

CITIZENS UNLEASH PARKS SUIT

By STEPHANIE GASKELL , NY POST

March 22, 2006 -- The city will be slapped with a class-action lawsuit for allowing dogs to run without leashes in parks and bite New Yorkers, sources told The Post yesterday.

The Juniper Park Civic Association in Middle Village, Queens, has notified city officials it plans to bring a lawsuit next week.

The group claims several people have been bitten because Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe has an informal policy of allowing dogs off their leashes between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.

"At these hours when the parks are lightly used and there are few enforcement officers available, this policy balances the needs of half a million dog owners who need to exercise their animals and the other park users," Benepe responded.

Benepe said he would enforce the rule if the city can build a dog run in that neighborhood, but the Juniper Park Civic Association has said it doesn't want one.

"This is a form of civic blackmail," wrote JPCA member Lorraine Sciulli in the group's newsletter. She said there have been several recent dog attacks in the area.