

POSITION PAPER (Proposed and Posted By John Russell 29/8/2017)

BOI WATCHDOGS

DOGS AND BEACHES

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to set out a policy, relating to dogs on beaches which is acceptable to dog owners in the Bay of Islands.

PREAMBLE

Beaches are a SHARED public resource. They are shared by wildlife, in particular shorebirds, kiwis, as well as predators in the form of rats, stoats, hedgehogs, and avian predators in the form of black backed gulls and eagle hawks. They are also shared by people, and people with dogs.

Since time immemorial people have used beaches to exercise their dogs. This practice has formed a very important part of the ordinary enjoyment of life for many, many people and their dogs. It is important for the health and well being of dogs, as they are running animals, and need places in which they can run. It is also good for people. There is compelling evidence that people with dogs are healthier, and live longer, than those without.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

An acceptable policy would be one which:

- finds the most accommodating balance between these sometimes competing uses.
- is simple and easily understood.
- avoids an overly prohibitory stance to any particular user. Prohibitory approaches cause bad feeling; can lead to covert or open disobedience, on the part of the user prohibited; and spying and heavy handedness on the part of the prohibiting authority. They can also be expensive in enforcing compliance.
- supports and encourages local, co-operative approaches to the protection of wildlife. Dog owners are overwhelmingly wild life and nature loving people, and they regularly walk on beaches. In a co-operative milieu, dog owners can perform an important role in monitoring wild life.
- is tough on delinquent dog owners.

POLICY OPTIONS

1. Share beaches on a time basis. That is, dog owners may exercise their dogs at a certain time of the day, say before 9.30 am and after 4.00 pm. This (generally) allows dog owners access to the ENTIRE beach within prescribed time periods. It does however, expose wildlife, and people who prefer not to be around dogs, to dogs, albeit at certain periods of the day. It can also become complicated and difficult to understand, particularly when seasons are added into the mix (witness the existing signs on Long Beach Russell)
2. Share beaches on a zoned basis. That is, a line is drawn separating the beach into two areas, one for dogs, and people (and other creatures) who do not mind being around dogs; and the other where dogs are prohibited. This approach is used in many parts of the world. It has several advantages, among these being that it is simple and easily understood; it guarantees people (and wildlife) in the non-dog zone that they should never have to suffer the presence of a dog; and it allows the dog zone to be available to people with dogs at all times of the day.