

OFF-LEASH AREA USER STUDY:

CHERRY CREEK STATE PARK

Conducted for:

Colorado State Parks

Research by:

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Business Research Division at the Leeds School of Business (BRD) was asked by Colorado State Parks to conduct a survey of visitors who use the off-leash dog-walking areas at two Colorado state parks, Chatfield and Cherry Creek. The survey assessed the conditions at the parks in April, May, and June 2008. This report addresses the survey responses from the Cherry Creek off-leash area.

METHODOLOGY

The BRD research team worked with Colorado State Parks to design the survey instrument. Based on feedback from parks staff, the survey was revised and finalized. It was determined that the survey would be administered by park volunteers. The BRD team members conducted a training session with a number of the volunteers in order to facilitate a smooth, consistent surveying process. As the surveys were completed by the park volunteers, they were mailed to the BRD for data entry and analysis. The data were double entered to verify accuracy and analyzed.

SURVEY RESULTS

This section explores the survey findings. A total of 139 surveys were gathered from the Cherry Creek off-leash dog-walking area. Surveying was carried out on weekdays and weekends and throughout the day to ensure that an adequate representation of all visitors was obtained.

Respondent Demographics

- Of the 139 surveys completed, nearly 62% of the respondents were females. Males contributed roughly 35%, and 4% of the surveys were completed by a multigendered group of respondents.
- Approximately 44% of respondents visited the dog area with one dog. Another 42% had two dogs. Just over 12% of respondents had three or more dogs with them.
- Forty-eight percent of respondents were between 35 and 54 years of age. People over 55 composed 28% of respondents. Twenty-three percent of respondents were between 25 and 34. Only 1% of responses came from people 20-24 years old. No respondents were younger than 19.

- The majority (62%) of respondents were at the dog park alone. An additional 30% were in a group size of two. Roughly 8% of responses came from groups comprised of three or more members.
- Respondents traveled from varying distances to enjoy the park. Approximately 63% traveled 5 miles or less, and nearly 30% traveled between 6 and 10 miles. The remaining 8% journeyed 11 miles or more.
- The majority of respondents are frequent visitors to the park. The most common visiting pattern for respondents was 2-3 times per week (35%). Nearly 23% said they visit the park 6-7 times per week. Another 21% of respondents visit 4-5 times per week. Approximately 20% visit the park 1 or fewer times per week.
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents hold yearly passes to the park.

Experience at Area

Generally, respondents have a very positive perception of the off-leash area’s level of safety for dogs. More than 61% said it is “very safe” and another 36% categorized the area as “safe.”

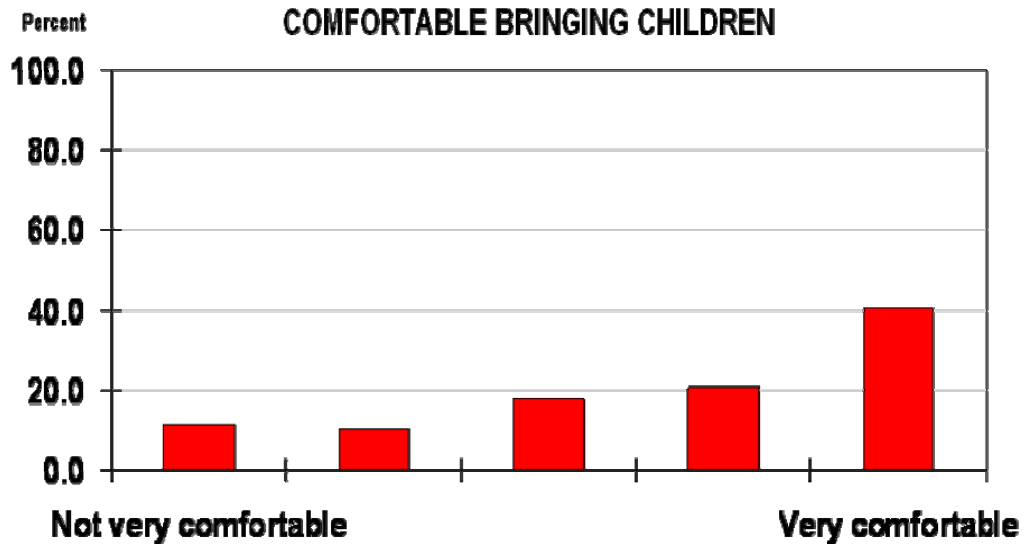
Additionally, respondents indicated that they felt the area is safe for people, with 68% responding that the area is “very safe” and another 25% reporting that it is “safe.”

