



County Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland

Department of Parks & Recreation



COUNTY PARKS & BETTERTON BEACH PET WASTE PROGRAM

Kent County has adopted a pet waste program to aid in the reduction of pollution in Kent County parks, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. The program follows guidelines recommended by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Why is Pet Waste a Concern in Kent County?

There are a lot of pets, producing a lot of waste, and while pet waste is not the most significant pollutant, it can contribute to pollution over time.

Why pick up after my dog? Won't the tide wash it away?

Dog waste may pose a health threat to swimmers, wildlife, and other dogs. It can pollute the water and lead to beach closures and a less than enjoyable recreation experience. In Kent County, NO pets are permitted on public bathing beach (sand) during public beach permit season (May-September). Pets must be leashed.

I only have a small dog, so it can't really harm the water, can it?

It can be hard to picture how a single dog depositing a small amount of waste can result in water pollution. However, studies have shown that the combined impact of all pets and wildlife within a watershed can be significant when it comes to water quality and human health.

Pet Waste is Natural

- However, efficient drainage systems and roads now make it easy for pet waste to reach beach waters.
- Waste left on the ground either passes through storm sewers untreated or washes directly into rivers and Chesapeake Bay.
- Pet waste is unpleasant and can pose health risks when left on beaches or in parks.
- To make sure your pet isn't contributing to the problem, always clean up after your pet and deposit waste in an appropriate manner.

Be Aware

- When animal waste ends up in the water it decomposes, using up oxygen. During summer months, low dissolved oxygen levels harm fish and other aquatic life.
- If evidence that disease-causing bacteria and viruses is found during routine water testing, Betterton Beach may be closed. Pet waste can be a cause of test results that closes the beach.
- The majority of water pollution comes from small sources - especially at the household level.
- All towns in Kent County have "pooper scooper" ordinances that require pet owners to pick up and remove fecal matter from public property. Fines can be imposed on those caught violating these laws.

Help Kent County Stop Pointless Poo-llution

Studies have found that roughly 40 percent of Americans don't pick up their dogs' waste. You can help by picking up after your dog 100 percent of the time. Below are some tips on what you can do to help keep Kent County waters, parks, and residential properties clean and healthy:

- Always clean up after your dog on walks and remind your neighbors and friends to do the same.
- Don't wait to scoop in your own yard - keep an eye out and scoop immediately.
- Take multiple bags on walks, just in case.
- Throw out pet waste using a bio-degradable bag OR flush waste down the toilet (where it will eventually end up in a wastewater treatment plant).
- Do NOT throw dog waste in a compost bin.

Do More to Protect Betterton Beach and Kent County Parks

- Always carry a plastic bag to pick up your pet's waste.
- Do not throw pet waste near a storm drain; use a trash can. Pet waste can also be flushed down a toilet, but please don't flush the bag.
- Make sure to dispose of pet waste in a sealed bag so it doesn't spill during trash collection.
- Obey the rules:
 - ~Per Kent County Public Law (Section 64 - Domestic Animals), all dogs shall be kept under restraint. Animal owners shall be responsible for the removal of any excrement deposited by the animal. Violations will result in fines of not more than \$400.
 - ~Per Betterton Beach regulations, NO pets are permitted on public bathing beach (sand) during public beach permit season (May-September).

Quick Tips

- Reuse old bags - grocery, sandwich, produce and bread bags to pick up and contain pet waste.
- Keep a supply of bags near your dog's leash.
- Tie bags onto the leash if you don't have a pocket or pack.

Questions?

- If you have questions or would like additional information about Kent County's pet waste program please call 410-778-1948 or email info@KentParksAndRec.org.

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