

**TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER  
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”  
Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
May 8, 2023**

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony in strong support of L.D. 958 “An Act to Expand Protections to Maine's Loons from Lead Poisoning by Prohibiting the Sale and Use of Certain Painted Lead Jigs.” Closing this loophole that threatens our precious loons, and other wildlife, is long overdue.

Lead is lead – no matter what the source. Whether it comes from lead fishing tackle left in our waterways, lead ammunition left on our land in coyote carcasses and other carrion, or from industrial waste, this heavy metal is poisonous to loons and many other species. In the case of both humans and animals, it is a widely accepted fact that lead in any form is extremely toxic. According to the World Health Organization, **no level of lead exposure is considered safe for people, domestic animals, or wildlife.**

Loons are exposed to lead while consuming fish that have ingested or attached lead tackle, or when mistaking lead weights for the small stones that they normally ingest to aid in digestion. Eagles, other scavenger birds and wildlife ingest lead while feeding off fish in a similar manner, as well as by consuming carcasses and gut piles left behind by hunters.

- A [recent alert](#) from the Maine Audubon Society states: “for decades, lead poisoning has been one of the leading causes of loon mortality in Maine.”
- According to a [2021 article in the Bangor Daily News](#), since 2016, Avian Haven has treated 82 eagles with elevated levels of lead in their system. Sixty of those eagles have died. The deaths of these eagles draw attention to a widespread lead contamination crisis in our state.
- As is the case with loons and birds of prey, this toxin also presents a danger to humans who eat fish or other animals that have been killed with or ingested lead.
- In addition to poisoning our wildlife, the lead contaminates our soil and water, that then is absorbed by plants that are ingested by many animal species, including humans.
- Lead is a potent neurotoxin that disrupts brain development in babies and children, damages kidneys in adults, and can cause pregnant women to miscarry. Exposure to lead in childhood can lower IQ. ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) is also associated with heightened blood and bone lead levels.

**With the many alternatives available, there is no longer a reason for our recreational and sporting activities to contribute any amount of this long-acting, tenacious poison to our environment. We need to get the lead out.**

Please help to protect Maine’s wildlife and citizens by taking a small step forward to eliminate lead contamination from our environment. Vote “Ought to pass” on L.D. 958 “An Act to Expand Protections to Maine's Loons from Lead Poisoning by Prohibiting the Sale and Use of Certain Painted Lead Jigs.”

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susanna Richer  
Portland, ME