

## **The Trustees of Reservations' Policy on Hunting**

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Approved by Field Operations Committee: June 27, 2007

The decision to allow or prohibit hunting will be evaluated on a property-by-property basis and will be guided by the following factors:

1. **Public Safety:** Where visitation is high and/or concentrated (e.g., where programming regularly occurs or in areas around a visitor center) or where a reservation occurs within a densely populated area, hunting will only be permitted if safety concerns can be mitigated through such means as temporary property closures or allowing only certain types of hunting.
2. **Donors' wishes:** Wherever possible, The Trustees honors wishes expressed by donors of land; in some cases, these wishes address the desire to allow or prohibit hunting.
3. **Ecological Resource Protection:** Overabundant populations of any animal in a natural setting can negatively impact the ecological integrity of an area. For example, throughout much of Eastern Massachusetts deer populations frequently exceed desirable densities and the ecological consequences of this overabundance have been well documented. Science has shown that when deer become abundant, overbrowsing of vegetation can alter ecosystems by preventing forest regrowth or eliminating plant species altogether. Overbrowsing can threaten rare and endangered plant species and reduce the overall biological health of our reservations. The Trustees considers hunting as part of a program of best management practices for managing deer at its properties.
4. **Other management goals.** At an overabundant level, animals may also negatively impact other significant features of a property. For example, deer can damage historically important plantings in a designed landscape or seriously damage agricultural crops. In these cases, The Trustees will work to apply a number of solutions, including deterrents, but values hunting as an important management tool as an option to consider.

5. Human health: Several diseases are transmitted to humans by deer ticks, which depend on deer for a part of their life cycle. Lyme Disease is typically the best known but others include ehrlichiosis and babesiosis. Research has shown that maintaining deer populations at or below a habitat's carrying capacity may help reduce the population of deer ticks which carry tick-borne diseases.
6. Visitor Experience: While not all users choose to hunt, The Trustees tries to honor traditional uses at its reservations where such uses complement our mission.
7. Local Regulations: Town bylaws and ordinances that pertain to hunting need to be reviewed and considered before hunting is allowed. For example, some communities have passed ordinances that prohibit the discharge of firearms.