



DOG POLICIES AT STATE PARKS AND MUNICIPAL BEACHES

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STATE PARK AND MUNICIPAL BEACH DOG POLICIES

Nearly all state parks, including those with beaches, allow dogs on the property provided they are on a leash. But dogs are not allowed in buildings, swimming areas, or state campgrounds. Most shoreline state parks restrict dogs to picnic areas or hiking trails.

Among the 24 shoreline municipalities with municipal beaches, 11 prohibit dogs, nine allow them during off-season months, three allow them only in specified areas, and one allows them on the beach year-round.

QUESTIONS

Which state parks, shoreline state parks, and municipal beaches allow dogs? How many dogs are licensed in Milford?

SUMMARY

According to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) [website](#), 106 of 107 state parks (and all 32 state forests) allow dogs that are on a leash. But, dogs are not allowed in buildings, swimming areas, or state park campgrounds. In addition, dogs are not allowed (1) in some state parks during certain times of the year or (2) at any time in Dinosaur State Park.

Among the eight shoreline state parks, seven allow dogs year-round, but four restrict them to certain areas (e.g., picnic areas or hiking trails). One, Sherwood Island, allows dogs only during off-season months. (For related information about pets in state parks, see OLR Research Report [2010-R-0435](#).)

Among the 24 shoreline municipalities with municipal beaches, only one allows dogs on its beach year-round (Essex Point Beach in Groton). Eleven prohibit dogs entirely, nine allow dogs during certain times of the year, and three allow them during any time of the year in specified areas (e.g., boardwalks, parking lots,

nature trails, or grass). The Department of Public Health’s regulations require municipalities and other entities (except the state) operating or maintaining a public swimming area to prohibit domestic animals from being in the water or on the immediate shoreline when the swimming area is open for use (Conn. Agencies Regs. [19a-36-B61](#), effective March 17, 2014).

State law generally requires each person who owns or keeps a dog to license it annually by June 30 in the town clerk’s office (CGS § [22-338](#)). According to the Milford town clerk, there are 2,165 dogs licensed in Milford for FY 2014.

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Tables 1 and 2 summarize the dog policies in the eight shoreline state parks and 24 shoreline municipalities with municipal beaches.

Table 1: Dog Policies at Shoreline State Parks

STATE PARK	YEAR-ROUND ACCESS (restrictions)	OFF-SEASON POLICY (dates)
Bluff Point	✓	
Farm River	✓	
Haley Farm	✓	
Hammonasset Beach	✓ (permitted only in picnic areas)	✓ (allowed on beach from November 1 through April 1)
Harkness Memorial	✓ (permitted in picnic and lawn areas, but not on the beach or in formal gardens)	
Rocky Neck	✓ (permitted on hiking trails and in picnic areas north of train tracks, but not in campground, south of train tracks, or on the beach or boardwalk)	
Sherwood Island		✓ (allowed October 1 through April 14)
Silver Sands	✓ (permitted in picnic areas, but not on the beach or boardwalk)	

Source: DEEP State Park and Forest Map

Table 2: Dog Policies at Municipal Beaches

MUNICIPALITY	YEAR-ROUND ACCESS (restrictions)	OFF-SEASON POLICY (dates)	ACCESS PROHIBITED
Branford		✓ (Mid-October through mid-April; exact dates depend on maintenance work)	
Bridgeport			✓
Clinton			✓
Darien			✓
East Haven			✓
East Lyme		✓ (October 1 through the Friday before Memorial Day; not permitted on the Niantic Bay boardwalk)	
Fairfield		✓ (October 1 through March 31)	
Greenwich		✓ (December 1 through March 31)	
Groton (city)			✓
Groton (town)	✓		
Guilford			✓
Madison	✓ (restricted to parking lots and nature trails)		
Milford			✓
New Haven	✓ (restricted to grassy areas, not allowed on sand)		
New London			✓
Norwalk			✓
Old Lyme			✓
Old Saybrook		✓ (October 15 through May 1)	
Stamford			✓
Stratford		✓ (December 1 through March 31)	
Waterford		✓ (October 1 through May 31)	
West Haven	✓ (restricted to boardwalk)		
Westbrook		✓ (October 1 through April 30)	
Westport		✓ (October 1 through March 31)	

Sources: municipal ordinances and websites and a telephone survey of parks and recreation departments

HYPERLINKS

DEEP Policies,

http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2716&q=325094&deepNav_GID=1650,

last visited May 5, 2014.

DEEP State Park and Forest Map,

<http://www.depdata.ct.gov/maps/parksforests/parksmap.htm?deepNav=|>, last

visited May 5, 2014.

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