CLOSURE OF MULTI-USE PASTURE/OFF LEASH AREA AT RANCHO SAN RAFAEL REGIONAL PARK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why is the multi-use pasture being closed?
A: The only source of irrigation for the Rancho San Rafael Regional Park multi-use pasture is the Highland Ditch (a diversion of the Truckee River), or rain/snow. The ditch is expected to be turned off at the beginning of May 2015. The ditch typically runs from May thru mid-October. It was turned on earlier this year in anticipation of extremely low flows in the spring. Washoe County has an obligation to preserve this resource into the future for the benefit of the community. Use of the pasture over the next couple of months will potentially impact the future use and enjoyment of this area for the long-term. Pastures do have the ability to go "summer dormant" in low water years. The pasture will come back relatively well next season if it is not disturbed or impacted during dormancy.

Q: Who decides when the ditch system is to be turned off?
A: The Federal Water Master makes this decision based on flows in the Truckee River system.

Q: Can't Washoe County utilize overhead sprinklers or other sources of water to irrigate the pasture?
A: No. Currently the only source of irrigation for the pasture is the Highland Ditch. Installing a more traditional irrigation system and using potable water would be a significant financial expense and the County does not have the financial resources to support that at this time.

Q: Why is the pasture such a valuable resource to the community?
A: The pasture at Rancho San Rafael is an extremely valuable resource and exemplifies the rich cultural and historical heritage of our community. Prior to being a park, Rancho San Rafael was an actual working Ranch that was eventually purchased by the citizens of Washoe County to preserve the ranching heritage for generations to come. In the past, the pastures were used as a cattle and hay operation with local ranchers paying the county to graze their herd and cut the grass hay. More recently the pastures still produce a hay crop which a rancher cuts towards the end of August.

Q: Will the pasture be closed to dogs only or all activities? Will the Balloon Race still be able to take place?
A: The pasture will be closed to all uses, with the exception of a Cyclocross event and the Great Reno Balloon Race. Washoe County is actively working with these two important community organizations to ensure that the events can still occur, while providing minimal impact to the area as possible. We will continue to work with these groups to address any revegetation or further restoration needed.

Q: Will the trail system still be accessible? Where should I park to access the trail system?
A: Yes. While trail access through the pasture will be fenced off with the closure, you will still be able to easily access the trail system from the west and east sides of the pasture. Parking will be available from the Coleman Street entrance at the Highland parking lot or in front of the Wilbur D. May Museum.

Q: How long will the pasture be closed?
A: In order to maintain the pasture into the future, it will be closed to public use, including off-leash dogs, for the remainder of the summer and possibly into the fall and winter depending on the water situation. Washoe County understands this will be an inconvenience for the many people who use the pasture; however, for their long term viability, this is the best option.

Q: Where else can I take my dog off leash? Can I go in other areas of the park?
A: While the pasture closure is an unfortunate situation, it can also provide a chance for people and their pets to find new places within the Truckee Meadows and surrounding areas to enjoy. The remaining portions of Rancho San Rafael will remain open to on-leash dog walking except for the Arboretum area where dogs are not, and haven't been, permitted.

There are other off-leash options in the area including:

- Virginia Lake Park Dog Park, 1980 Lakeside Dr., Reno, NV 89509
- Whitaker Park Dog Park, 550 University Terrace, Reno, NV 89503
- Sparks Marina Park Dog Park, 300 Howard Dr., Sparks, Nevada 89434
- Link Piazzo Dog Park at Hidden Valley Regional Park, Parkway Dr., Reno, NV 89502