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## Proposed Amendment to Animal Control Bylaw – Northeast Swale – Ecological Core

### Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the proposed amendment to Animal Control, 1999, Bylaw No. 7860, prohibiting domestic animals from the Ecological Core of the Northeast Swale, be approved; and
2. That the City Solicitor be requested to make the necessary amendments to Animal Control, 1999, Bylaw No. 7860.

### Topic and Purpose

The Meewasin Valley Authority is requesting that domestic animals be prohibited from the Ecological Core of the Northeast Swale, which is located between the Aspen Ridge, Evergreen, Silverspring, and University Heights neighbourhoods.

### Report Highlights

1. The Meewasin Northeast Swale Master Plan (Master Plan) includes key ideas such as conserving biodiversity, supporting passive recreational activities, accommodating educational programming, and interpreting cultural and natural history.
2. The City Solicitor's Office will be requested to amend Animal Control, 1999, Bylaw No. 7860 (Animal Control Bylaw) to prohibit domestic animals from the Ecological Core of the Northeast Swale.

### Strategic Goal

This report supports the City of Saskatoon's (City) Strategic Goal of Environmental Leadership by supporting success drivers such as responsible land use and improving access to ecological systems and spaces, both natural and naturalized.

### Background

The Northeast Swale (Swale) is a diverse network of rare native prairie and wetlands approximately 26 kilometres long and covering 2,800 hectares. Three hundred hectares of this area fall within city limits and are bordered by the neighbourhoods of Aspen Ridge, Evergreen, Silverspring, and University Heights.

The Master Plan was developed by the Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin) in collaboration with the City to support conservation, education, and passive recreation while integrating this rare and natural area into the growing urban form. The intent of the Master Plan was that overall design ideas and recommendations be scalable for the remainder of the Swale and could be applied to similar sites beyond those that fall

within city limits. As noted within the Master Plan, dogs are detrimental to the land use and are not recommended within the Ecological Core of the Swale (see Attachment 1).

The Master Plan has now been endorsed by Meewasin and the City has a mutually accepted plan that outlines the framework for ongoing planning and development in the Swale.

## **Report**

### Master Plan

The Swale is unique locally and within the context of the greater prairie region. It has intrinsic value as a natural system, as urban ecological infrastructure, and as a significant neighbourhood, city, and provincial amenity. Ongoing protection, selective development, resource management, education, and conservation will support and enhance the area.

Prohibiting domestic animals in the Ecological Core of the Swale supports the goals of protecting and conserving the Swale. In general, research has shown that dog-free trails are protected from the demonstrated ecological impacts that dogs have on wildlife communities, including the following:

1. The presence of dogs along recreational trails correlate with altered patterns of habitat utilization by several wildlife species.
2. The scent of dogs could either displace or attract wildlife depending upon the perceived competition or threat dogs offer.
3. For wildlife populations, the greatest consequence of interactions with dogs may be diseases such as canine distemper and rabies, as dogs can act as a vector for the transmission of disease.

These factors reduce a natural area's carrying capacity for wildlife, and reduces wildlife viewing experiences and opportunities for visitors. Further to this, research has shown that the presence of people with dogs disturbs wildlife more than the presence of people alone. Allowing dogs to be present in the Ecological Core of the Swale is in direct conflict with the goals of the Master Plan.

It should be noted that while dogs and cats will be prohibited from the Ecological Core, they will be permitted along the periphery areas, specifically on the greenway pathways.

### Animal Control Bylaw

The Animal Control Bylaw contains a provision which prohibits cats and dogs from specific locations within city limits. The specific areas that are currently prohibited to cats and dogs are:

- a) Kiwanis Memorial Park;
- b) Kinsmen Park; and
- c) Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo.

Both Kiwanis Memorial Park and Kinsmen Park are prohibited areas. These parks are located along the river valley and attract a large volume of visitors throughout the year.

The pet-prohibiting provision for these parks eliminates potential problems that may arise from mixing pets with large gatherings of the general public at special events.

The Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo is also a prohibited area. Allowing cats and dogs at the Zoo would create unrest among the animals housed there. The pet-prohibiting provision also eliminates potential problems that may arise from mixing pets with large gatherings of people in the park.

Subject to City Council approval, the City Solicitor's Office will be requested to amend the Animal Control Bylaw to prohibit cats and dogs from the Ecological Core of the Swale. This prohibition would allow for enforcement of the Animal Control Bylaw by the City's appointed enforcement agency, the Saskatoon Animal Control Agency.

**Options to the Recommendation**

City Council could choose to not approve the proposed amendment. The Administration is not recommending this as permitting domestic animals in the Ecological Core of the Swale would significantly conflict with the desire to maintain the natural processes and biodiversity of the Swale.

**Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement**

No public or stakeholder involvement is required.

**Communication Plan**

Meewasin will be responsible for implementing the communication plan. As part of the communication plan, signs will be posted at key points of the Swale notifying people that domestic animals are not permitted within the Ecological Core.

**Other Considerations/Implications**

There are no policy, financial, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations.

**Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion**

The City Solicitor's Office will attend to any approved amendments to the Animal Control Bylaw.

**Public Notice**

Public notice, pursuant to Section 3 of Public Notice Policy No. C01-021, is not required.

**Attachment**

1. Meewasin Northeast Swale

**Report Approval**

Written by: Chelsie Schafer, Open Space Consultant, Recreation and Community Development  
Reviewed by: Lynne Lacroix, Director of Recreation and Community Development  
Approved by: Randy Grauer, General Manager, Community Services Department