



Lighthouse Field no friendlier to pooches

By **HEATHER BOERNER**
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Dog lovers will have to take their fight for looser leash laws at Lighthouse Field to the City Council if they want changes.

They won't be getting them from the Parks and Recreation Department, whose draft, Lighthouse Field State Beach General Plan, includes no changes to the rules that require dogs to be walked on-leash from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Scores of pet owners told the Parks and Recreation Commission last year that the off-leash rules ought to be expanded. That was the biggest issue in the general plan update hearings.

So why aren't the rules different? Because the State Parks Department won't let them be — at least not in the general plan.

"We took our new general plan that included dog rules to the local superintendent of state parks, but they came back and told us that the dog rules were too specific for the general plan," said Susan Harris, an associate planner with city Parks and Recreation. "Basically, at this time, because the dog-rules process started with the city, it must be taken up by the city. If the city were to decide to do that, it would be at a later date, and that process has not started yet."

This news left dog owners disappointed. Many said that Lighthouse Field is one of the only public places in the county their pooches can romp.

Christina David, a UC Santa Cruz student, was walking her dog off-leash Friday morning when she heard the news. It was after 10 a.m., but still Hanna was off her leash and

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CHRISTINA DAVID, DOG OWNER

walking briskly beside her. She said that she keeps her off-leash until rangers arrive.

"The leash law is ridiculous, especially in the middle of winter," said David. "Look out here. There's no one around. And she's a good dog."

Richard Harbison was watching his dog Cruiser play off-leash with other dogs, who were also off-leash, about 10:30 a.m. He brings his dog out every day, and said the rules don't work in the winter.

"The rules as they stand are good for summer enforcement, when there are a lot of children here in the morning and the afternoon," he said. "But I don't see why they can't expand the off-leash hours to 11 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. or noon. This is a really important space. It's open, away from downtown, and it's one of the last spots."

The Lighthouse Field State Beach General Plan draft is available to the public at the Parks and Recreation Department and on its Web page, www.santacruzparksandrec.com. The city is accepting public comment until March 6. The Parks and Recreation Commission will discuss the general plan at a meeting March 13.

The proposed changes to the plan include:

- A requirement that the eucalyptus



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

TOP: Richard Harbison shares his views on the current leash laws at Lighthouse Field during an early-morning dog-and-owner get-together.

ABOVE: UCSC student Christina David carries a bag of dog waste to the garbage.

grove where monarch butterflies are over winter and a grove of willow trees be cordoned off to prevent people and dogs from interfering with the natural habitat.

- The consideration of an inland relocation of the Surfing Museum because of coastal erosion.

- No longer considering a new access road through the field on the interior of West Cliff Drive.

- No longer considering the creation of

a parking lot on Pelton Avenue.

- The elimination of 60 picnic areas and the retention of four picnic tables.

- No longer considering the creation of a surfer changing area.

- The elimination of recommendations to make Pelton a one-way street from West Cliff Drive to Eucalyptus.

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