

Honorable Debra Anne Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

We are writing to you as concerned scientists and as national conservation leaders urging you to embrace what could be the biggest conservation advance in the United States in our lifetime—one that this Administration can address and implement. Many of us writing to you are retired Department of the Interior staff, university staff that have worked in and with park units, and wildlife conservationists and scientists that are very worried about our park resources and as well as human health.

The public now has a much better understanding that lead exposure is a significant public health concern due to its persistence in the environment (and places where we work and recreate), its presence in our communities and homes, and that lead poisoning can affect children, especially in underserved communities globally, according to a study published by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 2020. We are also concerned that children in underserved communities may be consuming wild game contaminated with lead or possibly exposed during fishing activities. Since many communities not just recreate but rely on subsistence in National Park Service (NPS) units: from tribal members hunting in Alaska to underserved community members fishing in local park waters, their health is of utmost concern.

S. 4157², the LEAD Act of 2022, introduced by Senator Tammy Duckworth on May 5, 2022, and a similar bill, H.R. 405³ introduced in the House by Congressman Ted Liu in 2021, prohibits the use of lead ammunition in some units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. However, the bill does not address the use of lead ammunition or fishing tackle in the NPS, yet all of the arguments regarding negative impacts of lead certainly also apply to the nation’s national park units where these activities are authorized.

We are also aware of the October 2022 letter from the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks concerning this very issue and fully support their position. In addition, we fully support the Rulemaking Petition to the National Park Service, filed by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility with the American Bird Conservancy and the Union of Concerned Scientists, on November 17, 2022, to promulgate rules to ban the use or sale of lead-based ammunition or fishing tackle on the public lands and waters managed by the agency. As the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council will be meeting December 19th and this topic is on the agenda, we urge those from the Department and agency representatives in attendance to encourage a positive, progressive, and supportive dialogue on this issue.

Our request here is for serious consideration by the Office of the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the National Park Service to voluntarily implement an agency-wide ban on the use of lead ammunition where hunting is authorized, as well as a ban on the use and sale of lead fishing tackle in all national park units where fishing is authorized. This ban would complement and further ensure protections for human, environmental, and wildlife health as outlined in the NPS Director’s Memos regarding the use of non-lead ammunition in the direct reduction of wildlife in park operations such as culls and vehicle-wildlife collisions. It would also expand what is already in place and successful in our crown jewel parks such as Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Tetons. Do the rest of our nation’s parks and the “wild life therein” not deserve the same level of protections?

From the plethora of available peer-reviewed science on the negative impacts of lead-use in hunting and fishing, a ban on lead is not only necessary, but urgent. It is time for the most protected lands and waters in America (and the world) to fulfill its conservation mission—one that public and the world expects of this agency as a world conservation leader. The Biden-Harris administration, by launching **America the**

Beautiful, challenges us all to implement a nationwide effort to *conserve, connect, and restore the lands, waters, and wildlife*. This lead ban can significantly contribute to this worthwhile endeavor. Protection and restoration of our national parks will ensure the long-term conservation of our national natural heritage for this, and future generations to come.

We thank you for your time and please know that any of us can make ourselves available to further discussion and action on this matter.

Sincerely,

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The Honorable Chellie Pingree, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior
The Honorable David Joyce, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior
The Honorable Jeff Merkeley, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior
The Honorable Raul M. Grijalva, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable Joe Manchin, Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
The Honorable John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
The Honorable Tammy Duckworth, U.S. Senator, Sponsor S. 4157 LEAD Act of 2022
The Honorable Ted Liu, U.S. Congressman, Sponsor H.R. 405 LEAD Act of 2021

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