



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Friends of Lighthouse Field to Endorse City, County and State Candidates**

***Community of Pet Owners to Back "Quality of Life" Candidates In Favor of  
Family-and-Pet-Friendly Parks and Greenbelts***

**SANTA CRUZ, Calif., April 25, 2006** – Friends of Lighthouse Field (FOLF), a grassroots Santa Cruz community of pet-owning families, announced its plan to endorse a roster of Santa Cruz candidates for City, County and State offices who favor the maintenance and expansion of family-pet-friendly parks and greenbelts. FOLF, which supports Lighthouse Field as a model for off-leash access for dogs, is making this move to educate candidates on the vital role that pet owners play to:

- Improve park safety and reduce illegal activities
- Lead park stewardship programs, such as trail repair and park cleanup
- Provide a communication pathway to a broad community of park users, neighborhood residences and pet owners

40% of Santa Cruz County voters are pet owners. FOLF will work toward educating the pet owners of Santa Cruz about candidates that share their values and rally support for these candidates.

FOLF will educate candidates and voters on the imperative to maintain urban green spaces and shorelands for the public's use and enjoyment and the vital role of park stewardship in keeping neighborhoods and parks safe and relatively free from criminal activities. FOLF's candidate and voter education programs may include: candidate questionnaires, public forums, participation in local events, publication of candidate statements and actions and partnerships with other community organizations. FOLF expects to reach-out directly to a significant percentage of the pet-owners in Santa Cruz City and County by November 2006.

Santa Cruz is faced with a growing crisis of drug dealing and other illegal activities in Santa Cruz parks and greenbelts, with the exception of Lighthouse Field and Its Beach where the presence and active stewardship of the pet-owning community is helping to minimize anti-social and criminal activities.

“It is important for the voters of Santa Cruz city and county to understand the positions of the candidates, and their actions to support the diverse communities of Santa Cruz,” said Betsy Firebaugh, chairperson of Friends of Lighthouse Field. “Off-leash access for dogs is currently maintained in just two percent of Santa Cruz park areas – primarily at Lighthouse Beach and Its Beach during limited hours. ” However, acting with no prior notice, no public hearing and with utter disregard for the key role of the pet-owning community in preventing the deterioration of Lighthouse Field and the surrounding neighborhood, a State mandate ordered the City of Santa Cruz to terminate access for people with off-leash dogs by November 2007. Unfortunately, to date the Santa Cruz City Council has done nothing to overturn this harmful decision, even while our community is facing a rise of drug dealing, vagrancy and other illegal activities in other parks and greenbelts.”

Lighthouse State Beach (Park) has been under the management of the City of Santa Cruz for 28 years by virtue of a joint State, City and County agreement. The State of California Parks and Recreation Department has submitted a letter of notification that the agreement is due to expire on November 14, 2007. This move will not only change the management of Lighthouse Field and Its Beach from the City of Santa Cruz to the State of California, but will have a direct negative impact on the safety and relative absence of illegal activities at Lighthouse Field and Its Beach.

“We ask the Santa Cruz City Council to work with the State Parks and Recreation Commission to maintain the quality of life in Santa Cruz, including keeping Lighthouse Field and Its Beach open for the existing limited off-leash access,” said John McGuire, a member of the FOLF board of directors. “There are several very exciting options that would benefit all concerned -- the local community, Lighthouse Field users and neighbors, the City of Santa Cruz and the State of California.”

On April 15 2006, FOLF held its Lighthouse Field Trail Repair and Cleanup Day. With more than 55 volunteers, FOLF volunteers spread tons of gravel, countless square yards of mulch and picked-up numerous barrels of trash, primarily human trash. Friends of Lighthouse Field's ongoing park and beach stewardship program is yet another aspect of how Lighthouse Field State Beach serves as a model for off-leash access and recreation for pet owners and their dogs in a California urban parks and shoreland areas. Its Beach and Mitchell's Cove have been recognized as two of the cleanest beaches with credit to Friends of Lighthouse Field, according Sherry Bryan, Coastal Commission Cleanup coordinator.

### **About Friends of Lighthouse Field**

Friends of Lighthouse Field was formed in 2002 to support preservation of the beauty and recreation opportunities for humans and dogs off-leash at Lighthouse Field and Its beach. For more information, visit [www.folf.org](http://www.folf.org).

# # # #

### **Contact:**

Zee Zaballos  
Friends of Lighthouse Field  
831.425.1581, ext. 201  
zee@zna.com