

July 14, 2025

Please Vote NO on H.R. 556

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our 69 organizations and our combined millions of members and supporters, we are writing to urge you to vote NO on H.R. 556—Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025. Like the identical H.R. 615 introduced last year, H.R. 556 would prohibit the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture from regulating the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal lands or waters under their jurisdiction. This damaging bill will be marked up tomorrow, July 15, 2025 in the House Natural Resources Committee.

Access to federal lands for sportspeople is not under threat, despite what the title of H.R. 556 suggests. Instead, the bill would undermine the duty of the Secretaries to protect and steward our public lands and wildlife based on scientific principles. H.R. 556 would restrict the ability of federal agencies to promote healthier conditions on their jurisdictional lands. By effectively precluding the replacement of lead ammunition and tackle with commonly used non-lead alternatives, the bill would also prevent federal officials from protecting hunters and anglers from consuming lead-poisoned game and fish.

Lead ammunition and tackle have been shown to harm a wide variety of wildlife. For species like California condors, bald and golden eagles, mountain lions, black bears, common loons, and dozens of others, lead is a persistent threat that hampers conservation and recovery efforts. Ingestion of spent lead ammunition is the leading cause of death for the critically endangered California condor. A 2022 paper demonstrated population-level effects in both bald and golden eagles stemming from ingestion of spent lead ammunition. Aquatic species like loons succumb to lead toxicosis via ingesting loose tackle or fish which have consumed lead tackle.

The bill includes an exception whereby lead use may be regulated *only if it can be shown that declines in wildlife populations on a specific unit of land were caused by lead ammunition or tackle*. This is an impossible standard to meet as population monitoring data is rarely available at the management unit level. It is inconsistent with widely accepted scientific methods, dismisses well established facts about the dangers of lead, and would preclude responsible management actions that could prevent future population declines.

Furthermore, the bill states that any federal regulation of lead that does satisfy the exception must also be approved by the applicable State fish and wildlife agency. While State wildlife agencies have a role in managing hunting and fishing, they do not have primary jurisdiction over national parks, national forests, public lands, or national wildlife refuges. Management of these areas is an inherently federal responsibility and it would be inappropriate for States to exercise a veto over federal decisions there.

By constraining federal management of federal land, H.R. 556 may also conflict with conservation statutes including the Endangered Species Act. The establishment of narrow conditions under which lead may be regulated could prevent federal agencies from ensuring that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species.

There is no reason to assume that the regulation of lead on federal lands would harm sportspeople. Non-toxic steel, copper, and alloy ammunition and non-lead fishing tackle are affordable and available in all 50 states. Over a dozen manufacturers now market non-lead bullets and shot with satisfactory to superior ballistic characteristics. Hunters and anglers in states or other areas that have already restricted or banned lead have made successful transitions to non-toxic alternatives. Sportspeople who use non-lead ammunition also carry on the proud tradition of wildlife conservation by helping to keep animals free of the toxic effects of lead.

Moreover, there is little indication that federal land managers are contemplating the kind of heavy-handed regulation that seemingly inspires bills like H.R. 556. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently launched a pilot program to incentivize the fully voluntary adoption of non-lead ammunition on wildlife refuges. We believe that sportsperson education, widely accessible non-toxic ammunition and tackle exchange programs, and informed decisions by individuals and communities are key to reducing the use of lead. Voluntary approaches like these should be given an opportunity to demonstrate that they can achieve less-toxic environments and fewer wildlife poisonings. However, it is important that the federal agencies retain the authority to take regulatory action when circumstances demand it.

We strongly urge you to vote NO on H.R. 556 and, instead, to consider any legislation or regulation which creates lead ammunition and tackle exchange programs, sportsperson education initiatives, or otherwise decreases the likelihood of wildlife poisonings from lead. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aiken Audubon Society
American Bird Conservancy
Animal Welfare Institute
Animal Wellness Foundation
Animal Wonders KC
Audubon Colorado Council
Blue Ridge Wildlife Center
Born Free USA
Bozeman Birders
Californians for Western Wilderness
CalWild

Center for Biological Diversity
Christian Council of Delmarva
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice Action
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Protection Information Center- EPIC
Evergreen Audubon
Forests Forever
Forest Keeper
FOUR PAWS USA
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History
Humane World Action Fund
Humane World for Animals
John Muir Project
Kentucky Heartwood
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Klamath Forest Alliance
Large Carnivore Fund
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Los Padres ForestWatch
Maryland Ornithological Society
Maine Audubon
National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association
New Hampshire Audubon
Northwest Swan Conservation Association
Oregon Wild
PacificaRiptide.com
People & Pollinators Action Network
Prairie Hills Audubon Society
Project Coyote
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Raptors Are The Solution

Raptor Education Group, Inc.
Resource Renewal Institute
Rockbridge Bird Club
Rocky Mountain Wild
Salem Audubon Society
Save the Manatee Club
Saving Animals Facing Extinction
Saving Maine
Sequoia ForestKeeper
Sierra Club
Silvix Resources
Species Unite
The Conservation Angler
The Urban Wildlands Group
Unleaded Kids
Voices of Wildlife in NH
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project
Whale and Dolphin Conservation North America
Wild Farm Alliance
Wildlife for All
Wyoming Wildlife Advocates