

**From:** "Holmquist, Kara L." <KHOLMQUIST@mspca.org>  
**Subject:** **Comments for Middlesex Fells Trail System Plan (re: off leash areas for dogs)**  
**Date:** February 7, 2010 7:46:05 PM EST  
**To:** <Paul.jahnige@state.ma.us>

---

February 7, 2010

Middlesex Fells Trail Plan  
136 Damon Rd  
Northampton, MA 01060  
[Paul.jahnige@state.ma.us](mailto:Paul.jahnige@state.ma.us)

Dear Mr. Jahnige:

On behalf of our more than 60,000 members, I am writing to express the support of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) for recreation areas where dog owners can enjoy the Fells with their dogs off-leash -- legally and safely. We hope you will include such use as part of the Middlesex Fells Trail System Plan.

We know that many of our clients, adopters and supporters use the Middlesex Fells for recreation for themselves and their dogs. The MSPCA has supported off leash recreation areas because we believe they provide many benefits to a community, including:

- Improving the quality of life for families with dogs. Dog recreation spaces can benefit the whole community, not just dogs and their families;
- Making the surrounding area safer. People walking dogs can deter crime;
- Reducing the time officials must spend enforcing leash laws;
- Providing designated areas for dogs. This benefits people who don't wish to be around dogs also;
- Providing a positive recreational social outlet for both dogs and their owners;

There are many cities, towns, parks and conservations areas in the United States and Massachusetts that have successful dog park systems. However, most people will agree that there are still far too few places in Massachusetts where the public can legally exercise dogs off-leash.

In our experience, we have found that individuals or groups that have initially opposed the idea of an off leash recreation space or spaces have come to accept and even embrace the idea once they understand how this can benefit all stakeholders. We have also found that when off leash areas are properly planned, the issues that people might be concerned about (noise, waste, overuse, etc.) are almost always eliminated.

Thank you in advance for considering off leash areas in your Trail System Plan.

Sincerely,

Kara Holmquist

\*\*\*\*\*

Kara Holmquist, Esq.  
Director of Advocacy  
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA)  
350 S. Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02130

617-541-5008 617-989-1654 (fax)

*The MSPCA's mission is to protect animals, relieve their suffering, advance their health and welfare, prevent cruelty, and work for a just and compassionate society*