

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: March 26, 2024

To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Michelle Mariscal, Ecologist

Through: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item: **IX. Discussion and possible recommendation to the Board regarding pilot program for providing dog waste bags at Arroyo Pescadero Trailhead.**

ADDENDUM

Upon further review of the dog waste pilot program data, staff determined that reporting the number of dog wastes encountered along the trail relative to the number of days since the previous count survey was conducted would provide a relevant alternate perspective and possibly more appropriate from the report already provided. The data already provided was the total number of dog waste per survey day, and the data analysis below accounts for the interval between count surveys which increased over time. Surveys were conducted every 2.5 days on average through September and then were conducted every 9.8 days<sup>1</sup> on average thereafter. These data show a decreasing trend in the amount of dog waste (bagged + unbagged) encountered along the trails over time (**Fig. 1**). The Preserve was closed to recreation following significant rain events several times during the pilot program<sup>2</sup>, so these days were excluded from the dataset.

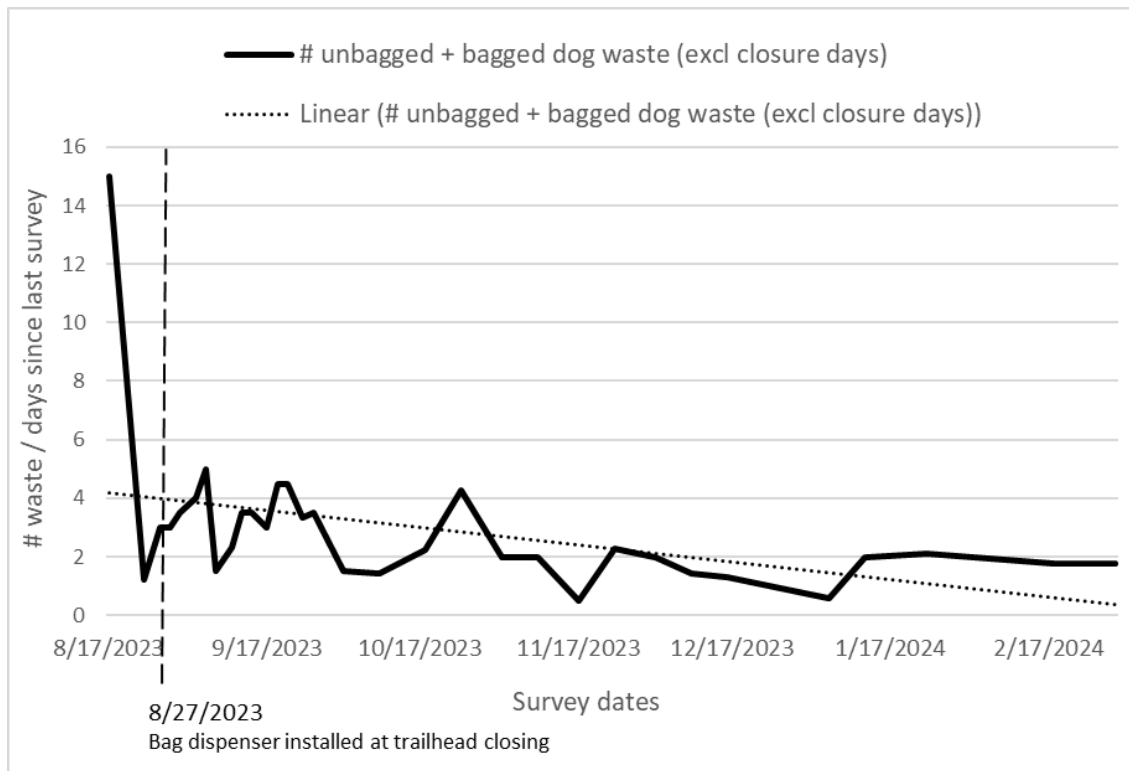
It is unclear whether providing the dog waste bags at the trailhead, or volunteer removal of all dog waste, or some combination is responsible for the downward trend. Because all bagged and unbagged dog waste and coyote scat encountered along the trail were removed by volunteers during each count survey, the absence of dog waste may have influenced trail user behavior resulting in trail users being more likely to pick up after their pets. If this is the case, this trend will be unsustainable unless Habitat Authority volunteers indefinitely assist with dog waste removal efforts. Because both dog waste and coyote

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<sup>1</sup> The target interval was once per week. The actual frequency of surveys can, in part, be attributed to unavailability of parking in the lot which precluded some survey efforts and Preserve closure days following significant rainfall events.

<sup>2</sup> There were four storm events after the dog waste bag dispenser was installed, resulting in 18 Preserve-closure days between December 21, 2023 and the last count survey date (March 1, 2024).

scat counts decreased over time, one possible contributing factor is that storm events washed them from the trail<sup>3</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Amount of dog waste (sum of bagged + unbagged dog waste per survey divided by the number of days since the prior survey, excluding days when the Preserve was closed to recreation) counted on the trail during the pilot program. The trend line indicates a decrease in dog waste encountered through time.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the remaining purchased dog waste bags continue to be provided at the Arroyo Pescadero trailhead. Although count surveys and dog waste removal efforts by volunteers have concluded, staff can continue to qualitatively observe whether trail behaviors change over the course of the next few months while the remaining dog waste bags are provided.

<sup>3</sup> Whittier received 16.6 inches of rain between December 21, 2023 and March 1, 2024