



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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**Testimony in Support of LD 958,
An Act to Expand Protections to Maine's Loons from Lead Poisoning by Prohibiting the Sale
and Use of Certain Painted Lead Jigs
May 8, 2023**

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, I am Melanie Sturm, the Forests and Wildlife Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 958.

Loons are one of Maine's iconic species. They are beautiful, and their characteristic call on Maine's remote lakes is a special and memorable sound for every person who spends time in Maine during the open water season. Unfortunately, loons are threatened by some fishing tackle used in Maine lakes. Many sinkers and jigs include lead, which is toxic to loons. The loons inadvertently ingest the lead while eating fish that have lead jigs or sinkers in them or when picking up gravel from the bottom of the lake. The toxic lead eventually kills the loons.

Sinkers less than half an ounce are already banned in Maine, and this bill would ban painted lead jigs weighing one ounce or less or measuring two-and-a-half inches or less in length starting in September 2024. Starting in September 2026, it would be illegal to use these products.

Lead fishing gear alternatives made of tin, tungsten, or bismuth are readily available. While they may be slightly more expensive than those made with lead, the cost of these alternative types of tackle are a minor part of the overall expense associated with fishing. Because alternative, cost-effective products exist that are less toxic to people and wildlife, we should shift to the less-toxic products.

Loons are part of Maine's tourism brand and economy as well as an intrinsically valuable part of the ecosystem. This is a small but very important step that we can take as a state to protect loons and other waterfowl in Maine.

NRCM urges you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 958. Thank you for your consideration.