



October 10, 2019

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Hawk Ridge Bird
Observatory is a
501(c)(3) Non-profit
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Commissioner Sarah Strommen
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Commissioner Strommen:

With this letter I am writing on behalf of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (Hawk Ridge), Duluth, MN, to support the recent petition from Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas (FMSNA) urging you to adopt rules requiring non-lead fishing tackle and ammunition. The mission of Hawk Ridge is to protect birds of prey and other migratory birds in the Western Lake Superior Region through research, education, and stewardship.

Our work with birds has convinced us of the need to move toward the reduction of lead-based shot and tackle in the Minnesota environment. As outlined in the FMSNA letter, lead is a problem for a wide variety of MN wildlife, including Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), an iconic Minnesota species that has suffered from exposure to environmental contaminants in the past, including organochlorine pesticides and PCBs.

The science on lead exposure is no longer in question. The Raptor Center, St. Paul, MN, reports that 90% of Bald Eagles admitted for rehabilitation have elevated lead levels in their blood. Of these, 20-25% have sufficiently high lead exposure to cause clinical lead poisoning and most of these birds must be euthanized. These statistics are all the more lamentable because they are unnecessary – proven safe alternatives are known to exist and well-described in the FMSNA letter.

To ensure the health and survival of birds, and other living organisms including humans, we need to remove lead from the food web as soon as possible and wherever possible. Non-toxic tackle and non-toxic ammunition have been widely available at reasonable prices for many years. There is no excuse to delaying this shift.

Hawk Ridge thanks you in advance for adopting rules that adequately protect human health and the environment, including migrating and native bird populations.

Janelle Long
Executive Director

Andrew Streitz
Board Chair