SAFETY OF OFF-LEASH AREA^a

	Not Very Safe	←—————→			Very Safe
Safety for dogs	0.7%	0.0%	2.2%	36.0%	61.2%
Safety for people	0.7%	1.4%	4.3%	25.2%	68.3%

^aPercentage of respondents indicating rating.

Responses were slightly less positive when visitors were asked how comfortable they would be bringing small children into the area. Approximately 41% said they were “very comfortable” and roughly 21% indicated they were “comfortable.” Nearly 18% said they would be neutral in bringing children to the area (they chose “3” on a 5-point scale). Over 21% indicated that they were “not very comfortable” or “uncomfortable.”



An overwhelming majority of those surveyed, 91%, said that limiting the number of dogs per owner would not improve their experience.

The survey asked respondents whether they had experienced or witnessed any conflicts in the park on the day they were surveyed, as well as within the past year. The most frequent type of conflict witnessed on the day the survey was conducted was between dogs, with 8.6% of respondents witnessing such conflicts. Conflicts between dogs and people, dogs and horses, dogs and wildlife, dogs and bicyclists, and dogs and fishermen, and between dog owners were all experienced or witnessed by less than 3% of respondents.

Over the course of the year the likelihood that a respondent had experienced or witnessed a conflict of these sorts increased. In the past year, nearly 48% witnessed conflict between dogs, 20% between dogs and horses, 16% between dog owners, 11% between dogs and people, and 7% between dogs and bicyclists. Only 3% witnessed conflicts between dogs and wildlife.

CONFLICT WITNESSED IN THE OFF-LEASH AREA

	Dogs and People	Dogs and Horses	Dogs and Other Dogs	Dogs and Wildlife	Dogs and Bicyclists	Dog Owners	Dogs and Fishermen
Percent witnessed on day surveyed	2.2%	0.7%	8.6%	0.0%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%
Percent witnessed in the past year	10.8%	20.1%	47.5%	2.9%	7.2%	15.8%	0.0%

Overall, respondents view the park very favorably. When asked to rate the quality of their experience, 74% rated it “excellent,” and 22% rated it “good.” In addition, more than 80% of respondents indicated that this dog area is “better than most” other dog areas. Less than 1% rated it as “not as good as most,” while 16% only visit this area.

RATING OF OFF-LEASH AREA EXPERIENCE

	Poor	←—————→			Excellent
Percent indicating rating	0.7%	0.0%	2.9%	22.3%	74.1%

OFF LEASH AREA COMPARED TO OTHERS

	Better than Most	Average	Not as Good as Most	Only Area I Visit	First Visit
Percent indicating response	80.4%	2.2%	0.7%	15.9%	0.7%

Respondents with a yearly pass were asked the importance of various factors in buying the pass. Not surprisingly, 97% indicated that the dog park was “very important.” Approximately 20% said the bike trails were “very important,” while the prevalence of wildlife was “very important” to 39%. An area to ride horses was very important to 15% of respondents. Responses mentioned most frequently in the “other” category were fishing to just being outside.

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS FOR PURCHASING YEARLY PASS

	Not Important	←—————→			Very Important
Dog park	0.8%	0.0%	1.7%	0.8%	96.7%
Bike trails	43.4	11.5	13.3	12.4	19.5
Prevalence of wildlife	23.0	4.4	10.6	23.0	38.9
Area to ride horses	67.0	7.1	8.0	2.7	15.2

Visitors to the off-leash areas also visit other Colorado state parks, with 68% indicating that they visit more than just the off-leash areas.

Finally, respondents were asked what would make their experience at the off-leash area better. Responses were diverse, but a few major trends emerged. Those surveyed indicated that more trash cans and bags for picking up dog waste would be beneficial. Similarly, respondents suggested enforcing rules to pick up after dogs. In addition, respondents expressed interest in having flush toilets, more sitting areas, cleaner and better maintained water features, and an improved parking lot.