

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

Construction under way on park for pooches

By Steve Ramirez/Sun-News reporter

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LAS CRUCES — Construction has begun on the first phase of the Las Cruces Dog Park.

Crews with Cupit Construction Co., of Las Cruces, have finished clearing land behind Meerscheidt Recreation Center where the city's first official off-leash dog park will be. The park, on Hermosa Street, across the street from Ralph Maag Park, is tentatively scheduled to open in May.

"How do I feel? I'm excited — very excited about this," said Reneé Waskiewicz, a dog owner who is also a member of the Las Cruces Dog Park Coalition. "I'm just so excited that Las Cruces is finally becoming more animal friendly. This is a first step in improving that, ...This is a long time in coming."

The park is being built with \$151,000 in state funds obtained by southern New Mexico legislators. But Las Cruces companies like Cupit Construction, Archer Farms, Ideals, Inc. and Gutierrez Landscaping all have donated time, materials and professional services to help the park become a reality.

Already, more than \$1,300 in private donations and other in-kind services have been provided for the dog park.

Waskiewicz said about 15 more trees are needed at the dog park, and donations are being accepted.

"Archer Farms has been just wonderful in giving us the trees we have so far," Waskiewicz said. "But we hope there's other residents out there who might want to contribute for a tree in honor of a pet or a family member. It's just heartwarming that the community has come together like it has to make this a wonderful place for dogs."

Some Las Cruces pet owners said a park specifically for dogs has been needed for years.

"All the city has had is that park across the street from Hermosa Heights (Elementary School)," said Leslie Coltraine, a Las Cruces dog owner who takes her dog to that park several times a week. "But I've got a fairly large dog and the park really isn't big enough for him to run around like he should. This new park will be better suited for him. I think he's going to like it a lot more."

The park will have structured rules for use and etiquette. The city's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will discuss those proposed policies at its next meeting, at 7 p.m. Feb. 26 in the Dresp Room of Branigan Memorial Library.

Ellen Mangan, a former coalition member, said Tuesday that efforts to build a dog park have been under way for more than two years.

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Pup park

- Located behind Meerscheidt Recreation Center, on Hermosa Street
- Being built on approximately two acres
- Cost is slightly more than \$151,000, and the money is coming from the state
- Donors to the park include Cupit Construction Co., Archer Farms, Ideals, Inc. and Gutierrez Landscaping.