

SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

24 FEBRUARY 2016

AGENDA ITEM D3

NGAWI AND NGAWI SURF BREAK: DOGS IN FREE CAMPING AREAS

Purpose of Report

To report on the findings of an informal survey of users and then discuss the current prohibition on dogs within the free camping sites particularly those located on the Ngawi and Ngawi Surf Breaks reserves. A decision on whether the current policy should stay in place or be changed for future seasons, is then required.

Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Council:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Resolve that no change be made to the current policy which prohibits dogs in the Ngawi and Ngawi Surf Breaks reserves, or*
3. *Resolve to allow dogs in the Ngawi and Ngawi Surf Breaks reserves and determine which of the following site specific conditions should apply:*
 - a) *Dogs are on a leash at all times within the camp ground;*
 - b) *Dogs are accompanied at all times (not left alone on the campsite while the owner is elsewhere);*
 - c) *Sufficient food, water and shelter is available;*
 - d) *Sufficient space between dogs and neighbouring campers;*
 - e) *Dog excrement is cleaned up and disposed of correctly;*
 - f) *No aggressive dogs allowed on the campsite;*
 - g) *Dog owners must obtain a permit from the Council before taking any dog onto a campsite and*
 - h) *The setting aside of specific sites for use by campers bringing a dog.*

1. Background

Over the last 3 summer seasons Council has been operating an extended coastal ranging service. This has resulted in some "tensions" around the

enforcement of the no dogs in the designated free camping areas, particularly at the Ngawi and Ngawi Surf Breaks sites.

Firstly, locals who often let their dogs "roam" have come under scrutiny as this means that their dogs are not deemed to be under lawful control. Consequently, the coastal ranger has been acting to ensure that dogs in public places (including the free camping areas) are under lawful control. This has led some locals to strongly challenge this enforcement.

Second, and at the same time, quite a few people who want to take advantage of the free camping areas, but who own a dog and wish it to accompany them, have not been able to use these sites.

In both cases the current prohibition on dogs is seen as the problem.

2. Discussion

2.1 The current policy and rules were introduced several years ago when problems with dogs on the free camping sites arose. It is fair to say that since then there have been few dog related problems. In addition staff find that the rather "black and white" form of the current structure is easy to enforce, as there is little room for interpretation and therefore debate.

Due to this background, the coastal ranger has however been subject to ongoing difficulties in trying to persuade local dog owners to keep their dogs under lawful control and off the areas set aside for free camping where dogs are prohibited.

2.2 The ranger has also faced angst from campers who have arrived and set up, but with a dog present. These people are asked to leave the camping sites and this has caused some upset, even though the coastal ranger operates the rules in a quite flexible way (will give campers sufficient time to decamp if required etc).

Lastly on this second aspect, a number of dog owning and potential campers have contacted Council to express the view that it is unfair and unnecessary to exclude them, as their dogs are not a danger in any sense, nor will they cause any other problems.

2.3 Towards the end of last season (2014-15) and during last year approaches have been made to Councillor Jephson and Council generally, to request a change in the current regime

For instance locals have now requested that a change be made, in consequence of a meeting held with Councillor Jephson on Friday 29 January 2016. In addition a letters from dog owners (e.g. Shavorne Simmonds – Appendix 2) have been received formally asking for the current rules to be changed.

2.4 To provide some information on attitudes of people staying at the free camping sites an informal survey was undertaken over this summer. The number of campers who agreed to participate was however small, with only 15 responses out of all campers (i.e. total camper sites 247; Ngawi/Ngawi Surf Break 159). The survey is therefore only indicative.

Approximately 40 campers actively declined to participate while other campers were not present to approach when the coastal ranger was checking a site (away at beach etc).

Of the 15 campers who did participate, there was a 70% agreement that campers dogs should be allowed. This agreement was however subject to a series of strong conditions (see Appendix 1).

2.5 Officers are of the view that the current rules are straight forward and therefore easily understood and enforced and in an ideal world be retained as is. However officers also recognise that there may be a number in the community, including current campers, who feel that they are no longer appropriate and so the rules should be reviewed.

Should Council decide to change the current rules then the Camping in Coastal Areas Bylaw 2009 (as amended in 2013) will need to be changed. The reference to a ban on dogs for the Ngawi and Ngawi Surf Breaks sites in Schedule 2 at least would need to be removed, and any site specific conditions agreed by Council would need to be included. If a change is desired, a report will be prepared along the lines of the resolution made by Council for consideration at the next meeting of Council.

3. Conclusion

Concerns have been raised on and off by locals and visitors, including potential visitors to Councils free camping sites on the south coast (and to a much lesser extent other sites). A decision is required as to whether to continue with the current rules or not.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 –Survey Results

