



**Senate Bill 0181
Hunting – Lead and Lead-Based Ammunition – Phase-Out
UNFAVORABLE**

Senate Bill 181 seeks to prohibit the use of lead ammunition for hunting after July 1, 2029. What it does not consider is the long-term impact it will have on Maryland’s hunters who play an integral part in controlling Maryland growing wildlife population.

The provisions in this bill will make it difficult and expensive for deer hunters in Maryland to continue to hunt deer. The net result will be fewer Maryland citizens hunting deer in Maryland. Hunters are an integral part of the Department of Natural Resources’ conservation plan.

Attachment 1 demonstrates that while the number of deer taken from 1975 to 2024 has dramatically increased, the number of deer hunters and hunting licenses has declined from 194,122 in 1975 to 110,182 in 2024. This is a tenfold increase in deer taken and a 44% decrease in the number of active hunters. Consequently, the Department of Nature Resources has increased the “bag limit” to maintain the deer population at the appropriate levels based upon the available habitat. The need to control the deer population to reduce vehicular traffic accidents and resulting human injury and property damage is also a concern. Imposing restrictions which will further reduce the number of hunters is not a wise course of action.

The exception provided in §10-408 (E)(2) “THE DEPARTMENT SHALL AUTHORIZE THE USE OF LEAD 17 AMMUNITION FOR MUZZLELOADERS, HANDGUNS, RIFLES, AND SHOTGUNS IF 18 NONLEAD AMMUNITION IS NOT COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE FOR THE SPECIFIC (underline added for emphasis) WEAPON” will create an enforcement nightmare for Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police.

Ammunition is not manufactured for a “Specific” firearm (we do not use the term weapon). Just because a firearm is chambered for a certain cartridge does not mean every firearm chambered for that cartridge is compatible with the type and weight of the projectile.

The Natural Resources Police will have a daunting task, enforcing the provisions of this bill because they lack the resources necessary to justify an enforcement action.

There are also technical issues involved. Unless the rifling in the barrel is designed with the proper rate to twist (expressed in the number of inches required for 1 revolution of the projectile), the projectile will likely “key hole” which means it is tumbling in flight and thus inaccurate and unlikely to perform properly upon impact on a game animal.

In firearms and ammunition, "keyholing" refers to a phenomenon where bullets fail to stabilize during flight, resulting in them hitting the target at an angle instead of head-on, with the front of the bullet. This is generally undesired as it reduces the accuracy and the effectiveness of the bullet. When a bullet "keyholes," it creates an elongated hole in the target, resembling a keyhole, hence the name. This irregular hole is a clear indication that the bullet is tumbling instead of spiraling smoothly. There are several potential causes for keyholing:

- 1. Improper Bullet Diameter: If the bullet's diameter doesn't properly match the barrel's bore diameter, it might not stabilize effectively, resulting in keyholing.*
- 2. Incorrect Twist Rate: Firearms barrels have a specific twist rate that helps stabilize the bullet. If the twist rate is not appropriate for the bullet's length and weight, it can result in keyholing.*
- 3. Muzzle Damage: Damage near the muzzle of the barrel can destabilize the bullet as it exits, leading to keyholing.*
- 4. Suboptimal Bullet Design: In some cases, the bullet design itself might be flawed, making stabilization during flight challenging.*
- 5. Velocity Issues: Bullets that are fired at velocities too low may not gain sufficient rotational speed to stabilize.*

To avoid keyholing, it's important to choose the right ammunition for your firearm, considering factors such as the bullet's weight, diameter, and the firearm's barrel twist rate. It's also essential to maintain the firearm properly to prevent issues like muzzle damage.

[Source: trueshotammo.com/](https://trueshotammo.com/)

Senate Bill 0181
Unfavorable

The provisions of §10-408 (a)(3) (II) are meaningless. The federal government does not “approve” ammunition for hunting. It does publish a list of materials it considers to be non-toxic.

Instead of taking a negative and punitive approach, Senate Bill 181 should encourage the use of non-toxic ammunition in a manner like that taken by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service:

Try Lead-Free Ammunition this Hunting Season

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offers a lead-free hunting ammunition incentive program for hunters at select national wildlife refuges.

The program is a collaborative public and private partnership effort, guided by the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council federal advisory group, to educate and empower hunters in their choice of hunting ammunition.

Through the incentive program, hunters at participating sites can try lead-free hunting ammunition for free by submitting receipts to receive a prepaid debit card for up to \$50 per box of lead-free hunting ammunition (\$25/box for shotgun or muzzleloader and \$50/box for rifle). Limit 2 boxes of ammunition per eligible hunter. The incentives will be provided on a first come, first serve basis until the available funds at each refuge are exhausted.

Source: <https://www.fws.gov/initiative/lead-free>

We strongly recommend an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 181.

