

Written Testimony

MD SB 181 – Lead Ammunition Phase-Out

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman

Chairman, Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 181 – Lead Ammunition – Phase-Out – FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

I am Elaine Leslie, an Executive Member of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks (the Coalition). The Coalition is made up of over 4,700 members, all of whom are current, former, and retired employees and volunteers of the National Park Service (NPS). Together, they have accumulated over 50,000 years of experience caring for America's most valuable natural and cultural resources. In my career, I have worked as the NPS Agency Chief of Biological Resources. I am also an experience wildlife biologist for over 45 years. I have been working on the impacts of lead to wildlife since the mid 90's. I have worked in collaboration on this issue with scientists, researchers, and state and federal agencies on species from California condors to bald and golden eagles from the west coast, to Midwest to the Atlantic coast.

I am submitting both written and oral comments. The Coalition is in strong support of SB 181, the phase-out of lead ammunition for hunting. See discussion points below.

We have all now heard of the threat of lead to public health: the U.S. removed lead from toys to furniture to house paint to gasoline. With safer, affordable, and high-performance ammunition alternatives available, it's time to embrace superior forms of ammunition for all sport hunting activities in Maryland and the nation.

Our collective concern is certainly Maryland's wildlife but also the human risk factor. There is so much we may not know about what humans are facing from meat ingestion of spent lead in hunted game carcasses. But there is definitive science and a plethora of peer-reviewed publications on the impacts to wildlife.

- For humans and wildlife and the environment, no amount of lead is safe. We do know that.
- Use of lead in hunting violates and compromises conservation and wildlife management principles, including the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation.
- Lead phase-out efforts can work, and alternative ammunition is available and cost-effective. This is a solid first step.

US Fish and Wildlife Service banned lead shot for waterfowl hunting in 1991. California phased out all lead ammunition with documented beneficial effects on wildlife and little or no disruption in hunting participation. Nationwide, millions of hunters already use alternative forms of ammunition. I think its evident we would not have species such as trumpeter swans, loons (albeit still under assault from lead) and the diversity of waterfowl we have today without that 1991 ban.

Maryland can take a big step forward in stopping the ongoing accumulation of toxic lead in the environment and help ensure the long-term conservation of our national natural heritage for this and future generations to come. The state of Maryland, its hunters, and the hunting community, can lead turning conservation concepts into actions and results.

All of us working diligently to make conservation strides recognize that progress does not fit within today's short attention spans. Restoring habitats, recovering species, and protecting species, often requires generations to achieve. To be successful, Maryland can filter out the noise and focus on the long game. The long game can mean aligning your efforts to achieve larger, more meaningful results that take time. This requires strategic thinking as presented in this bill. The path that the state of Maryland is on is the only path that will produce the durability that lasting conservation requires. Maryland will be demonstrating responsible, humane, ethical, and meaningful conservation actions and leadership in the state, and be a model for the nation.

It's not perfect. No conservation system or policies are. But by passing this bill, Maryland is moving forward, intentionally, with an eye on its natural resource conservation future.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 181.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elaine F. Leslie, National Park Service, Retired

Coalition to Protect America's National Parks