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KSWB

Dog owners, boaters face off over Fiesta Island

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SAN DIEGO

A pricey redevelopment plan for Fiesta Island pits animal lovers against boaters and may dramatically reduce the size of a popular dog park.

The parcel is about 90 acres in size and is fenced in, but the area fronts a portion of Mission Bay where paddlers and other water enthusiasts say is the cleanest in the area because it's close to the mouth of the ocean, and since they're going in the water, they believe they should have access to it.

"Fiesta Island is for everybody to use," said Mary Kay Schmidt of Hanohano Outrigger Canoe Club. "It actually doesn't belong to the dog owners or the dog walkers."

So, while one group wants to run their dogs free on land, the other group wants to build a road through the middle of it, dividing the space in two, and build an activities center and storage facility for their boats on one side.

"We want an area that allows us to have parking and a place to put our canoes - they are rather large," said Schmidt. "We need to be able to get to the water easily because they're very heavy."

But the non-profit group F.I.D.O. (Fiesta Island Dog Owners) disagrees.

"Then they can go to Mariner's point," said F.I.D.O. spokesperson Carolyn Chase. "And if it's really an issue about water pollution and issues like that, there are better places than the location that they're choosing."

Off-leash dog use was established by a city ordinance in 1972 when dogs were banned from all other city beaches except Dog Beach in Ocean Beach and at Fiesta Island.

"The solution is to have two areas," said Schmidt. "One for access to the beach for the public use and one for anybody who would like to have a dog free area."

But the group F.I.D.O. which currently has 7,000 members said they feel this is the only area it has and

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cutting that space in half is unacceptable.

"We don't understand why they can't go to another location, because we're the ones who have no place to go," said Chase.

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