



Ted Pritchard / Herald Photo

Elaine Hart-Evans walks her dogs Mini and Jenny on a trail in Long Lake Provincial Park. Hart-Evans and with many other dog owners have used this popular trail system to walk their dogs since the closure of Point Pleasant Park in the aftermath of hurricane Juan.

With Point Pleasant Park closed until June, Haligonians will have to use a little more ingenuity — and gas — to find an open park. If you are looking for an alternative place to take your family and pets, here are a few suggestions:

QUICK WALKS

Halifax Citadel — A 15-minute walk around the loop of the national park. “It’s breathtaking,” says Tanya Taylor White, Parks Canada marketing manager. “A wonderful place with fantastic views where you can really get a feel for our city.”

Halifax boardwalk — This wide wooden path runs from the Casino almost all the way to Pier 21.

Dartmouth boardwalk — Another waterside walk, from the ferry terminal almost to the Canal Interpretive Centre.

Regatta Point Walkway — Winds around this community of townhouses, ending just before St. George’s Greek Orthodox Church.

QUICK DOG RUNS

Conrose Field — “A handy place to let your dog get some exercise,” says Halifax dog owner Joan Sinden.

Halifax Common — In the heart of the city, there are a few ball diamonds and paths to use here.

PARKS

Flinn Park — Some of the trees are down, but it's a large open space off Quinpool Road with playground and baseball triangle. Workers have removed fallen trees and just the stumps remain.

Frog Pond — Forest and shoreline minutes away from the Armdale Rotary on Purcells Cove Road. The body of water inside this park (and visible from the road) is indeed called Frog Lake. Area residents cleared this park themselves, but technically it's still shut, according to the municipality.

High Head — Out in Prospect.

Seaview Park — The only off-leash park in Halifax Regional Municipality.

York Redoubt — This national park is a "fantastic place that people could go and walk and enjoy nature," says Parks Canada's Tanya Taylor White.

Long Lake Provincial Park — A few minutes' drive from the rotary, the trail offers forest and waterside trails. Technically, the park is not open, says provincial spokeswoman Susan Mader Zinck, so dog walkers and hikers are using it at their own risk.

Smiley's Provincial Park — Toward Newport Corner, off Highway 14, Rawdon Hills. This park, 45 minutes outside Halifax, didn't get too much hurricane damage and is open to the public.

TRAILS

BLT Trail — Park in the Lakeside Industrial Park. The rail line that served Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea is now a hiking trail. "It's a little flat because, let's face it, it's a former train track," says dog owner Janet Chernin.

St. Margarets Bay — The site of another former rail line, this one winds around inlets and bays to Chester and offers spectacular views.

To make sure a park is open, check the municipal website at:
www.region.halifax.ns.ca/mediaroom/pressrelease/pr2003/031121firstparksopened.html Amy Pugsley Fraser

Unleash a park, dog owners howl

By [Amy Pugsley](#) Fraser / Staff Reporter

The closure of Point Pleasant Park has forced many people to discover new places for weekend walks and daily dog jogs.

But the fact that the Halifax park is off-limits until June, due to damage from hurricane Juan, also highlights the lack of places for dogs to run free, says a local dog owner.

"There are hundreds and hundreds of regulars at Point Pleasant Park, and now there is nowhere to go," Janet Chernin says. In hopes of helping speed up the process, Ms. Chernin organized a fundraising walk for dog owners - and their dogs - on Nov. 22 to the park from Gorsebrook Field. Participants raised \$9,000.

Their enthusiasm should demonstrate that Halifax Regional Municipality must give dog walkers an option, she says. "This is putting the onus on people who want to be law-abiding citizens to technically break the law."

A ticket for letting your dog off its leash in a restricted area could bring a fine of up to \$128 - a hefty price for a little fresh air and exercise.

The municipality registers about 7,000 dogs per year. Right now, their only legal option for a run off the leash is Seaview Park in north-end Halifax.

"It's just a little blip," Ms. Chernin says of the park under the A. Murray MacKay Bridge.

"It's fine for puppies, who all want to rough-house, but when you have 15 dogs milling around together, they feel crowded," she says.

