

# The New York Times

Opinion -- Editorial -- A30

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## THE BULLET THAT KEEPS ON KILLING



(AP Photo/Matt York)  
Corey Slater fly fishes  
in Lower Lake Mary  
Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2010  
near Flagstaff, Ariz.

members. They know that getting lead out of the environment is essential. Lead is as toxic in nature as it is in the form of lead paint in houses. Scientists have established a clear link between lead from ammunition and the poisoning of some 75 species of birds — especially waterfowl and scavengers like condors, eagles and ravens.

AT THE END OF AUGUST, THE ENVIRONMENTAL Protection Agency turned down a petition to ban lead from the manufacture of hunting ammunition. According to the agency, it lacked the legal authority to regulate lead in that form.

But that conclusion is legally dubious and it was a sudden and premature about-face for the agency, which had planned a two-month public comment period on the subject. And the turnaround came after the National Rifle Association asked the E.P.A. to reject the petition. The N.R.A. said this was just a backhanded attempt to impose gun control.

The N.R.A. should consult the hunters among its

effective substitutes for lead in ammunition, and some states have experimented with a swap — encouraging hunters to trade in lead ammunition for nontoxic shells.

We urge the E.P.A. to reconsider this hasty decision. The agency has the authority it needs to regulate the lead in ammunition as a toxic substance, even though it isn't authorized to regulate the manufacture of ammunition itself. (It has said it will consider a ban on lead fishing sinkers, which would be welcome, but that is not going nearly far enough.) A bullet fired from a hunter's gun should kill only once, not go on killing again and again.