

October 27, 2022

**Re: Cosponsor Request: Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act**

Dear Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Member:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of hunters, anglers, wildlife professionals, and outdoor enthusiasts are writing to express our support for the *Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act (S. 4940/H.R. 9088)*. Introduced by Senator Steve Daines with a companion bill from Representatives Rob Wittman and Bruce Westerman, this legislation would prohibit the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal lands and waters absent field data delineating a science-based nexus to a wildlife species population decline. Overly broad and arbitrary ammunition and tackle bans have severe and unnecessary detrimental impacts on the economy while also serving as a hinderance to fish and wildlife conservation programs and projects. To that end, we are united in respectfully requesting that you join as a cosponsor of this important legislation.

At the outset, it is important to note that with few exceptions, fish and wildlife are successfully managed at the population level. Additionally, with the exception of Federal Trust Species and certain other species, fish and wildlife management decisions are primarily driven by state fish and wildlife agencies. With those considerations in mind, in the very rare occurrences that science-based field-data clearly delineates a causal nexus between traditional ammunition or tackle and changes in fish or wildlife population health, state fish and wildlife agencies already have the ability to regulate the use of those to both achieve conservation objectives and minimize impacts to anglers and hunters.

That said, we do not believe wildlife management decisions should be driven or decided by political motivations, litigation, at the ballot box or by anyone other than the applicable fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located. Furthermore, we maintain that any restrictions on the use of lead ammunition and tackle on federal lands and waters by a federal agency must have the support of the respective state fish and wildlife agency, which is required by the *Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act*. Simply put, this legislation reaffirms state fish and wildlife management authority.

In many cases, alternatives to lead ammunition and tackle that deliver similar performance at a comparable cost simply do not exist. Therefore, overly broad and arbitrary bans on traditional ammunition and tackle serve as a disincentive to the recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and anglers and, as a result, have significant negative economic consequences for sportsmen and women and local and regional economies. In addition, these bans result in decreases to the excise taxes that hunters and anglers voluntarily imposed on ammunition and fishing tackle as part of the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts, both of which provide the lion's share of funding for state fish and wildlife conservation, research, public access to natural resources and other important programs that promote hunting and fishing and sustainable populations of fish and wildlife species.

Recently, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a final rule that, while expanding access to hunting and fishing opportunities at certain wildlife refuges, also seeks to phase out the use of traditional lead ammunition and fishing tackle. We are disappointed to see the lack of a science-based justification for the arbitrary limitation on the use of lead ammunition and tackle. This rule does not recognize state fish and wildlife as the primary managers of our nation's fish and wildlife. Concurrently, litigation initiated by animal rights interests is pending against a similar, previous rule to expand hunting and fishing access on national wildlife refuges alleging that the additional use of lead ammunition and tackle will harm wildlife species at those refuges. However, those allegations are not substantiated by science.

The litigation not only lacks scientific justification, but it is entirely without legal merit. In light of the timing of this litigation, we are concerned the USFWS has engaged in settlement negotiations with the litigants. Despite strong opposition from many of the undersigned, we believe the USFWS continues conversations with the plaintiff. Furthermore, we are concerned that an overly broad, onerous and unnecessary ban on the use of traditional ammunition and tackle in the National Wildlife Refuge System could be forthcoming.

For these reasons, we strongly support the *Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act (S. 4940/H.R. 9088)* and encourage you to serve as a cosponsor of this vital legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and continued service on behalf of America's outdoor heritage.

Sincerely,

American Catfishing Association  
American Sportfishing Association  
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S)  
BoatU.S.  
Boone and Crockett Club  
California Waterfowl Association  
Coastal Conservation Association  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
International Game Fish Association  
Major League Fishing  
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas  
Mule Deer Foundation  
National Professional Anglers Association  
National Rifle Association  
National Shooting Sports Foundation  
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association  
Pope & Young Club  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Safari Club International

The Bass Federation, Inc.  
The Walleye Federation, LLC  
Whitetails Unlimited  
Wildlife Mississippi