



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Washington D.C. 20240



March 6, 2024

Mr. Collin O'Mara, Chair  
Mr. John Devney, Vice Chair  
Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council  
c/o Doug Hobbs, Designated Federal Officer  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: OC  
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

Dear Mr. O'Mara and Mr. Devney:

Thank you for the December 15, 2023, letter from the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council (Council) to Secretary Haaland transmitting the Council's recommendations pertaining to the future use and management of lead and non-lead alternative ammunition of federal lands. Secretary Haaland has asked the Service to respond on her behalf.

We appreciate the Council's thoughtful recommendations regarding the use and management of lead and no-lead alternative ammunition on federal lands. As you indicate, the issue of lead ammunition use on federal public lands continues to be a challenging one for fish and wildlife management agencies at the federal and state levels, as well as for the hunting and recreational shooting public, industry, and conservation organizations. As was discussed at the December 4, 2023, Council meeting, the best available science, analyzed as part of the Service's annual Refuge hunting and sportfishing rulemaking (hunt/fish rule), demonstrates that lead ammunition and tackle have negative impacts on both human health and wildlife, and those impacts are more acute for some species. The Service continues to evaluate the future of lead use in hunting and fishing on Service lands and waters through a transparent public process. Limited lead phase-outs on Service lands through the annual Refuge hunt/fish rule have been initiated, while continuing to open new hunting opportunities that do not utilize lead ammunition.

While the Service will continue to act to minimize the health impacts of lead, we are also working to initiate steps to identify approaches to mitigate the impacts of future management actions on the hunting and recreational shooting public. For instance, some field stations have been working with states and partners to provide opportunities to help increase the adoption of and incentivize the increased use of non-lead alternative ammunition by the hunting public (i.e., non-lead ammo shooting and demonstration, buy-back programs, etc.). The Service has also been considering ways that funds provided through the Wildlife Restoration Program can be utilized by states to try new approaches to increasing the use of non-lead alternative ammunition by the hunting public.

We would like to continue to work with the Council to identify options or initiatives that can address your recommendations of the matter. Towards this end, we will work with the Council Designated Federal Officer to schedule a briefing with the membership of the Council's Wildlife Health Subcommittee to further explore how we can work toward implementation.

Thank you for your efforts to provide the Service with thoughtful recommendations and to help shape America's conservation future through the work of the Council. If you have questions or need more information regarding this matter please contact Cynthia Martinez, Chief, National Wildlife refuge System, at [cynthia\\_martinez@fws.gov](mailto:cynthia_martinez@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martha Williams" with a long, sweeping underline.

Martha Williams  
Director