



Media Release

15 October 2020

Dogs prohibited at Woodman Point beach from 21 October to protect nesting shorebirds, but more dog-friendly spaces planned

Dogs will be prohibited at Woodman Point beach from 21 October, following Cockburn Council's adoption of the Animal Management and Exercise Plan 2020-2025 (AMEP).

Dogs will no longer be allowed at Woodman Point beach from Ammunition Jetty heading south around the Woodman Point headland to where the dog beach begins at Jervoise Bay.

The AMEP still enables about 40 per cent of Cockburn's coast to be accessible to dogs, plus the provision of more off-leash dog exercise areas at large public open spaces, and two new dog parks in the future

During preparation of the AMEP, Council requested an independent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The EIA found that continuing to allow dogs at the beach would adversely impact the area's nesting shorebirds, including federally protected species that migrate annually from the northern hemisphere.

The EIA found making the beach a 'no dog' area would provide a safe refuge with conservation benefits for vulnerable Fairy Terns, shorebirds, seabirds and other native species.

Extensive public consultation during the Plan's preparation also found the community overwhelmingly objected to the Woodman Point beach being accessible to dogs, due to concerns for the area's shorebirds.

A proposal for the beach to be accessible to dogs was also rejected by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Birdlife Australia, the Conservation Council of WA, Native ARC Inc, the Department of Local Government, Sport & Cultural Industries, and the Woodman Point Regional Park Community Advisory Committee.

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The main reasons why Woodman Point is prohibited to dogs include:

- The Woodman Point shorebird population may be adversely affected by the loss of breeding, roosting and foraging habitat, increased predation and increased disturbance causing the site to be unsuitable for nesting, breeding and feeding
- Impacts with significant potential to modify, destroy, remove or decrease the shorebird habitat or its quality will trigger referral of the area's use as a dog beach to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Breaches can result in civil or criminal penalties
- The possibility of a dog attack increases public safety issues, and the area's isolation poses access difficulties for emergency vehicles
- Dogs off-leash are incompatible with recreational activities associated with the Woodman Point Recreation Camp, and the State Government's Woodman Point Regional Park Management Plan.

City of Cockburn Environment Manager Chris Beaton said the EIA cited scientific findings that walkers accompanied by dogs often evoked greater flight responses from shorebirds than walkers alone.

"The EIA cites research (Maguire, 2018) which shows that domestic dogs are known to chase adult shorebirds and beach nesting birds which can impact birds' ability to rest and seek food, and can lead to prolonged absences from eggs and chicks," Mr Beaton said.

"This suggests that dogs are seen by shorebirds as much more of a threat than people, as dogs are more likely to catch and kill them or their chicks."

Mr Beaton said there had been no record of breeding activity by Fairy Terns at Woodman Point in the last decade however the birds were still regularly sighted during the summer nesting period between October and March.

Fairy Terns are known to have nested in the Woodman Point area in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2007 and 2009.

Management of Perth metropolitan coastal areas to protect beach nesting shorebirds



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has resulted in improved breeding success.

At Rous Head in Fremantle, a Fairy Tern breeding sanctuary has resulted in successful annual breeding since 2013.

At the Point Walter spit, Fairy Tern breeding pairs increased from 70 in 2018 to 130 in 2019 when fencing was moved to enlarge the breeding area, decreasing disturbance to the roost.

Cockburn beaches accessible to dogs are:

- C. Y. O'Connor Beach in North Coogee, north of South Fremantle Power Station to the Catherine Point groyne
- Jervoise Bay Beach facing south to the Henderson shipbuilding area, accessible via Jervoise Bay Cove road.

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