

Local pet-friendly places in short supply

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Viewpoints

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A recent letter writer opined that there are “plenty of places for people to take their dogs” (“Going to the dogs,” June 8). Could he please let me know where they are? He must be thinking of the Bark Park in Fort Walton Beach, the new subdivision in Freeport that has its own dog park, or perhaps St. George Island. But those aren’t in Bay County.

Nope, here in Bay County, all of our public recreational spaces — paid for and maintained with tax dollars — are off-limits to dogs, leashed or not. Our county and city parks, with the notable exception of a small area at Pier Park in Panama City Beach, are off limits to taxpayers with dogs. So are our beaches, our boat ramps and our outdoor dining establishments.

The News Herald’s recent Web poll showed that roughly two out of three citizens in this community agree that dogs should be allowed on Shell Island. More than 2,000 people in this community have signed a petition asking for dog friendly recreational areas. Now, I don’t play soccer or baseball or football, and I don’t use the public piers. I don’t use the boat ramps at Deer Point Lake, and I don’t use the playground equipment at our area parks. And I don’t begrudge the people who do use those facilities, financed in part by my tax dollars.

What I do begrudge is the temerity of fellow taxpayers who would say that my tax dollars don’t count because I’d rather play fetch with my dog than fish from a pier. There should be dog-friendly areas in every city, county and state recreational area in this county. It’s what the majority of people want in this community, and that should count for something.

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