



NEWS

MassWildlife proposes dog leash and waste removal regulations

MassWildlife is proposing leash and waste disposal regulations for dogs on Wildlife Management Areas. A public hearing has been scheduled for February 6, 2018 at 7 p.m.

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Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

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WESTBOROUGH — MassWildlife is proposing leash and waste disposal regulations for dogs on Wildlife Management Areas. A public hearing has been scheduled for February 6, 2018 at 7 PM at the [MassWildlife Field Headquarters](#), 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, 01581.

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) has a long tradition of welcoming dogs on Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), and dogs are still welcome on WMAs under this proposal.

MassWildlife proposes to take this action due to repeated complaints from WMA users about negative and unsafe encounters with unleashed dogs and issues with dog waste. MassWildlife protects and manages these areas to sustain wildlife abundance and diversity and provide wildlife-related recreation, including hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching, while at the same time providing a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience for all visitors. Therefore:

1. The proposed regulations require leashing dogs and other domestic animals on WMAs. Dogs may be off-leash only when hunting or hunt-training with licensed hunters under existing regulations, or if they are participating in retriever or bird dog trial events that have been permitted by MassWildlife. Leashing dogs decreases conflicts with both people and other dogs, resulting in a safer and more positive experience for everyone.
2. The proposal also requires dog owners to pick up dog waste and dispose of it offsite. Removing dog waste reduces nuisance and protects the safety and health of dogs and other pets, people, and wildlife.

Information on the public hearing, public comment process and proposed regulatory language is posted on MassWildlife's website at [Mass.gov/masswildlife-public-hearings](https://www.mass.gov/masswildlife-public-hearings).

The most common complaints detracting from visitors' recreational experience and the wildlife MassWildlife works to protect are:

- Dog attacks and bites on other dogs (both off- and on-leash) and people
- Piles of accumulating dog waste – nuisance and health concern for pets, people, and wildlife
- Unleashed dogs interfering with other Wildlife Management Area visitors

Other incidents and complaints from WMA users include: user conflicts between loose dogs with hunters, birders, field trial dog participants, naturalists and hikers; observations of dogs harassing or chasing wildlife; dogs chasing or killing livestock on abutting property; chasing/harassing neighboring property owners and families; dogs spooking horses, resulting in injuries to riders or horses; dogs trampling through posted endangered species restoration projects or newly planted agricultural crops.

Many municipalities have leash or animal control bylaws, but those bylaws and ordinances do not have legal standing on state lands. The proposed regulations address this circumstance. Enforcement of these proposed regulations, as with all [Wildlife Management Area Regulations](#), are handled by the Massachusetts Environmental Police. State and municipal police departments also have the authority to enforce Wildlife Management Area regulations.

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