Respectfully,

John H. Josselyn
2A Maryland

Brian Eyler, Associate Director
Wildlife Heritage Service
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Year	White-tailed Deer Hunter Harvest	Estimated No. Deer Hunters (Hunter Mail Survey)	No. Hunting Licenses Sold
1975	8,782	100,646	194,122
1976	8,665	101,773	183,726
1977	10,869	97,416	193,855
1978	12,182	95,340	181,008
1979	13,647	103,811	171,914
1980	13,724	103,272	169,971
1981	14,495	109,605	169,405
1982	15,120	105,381	172,738
1983	16,586	104,434	173,991
1984	18,176	100,550	170,997
1985	17,395	103,058	170,521
1986	23,711	109,433	174,088
1987	26,766	112,832	174,391
1988	31,461	108,619	175,074
1989	43,849	111,396	164,104
1990	44,279	108,664	143,080
1991	44,119	97,667	146,181
1992	48,677	106,627	147,890
1993	48,420	102,753	146,234
1994	48,431	85,101	137,016
1995	59,227	90,137	138,098
1996	59,183	89,774	129,896
1997	62,856	86,585	127,804
1998	71,479	82,765	128,667
1999	75,526	77,368	128,614
2000	82,426	80,357	126,914
2001	82,205	84,086	128,993
2002	90,908	82,073	132,252
2003	84,567	79,481	122,634
2004	91,208	74,118	121,079
2005	91,426	67,795	121,969
2006	89,305	66,994	118,768
2007	90,354	66,611	121,623
2008	98,258	64,469	118,965
2009	98,281	64,244	120,761
2010	95,883	56,919	118,588
2011	95,372	59,979	119,025
2012	85,129	55,398	123,919
2013	93,162	60,753	116,754
2014	83,855	61,041	114,105
2015	81,095	65,541	121,111
2016	82,360	59,010	118,181
2017	83,382	55,368	118,551
2018	73,948	54,486	117,319
2019	76,010	54,866	111,963
2020	78,275	55,530	114,765
2021	67,445	47,813	111,886
2022	72,554	54,023	111,913
2023	72,642	50,461	111,519
2024	84,201	Est Not Available Yet	110,182



Image Details



Image Details

Why choose lead-free hunting ammunition?

Lead ammunition loses weight as small pieces strip from the front of the bullet or shot as it passes through an animal. These fragments are found farther from the wound channel than you may expect, and many are too small to see with the naked eye, making them difficult to remove.

Lead fragments may be left in the remains after harvesting an animal, even after field dressing. Remains from field-dressed animals provide a food source for scavenging wildlife.

How can you help?

Protect wildlife by choosing lead-free ammunition this hunting season. We encourage hunters to choose lead-free ammunition for all hunting, including big game.

Try Lead-Free Ammunition this

Hunting Season

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offers a lead-free hunting ammunition incentive program for hunters at select national wildlife refuges.

The program is a collaborative public and private partnership effort, guided by the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council federal advisory group, to educate and empower hunters in their choice of hunting ammunition.

Through the incentive program, hunters at participating sites can try lead-free hunting ammunition for free by submitting receipts to receive a prepaid debit card for up to \$50 per box of lead-free hunting ammunition (\$25/box for shotgun or muzzleloader and \$50/box for rifle). Limit 2 boxes of ammunition per eligible hunter. The incentives will be provided on a first come, first serve basis until the available funds at each refuge are exhausted.

Lead-free incentive program hunting locations:

[William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon](#) (for antlerless elk with refuge hunting permit)

[Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin](#) (for whitetail deer with refuge hunting permit)

[Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Pungo Unit in North Carolina](#) (for hunting whitetail deer, refuge hunting fee required)

[Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey](#) (for all authorized species with refuge hunting permit)

[Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland](#) (for deer and turkey with refuge hunting permit)

[Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in West Virginia](#) (for all authorized species)

[Camas National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho](#) – elk hunting

[Cape May National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey](#) – deer hunting

[Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Maryland](#) – deer and spring turkey hunting

[Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge, New Hampshire](#) – deer and spring turkey hunting

[Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, New York](#) – deer hunting

[Nulhegan Division of Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, Vermont](#) – moose and deer hunting

[Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Massachusetts](#) – deer hunting

[SUBMIT YOUR PROOF OF PURCHASE](#)

[PLAN YOUR HUNT](#)

Read more:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Voluntary Pilot Programs for Lead-Free Hunting](#)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Voluntary Lead-free Ammunition Incentive Program for 2025-2026 Hunting Season](#)

[JOIN IN AND HEAR THE CONVERSATION ABOUT LEAD AND LEAD-FREE HUNTING AMMUNITION](#) 

All Initiatives related to Lead-free

Filter the list by searching for a specific subject or term. If you can't find what you're looking for, try searching the full FWS site from the search bar at the top of the page.

Enter Search Term

