

May, 2012

An open letter about the need to keep your dog on a leash  
in Bear Creek Nature Park in Oakland Township

Because we all want to provide safe parks for our users, the Oakland Township Parks and Recreation Commission wants to remind you of the various rules and ordinances with respect to park use and access that are clearly posted at all Bear Creek Nature Park entrances and kiosks. The rules include hours of use, alcohol restrictions, and dog leash and dog control considerations.

As with most public use parks across the country, including federal, state and locally managed parks, Oakland Township has an ordinance requiring that all dogs in a township park be kept on a leash at all times. Violation of this ordinance, a misdemeanor, could entail ticketing and a fine up to \$500 and/or up to a 90-day jail term.

These fines may sound harsh, but unfortunately the Oakland Township Parks and Recreation Commission continues to be advised of complaints about unleashed dogs in Bear Creek Nature Park. Incidents have been reported by residents where unleashed dogs have approached or charged at other park users, including walkers and other dog owners and their dogs. On occasion, off-leash dogs have even been reported at Goodison Good Tyme and other township events where small children are present.

The Oakland Township Parks and Recreation Commission wants to believe that all our residents and visitors promote safety within our parks system, and that they encourage their friends and neighbors to keep their dogs on a leash. However, continued violations of common sense safety rules about dogs off-leash in Bear Creek Nature Park are forcing the Parks and Recreation Commission to consider some alternate actions to bring this unfortunate situation under control. Potential changes may include:

- Increase on-site enforcement by Oakland County Sheriff's Department officers, Oakland County Animal Control, or private security groups. This involves a significant increase in park costs.
- Implement a dog licensing and fee structure process for users wishing to bring their dogs into Bear Creek Nature Park, similar to the process used in Rochester and Rochester Hills, where dogs in parks must also be leashed.
- Completely restrict dogs from our parks.
- Increase mailing and possible door-to-door distribution of materials to adjacent neighborhoods and township residents in an effort to further educate and inform park users of the dangers of dog off-leash conditions. After all, a self-policing action is usually the most effective policy. Our rules are for the safety of all and are fully posted in the park.

Should you have additional comments or questions regarding this notification, please contact our Parks and Recreation Department by calling 248-651-7810.

Sincerely,  
Oakland Township Parks and Recreation