

# Do Community Archery Ranges Hurt Area Bowhunting Retailers?

By Shannon Rikard, ATA contributing writer

Archery retailers often view community archery parks as direct competition. Granted, friendly competition generates pros and cons but do public archery ranges truly compete with archery shops?

The Archery Trade Association asked three retail members that question. Here's what they said.

## Cabin Fever, Victoria, Minnesota

Cabin Fever is within 15 miles of five publicly accessible target archery ranges. The Three Rivers Park District range is 2 miles away and is the area's largest archery park. It offers a walk-through course, a tower for treestand practice and a range with targets from 10 to 40 yards.

Jeff Byrne, owner of Cabin Fever, said 25 percent of his archery sales are for recreational equipment. He thinks public ranges benefit his shop in two main ways:

They let archers shoot at up to 100 yards, four times farther than Cabin Fever's 20 yard indoor range.

Outdoor ranges provide more opportunities for customers to interact with friends and refer them to Cabin Fever for lessons, repairs and service.

"My pro staff archers and I often shoot at the outdoor ranges and always wear our Cabin Fever shirts," Byrne said. "When someone sees one of us enjoying archery, they ask where to buy equipment or get lessons. We don't push hunting. We push archery and help people pursue the sport however they'd like."

Byrne also attends planning meetings for range-building projects and encourages community leaders



Photo by ATA

Community archery ranges excite people and offer venues for new archers to try the sport and learn about local archery shops.

to implement archery programs. He believes ranges complement other outreach efforts.

"You don't have to sell something to every archer right away," Byrne said. "When you build up archers, you see benefits over time."

Byrne also works with a nearby box store, sending customers there to buy items he doesn't carry. In return, the box store sends him referrals. When new customers come in, he finds ways to keep them there. "A lot of people come to Cabin Fever over a weekend and some kids get bored while their parents shop," Byrne said. "We let them shoot a bow for a few minutes at no cost. Those 15 minute experiences fire kids up. When they want bows and lessons, they think of us."

**Pros:** Community archery ranges

excite people and offer venues for new archers to try the sport and learn about Cabin Fever.

**Cons:** During pleasant weather, community ranges attract people who would rather shoot outside than at Cabin Fever's indoor range.

**The verdict:** Byrne said his store attracts more archers during bad weather, which more than compensates for lost patronage to outdoor ranges on nice days.

## Archery Field and Sports, Altoona, Iowa

Mark Wagener manages Archery Field and Sports. The community range in nearby West Des Moines naturally draws people away from Wagener's range and pro shop.

“The outdoor archery range provides another place to shoot and gets people interested in archery, which is excellent,” Wagener said. “But the city runs it, so it isn’t subject to the same taxes as my shop. With our overhead and taxes, we can’t compete with prices at the community range.”

Unlimited archery at the community range costs \$40 annually. Archery Field and Sports offers one year memberships to shoot paper targets at its indoor and outdoor ranges for \$500 and \$700 annually to shoot all targets, including 3-Ds.

Wagener also said the community range sends beginners to nearby box stores to buy equipment. Even so, Archery Field and Sports receives referrals from customers who know the shop’s history and good reputation.

**Pros:** The community range encourages people to try archery and provides a place to shoot.

**Cons:** The community range offers inexpensive one year memberships that siphon potential customers from Archery Field and Sports and encourages beginners to buy equipment at box stores.

**The verdict:** Wagener’s opinion of the community range remains mixed.

**Bill Pellegrino’s Archery Hut, Colorado Springs, Colorado**

Bill Pellegrino has owned the Archery Hut in Colorado Springs, Colorado for 10 years. He said the good outweighs the bad regarding public ranges that compete with his 30 target range.

“Just like ski slopes create a need for ski shops, archery ranges create needs for

archery equipment and help introduce people to the sport,” Pellegrino said.

An outdoor range at Cheyenne Mountain State Park and another range at the Air Force Academy are within 20 minutes of the Archery Hut. Pellegrino shoots tournaments at both ranges and is one of 600 members at the Air Force range. The two nearby ranges attract shooters during warmer months but Pellegrino makes up for lost range revenue by selling target

archery equipment and expertise.

“When someone starts in archery, they might begin as a bowhunter or buy cheap equipment at a box store,” Pellegrino said. “But few stores carry the variety and quality of equipment I offer. If someone stays in archery long enough, they’ll end up in my store.”

