

On Tuesday, February 6, 2018, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife will hold a public Hearing at 7 p.m., at the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's (MassWildlife) Field Headquarters, Richard Cronin Building, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, off North Drive, Westborough, Massachusetts, to amend and establish rules relating to the leashing of dogs, and the restraint of domesticated animals (as listed in 321 CMR 9.02(3)), on MassWildlife, wildlife management areas.

The Town of West Bridgewater has a number of Wildlife Management Areas around town, such as West Meadow off Spring Street, that would be affected by this change and visitors to them whether they visit with or without dogs, may be interested in this.

Here are links to two versions of the proposed change:

[https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/01/03/DFW_Unleashed%20Dogs%20on%20WMAs%20321%20CMR%203%2001_redline%20for%20PHN_12-13-17.pdf]DFW_Leashing Dogs on WMAs 321 CMR 3 01_ redline (this draft shows what is begin deleted and what is being added) -

[https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/01/03/DFW_Unleashed%20Dogs%20on%20WMAs%20321%20CMR%203%2001_clean%20for%20PHN_12-13-17.pdf]DFW_Leashing Dogs on WMAs 321 CMR 3 01_ clean (this draft shows the final results of the deletions and additions) -

There is a synopsis of the changes:

Summary of Proposed Leash and Waste-disposal Requirements for Dogs on Wildlife Management Areas

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 its WMAs primarily for wildlife to thrive and for wildlife-related recreation such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching. At the same time, MassWildlife strives to provide a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience for all visitors.

1. The proposed regulations require the leashing of dogs and other domestic animals on WMAs. Dogs may be off-leash only when hunting or hunt-training with licensed hunters or at permitted field trials. Leashing dogs decreases conflicts with both people and other dogs, resulting in a safer and more positive experience for everyone.
2. The proposal requires dog owners to pick up dog waste and dispose of it offsite. Removing dog waste reduces nuisance and health risks for dogs and other pets, people, and wildlife.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Board will accept written comment on the proposals at any time prior to the public hearings, and will accept either written or oral comment at public hearings. Unless otherwise noted, the Board typically extends the comment period on regulations for an additional 2 weeks following the public hearing, and votes on the proposal at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Comments (both oral and written) must focus on the changes to the regulation as proposed.

Send written comments to:

Chairman, Fisheries and Wildlife Board, c/o Director of MassWildlife, Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581 - Comments by e-mail may be sent to Susan.Sacco@state.ma.us, to the attention of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board.