

RC 34

To: Board of Fisheries
Attn: Monica Wellard, Executive Director
PO Box 115526
Juneau AK 99811-5526

Dear Board of Fisheries

I write in support of 2013 proposal # 234 to ban use of lead weights in fresh and salt waters of Alaska in sport fisheries. I am a biologist and a volunteer for non-profit organizations; however, these comments are solely my own, as an Alaskan and fisherwoman.

Lead is a well-known pollutant and toxin. There is a huge body of scientific knowledge spanning decades showing its negative effects on human health. Further, wildlife poisoning from lead shot and fishing sinkers have been documented. According to a US Geological Survey fact sheet:

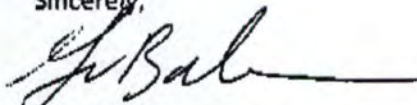
...lead is a potent, potentially deadly toxin that damages many organs in the body and can affect all animals, including humans. ...Wild birds, such as ... loons, can die from the ingestion of one lead shot, bullet fragment, or sinker. ... Species reported to have been poisoned by ingested lead fishing weights include trumpeter swans, brown pelicans, common loons, and other waterbirds. These birds may ingest sinkers attached to broken fishing line in hooked fish or may pick them up as grit. The use or sale of lead fishing tackle is restricted in national parks and wildlife areas in Canada (http://www.fws.gov/contaminants/Documents/lead_poisoning_wild_birds_USGS2009.pdf).

Due to hazards to wildlife ingesting small lead pellets, lead shot was banned, with eventual support from both sportsman and industry. Likewise, lead has been removed from most paint, many household products, and gasoline. Even a microscopic amount can warrant a warning label on electrical products. Yet, strangely, a lead fishing weights can be found at any tackle shop. Once taken to a fishing hole, this lead poses a hazard: to adults and children who fish; to young children who may accidentally get pellets on their hands or mouths; to birds who may pick up the weight as is their habit to ingest pebbles to aid digestion; to the very water that we all fish in. The only reason I can imagine for such a loop hole to exist is that it results from pressure from the lead industry, or sportsmen who are not cognizant of the grave hazards this metal poses.

Alternatives are available and would be sold more widely at local retail stores statewide if a ban was phased in. A quick internet search yields many hits for lead-free tackle, and the price is not prohibitive. For example, Cabela's offers a nice 190-piece lead-free weight set for \$9.99. While lead may be cheaper in the short term, this is likely going to be the least expensive piece of equipment in my tackle box.

Thank you for considering my comments. I hope to learn more about the outcome of the upcoming meetings.

Sincerely,



Gwen Baluss
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