

Dog park goes green: The scoop on composting pilot

By Eva Guenther



LYONS – Lyons’ residents love their dogs – but our four-legged companions leave behind more than muddy paw prints. A 50-pound dog generates approximately three-quarters of waste each day, roughly 270 pounds a year.

Most of it ends up in landfills in plastic bags, where it contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental pollution. Uncollected dog waste can wash into waterways like St. Vrain during storms, introducing bacteria and excess nutrients that degrade water quality and harm aquatic life.

To address these impacts, the Parks and Recreation Commission proposed a six-month dog waste composting pilot to the Board of Trustees, which was approved on February 17. The program is expected to launch in April.

“This is a simple idea that can make a real difference,” said Mike Jackson, Chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission and a local dog owner. “If we can turn thousands of pounds of dog waste from a landfill problem into something useful, that’s a win for our parks and our environment.”

When it is handled the right way, even something as unglamorous as dog waste can be transformed to something useful. With the right setup, generally a commercial composting facility, dog waste is safely broken down into a nutrient-rich soil amendment for trees, shrubs, flowerbeds and lawns. This process requires the use of fully compostable bags.

Unlike traditional plastic bags, which can linger in landfills for centuries and break down into microplastics, certified compostable bags are designed to break down in industrial composting systems within a defined timeframe into water, carbon dioxide, and organic material.

Lyons is building on the experience of other Front Range communities that have launched similar programs. Community members may have seen composting stations at Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks trailheads or at dog parks in Lafayette, Louisville, and Erie. Lyons will work with the same partners used by several Front Range communities. The waste from the Lyons dog park. The material will then be composted at a facility in Longmont through the Colorado EnviroWagg program.

What will the pilot look like in Lyons? To begin, the pilot will take place at the dog park in Bohn Park and run from April through September. If successful, the town may adopt it and

expand to other dog waste stations in Lyons. Visitors will see two clearly marked compost containers in the double-gated entrance area, replacing the current round trash bin. They will also see new light green, 100% compostable dog waste bags in the dispenser.

Dog owners must use the compostable bags provided and dispose of them in the compost bins. Pet Scoop will pick up the waste and transport it to the composting facility every week. Only dog waste and compostable bags can go in the bins – other waste will contaminate the compost. There will still be a can for “other” trash in the dog park. The Town will install a sign to remind friends of the dog park of the program and how it works. A tracker at the park will show how many pounds of waste are diverted from landfills each month during the six-month pilot.

Anybody interested can learn more about the program and get answers to questions at the Earth Day Event at Bohn Park on April 25, organized by the Sustainable Futures Commission. The Parks and Recreation Commission will have a table with information and fun facts, opportunities to take photos with dogs, stickers, and more for kids and adults. Stop by!

The pilot is expected to divert roughly 3,000 pounds of dog waste from landfills – a result that both dogs and their humans can feel good about. And while we are on the topics of dogs, it will soon be Discount Dog Days in Lyons during the month of April. The dog licensing fee is reduced to \$20 for the first dog, \$15 for each additional dog. Town of Lyons dog licenses expire each year on April 30th and need to be renewed annually. The fee helps fund dog waste bags provided across town as well as maintenance of the dog park. Visit www.townoflyons.com/dog to learn more.

Eva Guenther is a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. She enjoys visits to the dog park with her dog Momo, a black lab mix. She also serves on the Board of LEAF. For her day job she works in global operations and strategy.