



Dog Policy As of May 20, 2020

As advocates for the outdoors and all things living, it comes as no surprise that as individuals, the staff and Board of the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes (NCSL) are big fans of dogs, cats, and other kinds of domestic animals. As an organization, we sometimes have to make decisions that at times contradict our personal feelings. One example is our “NO DOGS ALLOWED” policy which prohibits dogs on our trails, grounds and inside our building.

We know this policy can be controversial, and because we sincerely value our visitors, we feel obligated to explain our rationale, which hinges on our mission:

“The Nature Center at Shaker Lakes conserves a natural area, connects people with nature and inspires environmental stewardship.”

Being mindful of our mission, the NCSL Board of Trustees has determined:

- 1) By their very nature, dogs/pets can be a real threat to wildlife. Their presence on our trails and grounds can cause wildlife to take cover or leave the area. This in turn reduces the ability to observe and learn about nature while on the NCSL property, the very purpose for which these natural areas were established.
- 2) Dogs/pets leashed or unleashed may pose a threat to visitors on our trails, keeping in mind that our trails are frequented by young children, adults and senior adults. Because part of our mission is to conserve a natural area and connect people to nature, we are obligated to eliminate this threat.
- 3) Dogs/pets can introduce diseases, spread invasive plant species and interfere with our research on habitat restoration on our property.

The only exception to our policy is our allowance for service animals for persons with disabilities. The ADA requires facilities like the NCSL to allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into the building and our trails. As an institution which recognizes the importance of serving all members of our local and surrounding communities the NCSL welcomes visitors with service animals consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

A service animal is defined as a dog or animal that is individually trained to perform tasks or do work for the benefit of a person with a disability. The tasks or work the animal does must be directly related to the person’s disability.

These laws do not cover pets or animals that are considered “therapy” or “emotional support” animals. Animals that provide a sense of safety, companionship, and comfort to those with psychiatric or emotional conditions, are not protected or covered under the law.

We hope that this policy is not perceived as unfriendly towards dogs/pets and their owners, and we regret the inconvenience it may cause. We hope that you, as an animal lover, will understand and fully cooperate with this policy. As a reminder, dogs are allowed on leash within the surrounding Shaker Parklands.