Drone Disturbance Policy

Paint Rock Forest Research Center

Approved April 2026

All suggested or upcoming projects that require drone use on the Sharp-Bingham Mountain Preserve must be evaluated and approved by the Science Advisory Council (SAC) before proceeding. Furthermore, drone use must be discussed with any researchers that are studying birds and small mammals on the property to identify any conflicts of interest.

When considering drone use for a project, the researchers involved and the SAC ***must*** take into account the following:

- It must be proven that the use of drones is absolutely necessary for the project to proceed or that any substitute would cause greater harm or disturbance to flora or fauna.
- Flying drones from late March-June must be avoided to accommodate territory establishment and nesting periods in birds wherever possible.
- Should no other time of year be suitable for the purposes of the project, drone flights should occur as late within the aforementioned period as possible.
- If sensitive species are breeding within the study area, special accommodations must be made to avoid their specific territory establishment period and any active nests.
- Surveys of existing breeding bird populations must be conducted throughout the proposed study area prior to the start of the project, if time allows.
- Duration of drone use must be kept as minimal as possible to avoid long-term disturbance of resident species. Alternating deployment sites instead of continuously using one site is preferred.

It is the responsibility of the SAC to decide if any project that requires drone use is valuable enough to risk disturbing birds or small mammals on the Sharp-Bingham Mountain Preserve. The SAC must use their professional judgement in these cases to determine what course of action is in best alignment with the mission and values of the Paint Rock Forest Research Center. The SAC reserves the right to reject any project deemed to be too disturbing or harmful to plants, animals, or existing projects on the preserve.