Appendix 2 – A Letter of Complaint

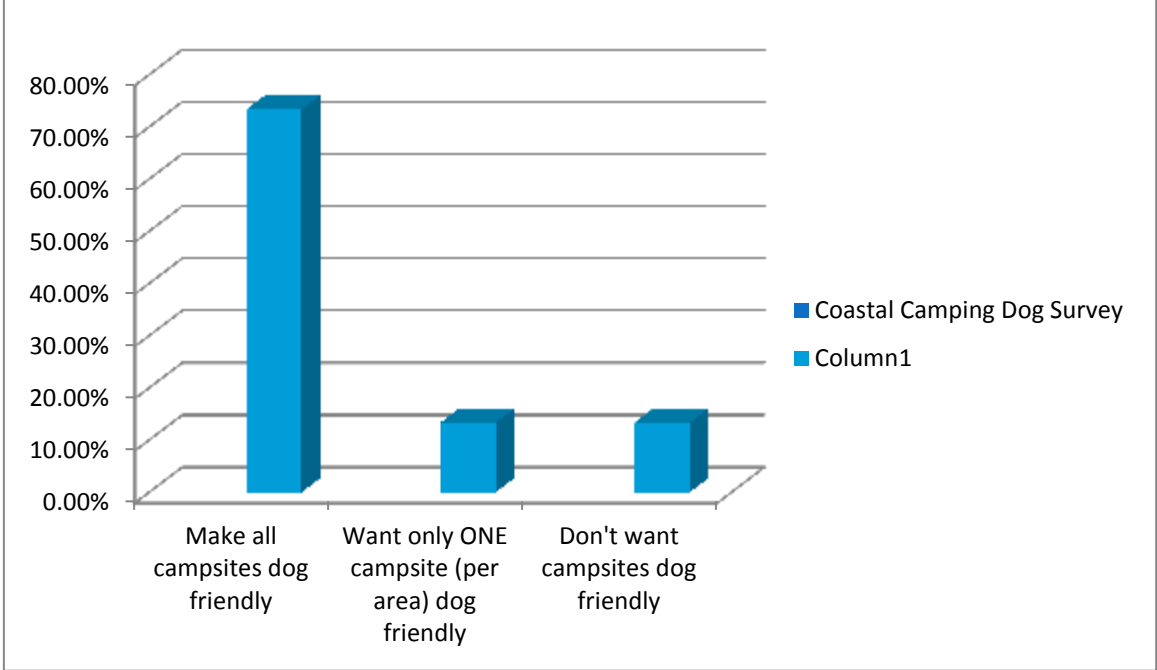
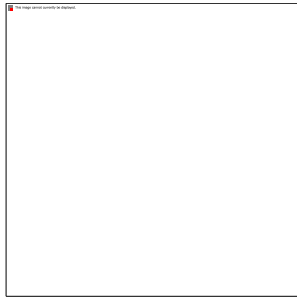
Reporting and Contact Officer: Murray Buchanan, Group Manager,
Planning and Environment

Appendix 1 – Survey Results

Informal Coastal Camping Dog Survey

Findings 2015/2016 Season

1. Nine campers would like dogs to be allowed on the campsite, under the following conditions;
 - Dogs are on a leash at all times within the camp ground
 - Dogs are accompanied at all times (not left alone on the campsite while everyone is on the beach)
 - Sufficient food, water and shelter is available
 - Sufficient space between dogs and neighbouring campers
 - Dog excrement is cleaned up and disposed of correctly
2. One camper preferred dogs to be allowed, under the following additional condition;
 - No aggressive dogs allowed on the campsite
3. One camper preferred dogs to be allowed on the campsite, with the following additional condition;
 - Dog owners must obtain a permit from the Council before taking any dog onto a campsite
4. Two campers preferred one of the campsites in each area to allow dogs, with the additional condition;
 - Policing at all times
5. Two campers did not want dogs to be allowed on any of the campsites because they were concerned about;
 - the breeds and types of dogs
 - safety of campers
 - the mess that the dogs will create



Appendix 2 – A Letter of Complaint

29.08.2015

Mrs Shavorne Simmonds

53 North Street

Greytown

Wairarapa 5712

Phone 0273603086



Dear Adrienne Staples,

I am writing concerning the issue of the NO DOGS ALLOWED signs in the South Wairarapa Camp grounds not only at Ngawi, but all the camp grounds.

I am a responsible rate payer & registered dog owner, who gladly pays fees every year.

My family and I have been camping at Ngawi for many years on our free weekends and now feel we are not welcome as we always take our family pet with us.

My Husband & I went up North not long ago and found every town welcoming with a dog friendly area to camp, all these campgrounds were nearly full. (Signed: Dog Friendly Camping, dogs must be on a lead).

I think the SWDC region is only unwelcoming place we have come across and this needs to be addressed.

SWDC are missing out on potential tourists to our beautiful region with their family pet. (Who may spend money in our region).

After talking with Murray Buchanan a few weeks ago, it has only left me feeling more frustrated as his solution is to park by the lighthouse, which is not an option as it is too hard and dangerous to get a 9metre bus with a boat on the back, around Kupaes Sail narrow single lane road.

Murray also said we could park on the roadside anywhere (Its Legal and we cannot be fined). But we are not allowed dogs in any Council reserve.

We love the township of Ngawi as we have friends and family out here but they have limited room or are hill side, so no room for parking.

I don't think the residents of Ngawi would be happy with a 9metre bus plus boat parked in front of their home obscuring their sea view and encroaching on their privacy, considering there is a camp ground across the road.

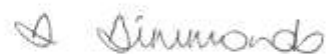
My elderly parents also camp with us in their campervan with their small dog and need to be close to council facilities.

I do realise there are a few bad dog owners (Penalise or fine them), but there are a lot of responsible dog owners, like me who feel like we have been penalised.

I would appreciate a full plan of the council land & area of Ngawi of where we are allowed to park with our little dog and if you could please help me come up with a practical solution to this issue.

Kind Regards

Shavorne Simmonds

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S Simmonds". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.