are being removed so the County and the Friends can define and explore this issue. (I am on the Board of the Friends group. Please write me if you want to discuss this.) ----- The following email reply came from the Lloyd Eagan the President of the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, to Darren Marsh of Dane County whose explanation is below Lloyd's reply- On Tue, Dec 19, 2017, Lloyd Eagan wrote - Thanks Darren, We will pledge to work with you on this issue. In fact at our last Friends of Pheasant Branch Board Meeting we agreed to put together a small group to work on messaging on the topic of dogs in the Conservancy. It looks like the work of the group will be more important than ever. It is important for dog owners to understand the very negative impacts that dogs off leash can have to nesting birds, to other dogs on leash and to people who are afraid of dogs or who have had negative experience with dogs. It is also important that all users of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy understand the habitat protection needs of the vulnerable bird populations that make the Conservancy their home. Pheasant Branch Conservancy is and Important Birding Area because of its wonderful habitat. We need to make sure that is protected. I know there are strong feelings on this issue, so it will be important to do due diligence in our outreach efforts. Thank you for being so responsive. We have no hard feelings and greatly value our partnership. We will keep you posted on our work on this topic. I anticipate it will generate a productive dialogue at least. Thanks again for taking such quick action. Lloyd Eagan President, Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Board ----- On Tue, Dec

19, 2017 at 2:47 PM, Marsh, Darren <[Marsh@countyofdane.com](mailto:Marsh@countyofdane.com)> wrote: Hello Lloyd and Others, I am reaching out to you to make you and the Board of Friends of Pheasant Branch aware of a breakdown in communication on my part. This breakdown resulted in our staff being proactive and posting the county land north of the bike/ped trail closed to dogs. Unfortunately, I put our operations staff into a situation where they felt they were serving the best interest of everyone at the time. The situation has been corrected and staff will be removing the signs. I guess there is one good benefit that I can see that came from the posting is that there is a new awareness of the situation and a great list of patrons that we can contact if we're looking at future policy issues. A little background on the dog issue. I have been recently copied on a number of emails and issues raised related to potential impacts of dogs on wildlife at the Conservancy. There was a string of emails that request by a user of the conservancy for the county close the area north of the Bike/ Ped Trail. I responded to that email stating that if there was going to be any change in policy regarding dogs that there would need to be a written request by the Friends of Pheasant Branch or another group requesting the closure. The request must articulate the issue and a recommendation. From there we'd need to do some outreach and take input before taking the issue to the Park Commission for their consideration. The Friends would need to help with the outreach being that the Friends are more tied to users and the neighborhoods vs the county. In the email I also offered to meet with the Friends if there was any assistance that I could help to handle concerns. After responding to that dog issue email, I sent a email to our staff and asked that they work with the Friends and keep me posted. I believe it was with this email that I failed to provide good instruction to our staff. We have outstanding staff that is very is busy trying to manage all of our properties. It also appears Staff wanted to move forward and handle the situation based on steps that were already taken to date at Pheasant including: signage that has been posted for years, Friends volunteer patrol program and the stepped up enforcement by park staff. I "anticipated" when staff where moving forward to updating the park signs that they were working with the existing signs purchased by that the dog leash rules, fines and threat that the area could be closed to dogs if people fail to follow the rules. That was not the case. The new signs that were posted closed the area. We will be removing the signs and will monitor the situation and assist where and when we can related to dog issues. I am sure there will be some patrons that were happy by our actions and there were some patrons very saddened by our postings. Many that I spoke with today. As I mentioned above, I know there is greater awareness to dog issues at Pheasant Branch. Again, it was my failure not to provide good direction in this situation. I am sorry for any confusion this may have created. Darren (Marsh) (Dane County Parks Director)

Thank

3 Thanks



[Sara Burr](#), Orchid Heights · 18h ago

Thanks to all who have contributed to this discussion, and who have achieved the positive outcome of the sign removal. I love walking my dog in the Conservancy but have become aware of some bad actors who let their dogs run free. Very distressing. I hope we can arrive at effective enforcement of the leashed dog policy (and related clean up dog waste as you go rule). I believe the mission of bird conservation is top priority. That priority has fostered marvelous bio-diversity. One suggestion I offer is to greatly increase the signage instructing visitors to keep their dogs on leash and on the paths.

Similarly, I'd like to see an increase in the number of signs about who yields to whom on the paths. Those signs are valuable in resolving disputes between people on bicycles and pedestrians and dog walkers. Grateful for our beautiful Conservancy, Sara.

[Thank](#)

2 Thanks

[Mark Felten](#), Cedar Ridge·3h ago

I am sad at the removal of these signs. Of the 6+ times I visited the `Sacred Springs' this summer, every single time someone was using the springs as a dog swimming pool [off leash]. The Pheasant Branch used to be a better birding and nature area, but the sheer numbers of dog owners now using this area [some of them off leash] is starting to seriously affect the fauna.