The ball fields, which are open as off-leash areas from 6 to 10 a.m. daily, are providing a diversion for Joan Sinden and her dogs.

"I had no idea that there could be 20 dogs . . . down the street from where I live playing ball," she says. "It's kind of neat in that way, getting to know dogs in my own neighbourhood."

The municipality is soon likely to reopen a few more of its parks and ball fields, which will ease dog congestion somewhat.

On Tuesday, regional council will start the wheels rolling for ball fields to be open daily as off-leash areas through to 9 p.m.

It could take a while, though, because the proposal has to be passed as an amendment to the dog bylaw.

The ball-field option isn't good for everyone, Ms. Chernin says.

"Halifax Common has too much traffic and Gorsebrook Field is freezing because it gives a real wind-tunnel effect," she says.

"We're just numb when we're there."

Those places don't really offer good exercise for humans or dogs, she says.

But since hurricane Juan hit, she's found it hard to find trails and parks outside the city core.

"I'm spending a fortune in gas trying to find a place to take the dogs so they can run free."

Long Lake Provincial Park, which stretches between the St. Margarets Bay Road and Herring Cove Road, and the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea Trail have been her recent dog-walking destinations.

Visiting these new places only re-establishes her love for Point Pleasant Park, she says.

"Nothing is like the park, where they have land."

She's also afraid that there could be many more dogs where there weren't before. "If everyone starts going out there, then people are going to get snarky, because it's technically leash-on."

As well, all the provincial parks in the metro area - including Long Lake - are now closed.

"People aren't supposed to be using provincial parks that were affected by the hurricane right now, because we haven't been able to go in and clean them up yet," says Susan Mader Zinck, spokeswoman for the provincial Natural Resources Department.

"You're there at your own risk."

There could be loose branches or trees down that could create hazards, she says. Many other places in the municipality are also closed, but people are using them at their own risk, says Coun. Linda Mosher (Purcells Cove-Armdale).

Ms. Mosher has been taking her two dogs around Long Lake and the Frog Pond, but always with their leashes on. That's a philosophy she takes to heart.

"Multi-use parks should be kept on-leash," she says, pointing out that new ones should be created for off-leash.

She has her sights set on 21 hectares of municipal land on the Williams Lake Road across from Cunard Junior High.

"It would be perfect," she says.

"That way, everybody knows it's for a specified use (off-leash area) and there wouldn't be any conflict."

Before that happens, though, the whole area would require fencing and an environmental assessment, she says.

In the meantime, her phone has been ringing a lot with her residents' dog concerns.

"I've had numerous complaints from both sides of the issue," she says, describing the lack of places for dogs and the fears of residents when dogs are off their leashes.

Coun. Sue Uteck (Northwest Arm-South End) says she's also heard complaints from people who are fearful for their children's safety on the ball fields in her area.

"What we're asking for people to do is to go in by the baseball area or avoid the area where the

kids are walking - and have control of their dogs, obviously," she says.

The number of people using the fields has been posing a bit of a problem, Ms. Uteck says.

Dog owners are in a no-win situation, she says, herself the owner of a border collie named Whiskey (whom she is quick to point out she didn't name).

"This just goes to the whole issue that we need more off-leash parks."

But to get more areas set aside for dogs would mean amending the existing bylaw, which requires notice of motion, first reading and public hearing at separate council meetings.

In Dartmouth, there are no off-leash areas.

"The outcry has always been that Dartmouth has always had a leash bylaw and let's keep it that way," says Coun. Bruce Hetherington, chairman of the Harbour East community council, which oversees council districts on the Dartmouth side of the harbour.

"But if it changes, we'll talk about it again."

Allowing dogs to be off their leashes causes problems, he says.

"People aren't picking up after their dogs when they are allowed to run free, because they don't follow them," he says, adding that there are people who follow the rules.

"There's also the issue if a dog bumps up against a senior or a child playing . . . They could get hurt."

If the dogs are on a leash, they can remain under control, Mr. Hetherington says.

Leash on or off, the issue of where to take dogs during Point Pleasant Park's cleanup will be a challenge.

Joan Sinden is counting the days.

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