

Ted Williams
Grafton, Mass.
LD 1364

Committee of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony In Support of LD 1364- Resolve: Authorizing a Study on the Impacts and Risks of Lead- based Ammunition

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

My name is Ted Williams. Today, I offer my testimony in support of LD 1364, a Resolve: Authorizing a Study on the Impacts and Risks of Lead- based Ammunition. I applaud the members of the Committee for considering this first step to determine a path forward that makes sense for Maine to phase out lead ammunition in hunting, following USFWS' decision to begin implementing a phase out plan for two National Wildlife Refuges in Maine: The Rachel Carson NWR, and The Great Thicket NWR.

As a full-time outdoor writer and editor for the last half century, I've written exclusively about fish and wildlife for national publications such as Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, Gray's Sporting Journal, Audubon, Downeast, Yale Environment 360, Sierra, National Wildlife, Smithsonian, Modern Maturity, Yankee, and Slate.

I'm a lifelong hunter and own a dozen guns. As a former information officer for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, I worked closely with my fellow hunters. I continue to work with them.

I am a graduate of Colby College. I have hunted and fished throughout Maine for my entire adult life. I worked on some of Maine's last pulpwood log drives. And I have written countless magazine articles about Maine environmental issues including a profile of The Rachel Carson NWR, removal of the Edwards Dam, the value of Baxter State Park, alewife recovery, the salvation of the St. John River, forestry, and management of grouse, woodcock, bear, deer, salmon and brook trout. I am the former national chair of the Maine-based Native Fish Coalition.

I can't think of a study more important to my fellow hunters and all other wildlife advocates than the one proposed by LD 1364: a bill to "Authorize a Study on the Impacts and Risks of Lead-based Ammunition," sponsored by IFW committee members Rep. Jim Dill and co-sponsored by Rep. Tiffany Roberts (committee co-chair) and Rep. Bill Bridgeo.

This legislation forces nothing. It offers knowledge.

I've been doing the same study for decades with my friends Dan Ashe -- former U.S. Fish and Wildlife director -- and Dr. Elaine Leslie, former Chief of the National Park Service's Biological Resources Division.

Ashe issued a rule (overturned by Trump 45) that would have banned lead ammunition on all 567 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management units.

Leslie drafted an order to ban lead ammunition from National Park units open to hunting. Her superiors never rescinded it, but never implemented it.

Copper bullets weren't developed for the health of humans or wildlife. They were developed strictly to kill game more efficiently, and they do.

I polled the most hardcore big-game hunters I know about their thoughts on copper bullets. They serve with me on the Outdoor Writers of America Association's Circle of Chiefs:

Jim Low: "Highly accurate, sturdy, excellent expansion and weight retention."

Matt Miller: "I have found copper superior in every way."

Scott Stouder: "Nothing but stellar performance."

Larry Stone: "Accurate, hard-hitting, no fragmentation."

Mike Furtman: "As I hunted deer today, I sat within sight of the gut pile from the doe

I killed two days ago. What remained was dined upon by two bald eagles, three ravens, two pileated woodpeckers, one hairy woodpecker, several blue jays, and numerous chickadees and nuthatches. Which is why I switched to [nontoxic] copper bullets. Copper bullets are every bit as effective.”

The North American Non-Lead Partnership -- committed to protecting wildlife from poisoning by lead bullets -- includes 46 organizations and agencies that support and promote hunting.

The partnership sponsors demonstrations in which copper and lead bullets are fired into water-filled plastic bags housed in plastic drums. Slugs and fragments fall to the bottom of the drums.

In one typical demo, Allen Zufelt of the Arizona Game and Fish Department fires a Federal Nosler AccuBond 180-grain lead bullet, then a 180-grain Federal Trophy Copper bullet. The retrieved copper slug weighs 179.9 grains. The lead slug weighs 137.5 grains, having shed and scattered 42.5 grains of fragments.

Lead poisoning symptoms include anemia, memory loss, depression, convulsions, brain damage, stillbirth, paralysis, kidney and liver failure.

The Centers for Disease Control reports: “No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to negatively affect a child’s intelligence, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.”

It baffles me why so many of my fellow hunters insist on poisoning wildlife (including their game), themselves, their children, their wives and their friends when they can use non-toxic copper bullets which perform better and cost something like \$2 more per box of 20 than lead. The added expense amounts to roughly the cost of a cup of coffee per hunting season.

Hunting organizations donate venison to food banks. But because lead ammo breaks apart on impact, that venison is frequently impregnated with poison. As a result, health departments of North Dakota and Minnesota impounded 17,000 pounds of donated venison.

I won’t forget the day when Dr. Mark Pokras of Tufts University’s Wildlife Clinic in North Grafton, Massachusetts, opened a giant freezer and two dozen stiff bald eagles tumbled out around my feet. Most were from Maine, and most had been poisoned by consuming lead bullet fragments.

The toxicity of lead hunting projectiles is ancient news. George Bird Grinnell published this warning in his sporting weekly, *Forest & Stream*: “Until they reach the gizzard where the wildfowl grinds his food, these pellets do no harm, but, when reduced to powder ... they become a violent poison.”

The year was 1894. It wasn’t until 1991 that we got around to banning lead shot for waterfowl hunting.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill and your work to craft the final outcome: legislation to phase out lead ammunition in hunting. You are taking an important step forward that will rid lead toxins from Maine’s environment and wildlife.

Here are links to some of my other pieces on the poisoning of wildlife with lead bullets (and fishing tackle):

<https://www.landcan.org/landcan-blog/Poison-Bullets/349>

<https://www.hcn.org/wotr/let-them-eat-copper/>

<https://blog.nature.org/2016/11/28/recovery-saving-common-loon-lead-fishing-tackle-poisoning-birds/>