



Heal the Bay

# Dog Parks at Public Beaches

## Recommendations

Heal the Bay's recommendations for dog parks at public beaches.

1. The dog park must be located above the highest high tide line.
2. The dog park should be fully enclosed by fencing or other means to ensure dogs stay within the designated area.
3. The area should be clearly marked as a dog park so that tourists and other visitors will understand the area is a dog park.
4. Rules requiring the immediate clean-up of dog feces should be strictly enforced.
5. A routine maintenance program should be implemented to keep the designated area clean of dog feces and trash.

Heal the Bay recognizes the need for dog parks in highly urban Southern California. However, we believe that people are more likely to become ill after swimming at "dog beaches" or beaches that allow dogs to run and play in the surfzone or on areas of the beach that are subject to tides. Thus, Heal the Bay does not support dog beaches that allow dogs in the water or on any part of the beach that is subject to the tide.

Even if dog owners diligently remove dog feces, small amounts of fecal matter will remain on the sand and contaminate the water. Animal feces may carry viruses and other pathogens that may cause illness to exposed humans, especially in children. Children tend to play in the swash zone where fecal contamination is greatest; they tend to ingest more water than the average swimmer; and epidemiological studies indicate that they are more susceptible to illnesses associated with swimming in water contaminated with fecal bacteria. Also, people with compromised immune systems, including the elderly, are also more susceptible to water-borne diseases

Heal the Bay's recommendations for dog parks located at public beaches (see sidebar on left) balances the need for such facilities in urbanized Southern California with protection of public health.