

RESPECT & RESPONSIBILITY ON FALMOUTH'S TRAILS



Falmouth's residents regularly enjoy over fifty-five miles of trail systems within our community. The following article is the first in a series exploring the role that we, as stewards of these public spaces, can play as responsible and respectful citizens to ensure that trail use in Falmouth is enjoyable and safe for everyone. This article first appeared in The Falmouth Focus in May 2021.

Tips for Dog Owners

By Amanda Stearns, Falmouth Open Space Manager

With dogs being a part of the family for so many, Falmouth offers many opportunities for on and off leash dog adventures. With this great privilege comes responsibilities. Fellow users deserve our respect and count on us to be responsible for our dogs. Your dog relies on you to train them, keeping them out of harm's way and from harming others.

As the Open Space Manager and a dog owner, I advocate for responsible use of the trails with dogs. I encourage my fellow dog owners to follow basic rules and etiquette when out on the trails with their pet.

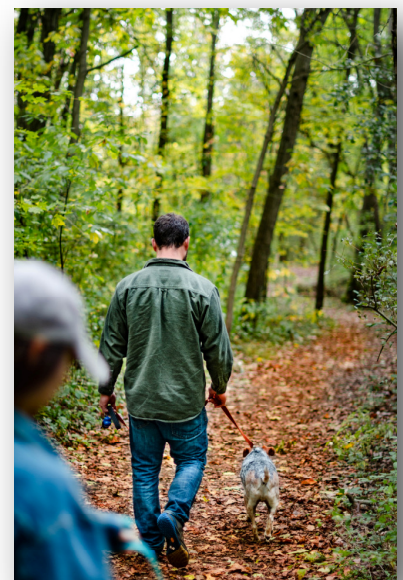
Restrictions on dogs

- Respect the seasonal and year-round restrictions on dogs. These rules are in place to protect wildlife. Hadlock Community Forest, North Falmouth Community Forest, and Suckfish Brook Conservation Area all have leash restrictions from April 1 through September 30. Dogs **MUST** be on leash during this time frame at these locations. River Point Conservation Area is closed to dogs year-round.
- Find a place that fits your criteria for dog walking. Information on all allowed trail uses can be found at: www.falmouthme.org/community-programs/pages/parks-and-public-lands

In the parking areas and near trailheads

- Obey the leash restrictions and leash your dog from the car to the 300 foot mark (marked on all trails where dogs are allowed). This keeps dogs and people safe in the parking lots and near the trailhead. Don't leave the car without a leash!!
- Pick up after your dog! All Town of Falmouth Parks and Open Spaces are "carry in/carry out" by ordinance. Don't leave the car without bags for your dog waste and if you use a bag, take it with you! Leaving your bags for someone to pick up is not cool. There is a plethora of dog waste in and around trailheads especially after the winter. This can be a health issue for both children and dogs. It is disrespectful to leave it for someone else to pick up.

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Tips for Dog Owners

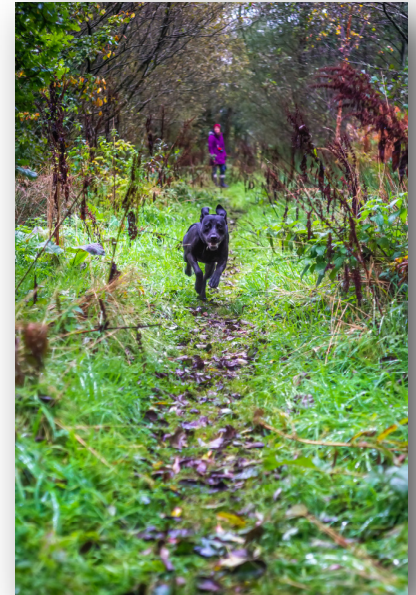
Greeting others on and off leash

- If you're a dog owner that allows your dog off leash, you are responsible for controlling your dog so that it does not rush up to other people and/or dogs. You may think your dog is friendly, but some people are afraid of dogs. Some dogs are old, fearful of other dogs, recovering from injuries or just don't like other dogs. They have a right to be on the trails too.
- If you do not have a recall to call your dog back you can teach them one! There are lots of great resources on YouTube and many great trainers in the area. A dog without a recall is an accident waiting to happen. Please reach out to me at: openspace@falmouthme.org if you are interested in recall training. It can be a life saver. We are considering holding a seminar if enough are interested.
- If you have a dog that is "dog reactive," keep it leashed or muzzle train it. Nobody wants a dog fight. If your dog is human reactive, it should be muzzled too.
- Always be prepared to leash your dog. Everyone should have an expectation that they will leash their dog if asked to do so by another trail user. Remember, there are many good reasons why someone might not want an unleashed dog near them or their own pet.



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- Respect other users. If you encounter other parties without dogs or on bikes, leash up your dog or heel them to avoid unwanted greetings.
- Be your own advocate. It is okay and helpful to let oncoming people know your situation and what you want or need. You can try some of these announcements as you near another dog owner:
 - * "Please leash your dog, we are training,"
 - * "My dog doesn't like other dogs," (or is sick or afraid of other dogs), or
 - * "I'm afraid of dogs jumping on me, could you leash yours, please."Just keep it short, to the point, and above all, polite.

Remember

The more polite dog owners are with all other users, the more likely our privilege of having our dogs in open space will continue. Many communities around us are struggling with these issues as well and some have enacted more stringent regulations regarding dogs. Let's not have this happen in Falmouth. We want all our residents, including our canine ones, to enjoy our trail system to its fullest.