



Muriel Bowser  
Mayor

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Department of Parks and Recreation



Delano Hunter  
Director

June 11, 2021

Dear Francis Field Stakeholders,

Thank you for your continued advocacy in support of Francis Field. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of our parks in supporting the health and well-being of our communities. As such, we continue to experience increased demand and usage across our inventory.

Maintaining a grass field in an urban environment presents many challenges. The current usage patterns at Francis are not conducive to a quality natural grass surface that meets the needs of the community. Francis Field is used by various stakeholders, including community members, organized sports groups, school children, and dog owners. Dog usage poses the most significant risk to the condition of the field. Despite enforcement efforts, we recognize that entrenched patterns of behavior adversely impact the surface. Recently, DPR posted new signage (see attachment) to reinforce the standing policy that pets are prohibited. Additionally, the signs inform owners that pet waste is harmful to the health of users. In the coming weeks, DPR will pilot the periodic deployment of Park Ambassadors at Francis Field to distribute literature with detailed information about applicable laws, fines, and health risks.

DPR believes that the following action items are necessary to improve the condition of the field. It is important to note that the National Parks Service (NPS) owns 46% of the property and must be a part of any plan.

**Upgrading Fencing and Gates-**Access to the field must be controlled by installing new fencing and lockable gates. DPR's permitting policies will control access to the field. DPR's [Priority of Use](#) protocol governs our permit issuance and would include priority access for School Without Walls at Francis Stevens and the Friends of Francis Field.

**Field Improvements and Periods of Rest-** Once meaningful change in field use and behavior is achieved, we then feel it is appropriate to invest in upgrading the field infrastructure. This work includes re-grading, sodding, irrigation, and the implementation of a field-use schedule that provides built-in periods of rest so that the field doesn't suffer from overuse and compaction, which ultimately leads to unsafe field conditions and potential injury.

**Maintenance Plan-** For natural grass athletic fields, a maintenance plan based on known best practices and the latest turf science that includes mowing, fertilization, irrigation, aeration, and overseeding will keep the grass healthy year-round and provide a safe playing surface throughout the season. A successful maintenance plan requires community support, as the field will be offline while each task is performed.

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**Expanding and Improving Existing Dog Park-** DPR believes it is necessary to expand the dog park and replace the existing surface with synthetic turf to attract increased dog usage. To move forward with this proposal, DPR will need community buy-in and support. This will include initiating discussions with the National Park Service, support of the ANC2A, Francis Field Dog Park Group, and the Friends of Francis Field.

I firmly believe that the action steps above will lead to a healthy, safe, and sustainable Francis Field. Again, we thank you for your continued collaboration. Please contact DPR Chief of External Affairs, Tommie Jones, at 202-431-8676 with all questions and comments.

Sincerely,



Delano Hunter  
Director  
DC Department of Parks and Recreation

cc: Councilmember Brooke Pinto  
ANC Commissioner Joel Causey  
Gary Griffiths, Friends of Francis Field  
Kip Smith, Athletic Director, School Without Walls- Francis  
Ward 2 MOCRS- Joe Florio and Anna Noakes  
Ella Faulkner, Deputy Director Administrative Services, DPR  
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