

Representative Rick Hansen, Chair
House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
E-mail: rick.hansen@house.mn
Re: Legislation to Phase Out Lead Ammunition and Lead Fishing Tackle

Dec.21, 2020

Dear Chairman Hansen:

Congratulations to you on your election win and for your appointment as Chair of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee.

During my 41-year career as the DNR Nongame Wildlife Program supervisor, I was involved in research involving lead poisoning in bald eagles beginning in 1977. I have collaborated with The Raptor Center concerning problems with lead poisoning in bald eagles resulting from their consuming deer gutpiles containing toxic lead bullet fragments. At the DNR, we also did necropsies on dead loons and found that about one-third of their mortality was caused by lead poisoning from small fishing jigs and sinkers that they picked up on lake bottoms. We continue to experience mortality to eagles and loons. Trumpeter swans also die when they swallow small lead jigs and sinkers that that have been lost by anglers.

This loss of Minnesota wildlife is typically not witnessed by anglers and hunters so they are typically unaware of the problems caused by lead. This loss of some of Minnesota's most iconic wildlife can be avoided if hunters and anglers would use nontoxic fishing tackle and nontoxic hunting ammunition. Continued use of lead incriminates hunters and anglers as polluters who are causing collateral damage to nontarget wildlife. It damages their long-time reputation as conservationists.

Why do we continue to allow use of lead on Minnesota's wildlands and public waters? It is a cumulative form of toxic pollution that does not degrade or break down. It is time to discuss a multi-year phase-out of lead for hunting and angling as we have already done with paint, gasoline, and lead in children's toys. This proposal is not "anti-hunting" and has nothing to do with Second Amendment rights. This is about bringing hunting and fishing out of past traditions that unknowingly poisoned nontarget wildlife. I have hunted and fished since I was ten. I value those traditions. People can still enjoy their hunting and fishing traditions with nontoxic ammo and fishing tackle with no loss in quality of their outdoor experiences. It sets the stage for a future that will preserve hunting and fishing traditions without poisoning the wildlife and fisheries habitats we need to preserve for future generations.

Please let me know if I can be of assistance in any dialogue to advance this concept in the legislature.

Sincerely,

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