Pellegrino said his sales are 25 to 30 percent target equipment. Many bowhunters, who already own hunting bows worth \$500 to \$900, want to

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shoot all year, so they'll buy a target archery setup for \$1,400 to \$1,600. In addition, target sights and releases cost nearly twice as much as those used for bowhunting.

**Pros:** Two nearby outdoor ranges give people more places to enjoy archery and help Pellegrino and his staff shooters informally advertise when they wear Archery Hut shirts at practices and tournaments.

**Cons:** The Archery Hut's range loses business during warmer months, when most archers shoot outdoors.

**The verdict:** Nearby ranges are good for Pellegrino's business. When more people enjoy archery, more of them stick with the sport and buy lessons, nicer bows, replacement arrows and the store's expertise.



Bill Pellegrino/Archery Hut

Bill Pellegrino and the Archery Hut staff shooters informally advertise their business by wearing Archery Hut shirts for practices and tournaments at nearby outdoor ranges.

# Connecticut Opens Sunday Bowhunting

Connecticut doubled its number of bowhunting days for many people when lawmakers voted in early June to open Sundays to bowhunters pursuing deer on private property in areas designated to have overpopulated herds.

Connecticut hasn't allowed hunting on Sundays since creating its modern seasons during the 1940s. Bowhunters in recent years, however, have increasingly pressured lawmakers to lift the prohibition on bowhunting in hopes of reducing the state's burgeoning deer herds.

Dr. Howard Kilpatrick, a research scientist with Connecticut's Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, said time has been a limiting factor in managing deer herds. That's especially true in urban and suburban areas because most hunters can only get outdoors on Saturdays there. By adding Sunday to bowhunters' calendars, the state basically doubled opportunities for archers to reduce deer numbers.

"A lot of people can't hunt weekdays

because of work and other obligations, so adding one or two extra weeks to our hunting seasons really doesn't provide the same benefit as adding Sundays," Kilpatrick said. "Our bowhunting season in urban zones is four months long, so this adds nearly 20 days for bowhunters. Plus, our highest harvest day is Saturday, so this should add another high-harvest day and increase the overall harvest."

The new law does not expand gunhunting opportunities to Sundays. Nor does it allow bowhunting statewide. Bowhunters are restricted to privately owned land on Sundays and the area must be deemed by the DNRE to have an overpopulated deer herd.

"This will allow a large portion of the state to have more deer management because most of our land is privately owned," Kilpatrick said. "Connecticut really doesn't have much public land. We're hoping that by restricting the bowhunt to Saturdays that we eliminated the perceived risks and conflicts some people feared on

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The extra day of bowhunting each week is expected to give Connecticut archery shops a bump in business.

public lands between bowhunters, hikers and other recreationists.”

Jay McAninch, president/CEO of the Archery Trade Association, said Connecticut’s decision gives bowhunters a chance to show they can help manage deer without creating conflicts with nearby residents.

“I’m always thrilled when states increase opportunities for bowhunters while validating the importance of bowhunting as a management tool,” McAninch said. “In many parts of Connecticut, deer live in tiny woodlots between people’s homes. Bowhunting allows a state wildlife agency to surgically remove deer where public safety is a concern for the residents. And when bowhunters remove deer and reduce the herd, residents should see less damage to their woods, gardens and shrubbery. We also know that high deer numbers often cause more problems with Lyme disease, so bowhunting should reduce that problem, too.”

The extra day of bowhunting each week is also expected to give Connecticut archery shops a bump in business. In the past, few bow shops had a reason to open on Sundays but maybe now they will.

“I don’t think it will have a huge impact on business because most bowhunters were hunting anyway,” Butch Johnson, sales manager of Hall’s Arrow in Manchester, Connecticut, said. “But personally, I think it’s great. The more

time people have to bowhunt, the more likely they’ll need more arrows, broadheads and other things. Now people can bowhunt all weekend, not just one day. That should keep more of them in the woods.”

The new law takes effect on October 1. Connecticut’s bowhunting season opens on September 15 statewide and

runs through December 31. In addition, a winter season in zones 11 and 12 runs from January 1 through 31. Bowhunters hunting on private property on Sundays must have written permission from the landowner and they cannot hunt within 40 yards of blazed hiking trails.

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