



TO: Pitkin County OSTB
FROM: Jessie Young, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Jaffee River Trail Dog Leash Policy
DATE: March 22, 2019

Summary:

In response to residents' requests, Pitkin County Open Space and Trails has been exploring a change to the dog leash regulation along a portion of the Jaffee River Trail extending south from Wilton Jaffee Sr. Park. The existing multi-use trail has seen informal off-leash use for a number of years, mostly without conflicts. From January 14 through February 15, staff collected input from community members and trail users on the potential of formalizing a voice and sight control, off-leash trail regulation extending for approximately 1 mile from the start of the river trail at the intersection of Rio Grande Trail Spur (see map in summary document). This area has year-round recreational use and limited use by wildlife. Leashes would be required as the trail continues upstream prior to entering a wetland area with ecological values, which will remain protected.

To formalize this change, a two-reading ordinance to amend the Roaring Fork Gorge Management Plan must be approved by the BOCC, following a recommendation by the OSTB. An ordinance is required because the proposed amendment to allow for voice and sight control is a special rule that differs from the Title 12 open space regulations, which require dogs to be on leash on Open Space and Trails properties.

Issue:

The leash requirements of Title 12 are important to protecting the ecological integrity and resources of open space properties as well as limiting user conflicts; however, in limited circumstances the conditions are conducive to allowing for off-leash dog use. Jaffee River Trail is an area where allowing for dogs under voice and sight control is not anticipated to diminish natural resource or habitat values or create user conflicts, as it is primarily an out-and-back trail used by people on foot, with limited bicycle or equestrian use. There is limited potential for wildlife conflict due to the physically constrained corridor and the change is supported by CPW staff.

This change will formalize the current off-leash dog use and is strongly supported by community members and users who frequent the area. Voice and sight control regulations along this trail will help by clarifying the rules so that rangers can effectively enforce the dog policy and other Title 12 regulations on this open space. Over time, there have been very few conflicts with off-leash dogs and owners have demonstrated compliance with dog waste pick-up regulations. Formalizing voice and sight control regulations in this location will also fulfill some of the demand from community members to have off-leash areas for their pets and by offering a formal alternative, may dissuade folks from taking dogs off-leash on the Rio Grande Trail and

other more sensitive areas. This change may therefore improve compliance in other locations and concentrate dogs in a less ecologically sensitive area.

The public survey verified that there is broad support for formalizing this trail for voice and sight control, with support from 88% of respondents. Dogs would be required to be under voice and sight control on the specified section of the Jaffee River Trail, meaning dogs may be walked off leash; however, they must remain within their guardian's eyesight and follow voice commands. Guardians who do not have control of their dogs or fail to pick up after their pet will be subject to fines beginning at \$100. If user conflicts with off-leash dogs become common, regulations are not followed, ecological damage, wildlife conflicts or other unforeseen circumstances occur, the on-leash requirement can be reinstated.

Open Space and Trails Board Stewardship Policy #1 provides that a management plan should be adopted for all fee owned open space properties. Title 12 of the Pitkin County Code, article 12.04.060, authorizes the OSTB to adopt management plans for Open Space and Trails Properties, and requires BOCC action by Ordinance when such plans require special use rules that differ from the general open space rules in Title 12. The 2013 Roaring Fork Gorge Management Plan did not speak to a specific dog policy for the properties under the plan's management scope. Amending the plan to add an action item under the recreation section to allow for dogs under voice and sight control to be walked off leash on the identified section of the Jaffee River Trail is a special rule, requiring approval by the BOCC.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the OSTB make a motion recommending that the BOCC approve an ordinance on first reading amending the Roaring Fork Gorge Management Plan to allow for voice and sight control along the first mile of the Jaffee River Trail, beginning at the intersection of the Rio Grande Trail Spur. This change will be accompanied by appropriate signage and ranger presence/enforcement to educate users about the change and ensure compliance with the regulation over time. The plan will be amended to include action item 4.3.9 under the section titled "Recreational Use, Parking, and Amenities". The regulations below are consistent with the regulations of the County's two other voice and sight control areas, Smuggler Mountain Road and a portion of the Lazy Glen Open Space.

"Action Item 4.3.9: Jaffee River Trail Voice and Sight Control Regulations – The Jaffee River Trail extending to the south from the intersection of the Rio Grande Spur Trail adjacent to the river, is designated as a voice and sight control area. OST may evaluate and address issues as they occur. If conflicts become common, regulations are not followed, ecological damage, wildlife conflicts or unforeseen circumstances occur, the on-leash requirement can be reinstated.

Pitkin County Title 12 regulations allow for management plans to provide for different regulations. There are no current Pitkin County Title 12 regulations for dog off-leash areas, therefore this action item will allow for a voice and sight control trail and set the regulation as:

- A. Dogs must be in sight of guardian.
- B. Dogs must be under voice control and respond the first time the guardian commands the dog to come.

- C. Dogs not under voice and sight control must be leashed at all times.
- D. Guardian must carry one leash per dog.
- E. Guardian must carry and use dog waste bags, which may not be left along the trail or on the property.
- F. No more than two (2) unleashed dogs per guardian are allowed (A single person may walk no more than three dogs pursuant to Title 12 regulations).
- G. Violations are subject to a \$100 fine for first offense, \$500 fine for second offense, and \$1,000 for third and subsequent offenses.”

Attachments:

- Jaffee River Trail Potential Dog Leash Policy Change Summary / Survey Results
- Draft BOCC Ordinance
- Roaring Fork Gorge Management Plan can be viewed here:
<https://pitkincounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/1076/Roaring-Fork-Gorge-Management-Plan-PDF>