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NEW REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF LEAD USED IN HUNTING AND FISHING

BETHESDA, MD -- Lead introduced in the environment through recreational hunting, shooting sports, and fishing poses a potential hazard to both wildlife and humans, according to a new technical review by The Wildlife Society (TWS) and American Fisheries Society (AFS).

“The Wildlife Society (TWS) supports legal and ethical hunting and fishing and recognizes its important role in supporting wildlife conservation,” said Michael Hutchins, PhD, executive director/CEO of TWS. “However, we are very interested in preventing potential lead toxicity associated with these outdoor activities from adversely affecting wildlife, fish and the environment as a whole while maintaining healthy populations for future generations.”

Large quantities of lead ammunition and fishing tackle are produced annually -- the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that roughly 72,600 metric tons of lead shot and bullets are deposited in the U.S. environment each year at outdoor shooting ranges alone. And while estimates of lost fishing tackle are much less, lead tackle also poses a potential toxicological threat. Lead (Pb) is a nonessential heavy metal with no known functional or beneficial role in biological systems. Although lead is relatively stable, under some environmental conditions (e.g., soft acidic water, acidic soil), lead objects can weather and the element can mobilize, spreading the toxic properties. However, the TWS/AFS technical review concludes that the greatest hazard arises from direct ingestion of lead ammunition and fishing tackle by wildlife, particularly birds.

Topics covered include the chemical properties of lead, sources and estimated quantities of lead originating from hunting, shooting and fishing, as well as the pathways of exposure and the effects of lead on plants, animals, and humans. Current regulations on lead ammunition and fishing tackle, along with alternative materials, are also evaluated.

“This review is a long overdue look at the big picture regarding the overall risk that lead ammunition and fishing tackle pose to natural resources,” said Gus Rassam, PhD, AFS executive director. “We believe this report will provide a good starting point for developing management policies that protect both humans and wildlife while allowing for the continued enjoyment of hunting and fishing.”

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The review contains suggestions for future research and possible paths for new policies and/or regulations. Those of highest priority include:

- Broad scale monitoring on the incidence of lead poisoning in wildlife in countries where the extent of the problem is poorly documented or unknown;
- Data on the prevalence of lead poisoning related to fishing tackle in reptiles and aquatic birds;
- Information on the weathering, dissolution, and long-term fate of lead fragments, and bioavailability of lead in various ecosystems;
- The hazards of spent ammunition and mobilized lead to wildlife at or near shooting ranges; and
- Evaluation of regulations restricting the use of lead ammunition and fishing tackle on exposure and health of biota in various ecosystems.

About TWS and AFS

TWS, founded in 1937, is a scientific and educational organization dedicated to enhancing the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure the responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. **AFS**, founded 1870, is the world's oldest and largest fisheries science organization. Its mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals.

To obtain a copy of the technical review, “*Sources and Implications of Lead-Based Ammunition and Fishing Tackle on Natural Resources*,” visit <http://www.afsbooks.org/55057p.html>.

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