

Memo

To: Liza Walker, Vermont Land Trust
From: Boyce Hill Steering Committee
Date: February 2023
Re: Boyce Hill and Hunting

After consulting with several local hunters, a state biologist, a non-profit trails organization, and a county forester, and receiving a great deal of public input, the Boyce Hill Steering Committee has decided not to allow hunting on Boyce Hill. This is a matter we considered very carefully considering the Town's support of local hunters and Vermont traditions and our commitment to providing safe access to public land. (We also sought input or feedback via e-mail from some hunting and fishing organizations, notably Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, but received no responses.)

Here are some of the reasons and observations that guided our decision:

1. Because of the pattern of use occurring on Boyce Hill, we feel it would be irresponsible to allow hunting and the use of firearms in such an open public area where people and dogs are recreating at all times of the day and throughout the year.
2. Seasoned and knowledgeable hunters would likely not hunt there given better and safer opportunities available on nearby state and private land. Allowing hunting on Boyce Hill might only be attractive to more inexperienced hunters.
3. From the standpoints of both safety and opportunity, for a hunter, Boyce Hill is not an ideal spot to hunt because of the other recreational uses.
4. There is a relative scarcity of game now on Boyce Hill largely because of higher intensity of recreational use. Most animals are only passing through the property or foraging in the safety of darkness, outside of legal shooting hours.
5. While the property has some large open areas, the vegetation and our planned approach to its management make it hard for hunters to see if there are any people or dogs in their line of sight and establish safe shooting positions.
6. The topography and slope of the property increases risk by allowing bullets to travel farther.
7. Since State multi-use trails and local mountain bike trails close during hunting season for safety reasons, if hunting were allowed, Boyce Hill would also have to be closed during hunting season. Even if closed, people will likely still go there, increasing safety concerns. It seems to us that it would be contrary to the spirit of the easement to exclude access to the parcel from all of the *non-hunting* general public, and that the area is too small to carve out zones with particular restrictions for particular activities.
8. Boyce Hill is not a large property and there are abutting landowners with houses nearby. Allowing hunting could be unsafe for them. Some have thoughtfully posted "No Shooting Zone" notices, a practice we might want to undertake for the border of Boyce Hill to respectfully alert hunters traveling through adjacent lands.
9. Boyce Hill would be welcomed as a refuge for people looking for a safer place to walk and exercise outdoors during hunting season as many of the recreational trails in the Mad River Valley are closed. People using Boyce Hill are often older and hike Boyce because the access is easier than many other trails and safer and quieter than most of the roadways in our area.
10. In a public survey, respondents responded overwhelmingly NOT to allow hunting on Boyce Hill.

11. The Town's insurance adjustor strongly recommended not allowing hunting on this property. Allowing hunting could increase the Town's insurance liability.
12. As many of the principles applied above to our position on hunting at Boyce Hill apply to trapping also, and as a matter of simplification and consistency of message, we think trapping should also be prohibited.