



### Sportsmen no longer the ultimate environmentalists

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I mean, come on, who hasn't shot over a pond, just to see how the lead pellets pepper the water.

Of course, the issue facing the EPA has nothing to do with ammunition. The federal agency very quickly dismissed the notion that it has the authority to regulate the use of lead any form of ammunition.

Change is oh so difficult.

Or, perhaps its simply the opportunity to remake the old bumper sticker that once adorned many a vehicle, telling authorities they'll only give up their gun "when you take it from my cold, dead hands."

There's only one problem, this issue has nothing to do with stripping away gun ownership rights or for that matter, the ammunition used in the guns.

But if we continue to use the material that is at the heart of the Environmental Protection Agency's request for comments, it might be much easier to pry anything from our cold, dead hands.

Yes, I'm talking about lead, a metal that has been banned in virtually all uses other than in the sporting world, where shotgunners, riflemen and anglers toss it into the environment in perhaps the most willy-nilly fashion possible.

It was not so quick to dismiss the possibility of regulating lead in fishing sinkers and such, and opened a comment period on that topic.

Unfortunately, virtually no one paid any attention to that critical tidbit of information.

As a result, there have been 3,523 comments -- a thousand more than just two weeks ago -- filed in the case of regulating the use of lead in fishing sinkers, and I'm going to guess that all but about four of them are objections to the idea of regulating lead in ammunition.

I'll forgive the first few to file comments, as I've sure they were in a rush to be the first on their block to overlook all the facts -- including the posted letter from EPA telling the American Bird Conservancy and the Center for Biological Diversity that the ammunition request is out of the question.

I mean, after all, it's the one posted just before the comments from lead supporters.

But, it's the same, all the way through. Even the 2,393rd comment, coming on the letterhead of an Illinois probation officer, still spreads the falsehood.

"I do not support the EPA's proposal," this so-called public servant writes, "... banning all traditional ammunition. I will be contacting my congressman and senator with regards to this matter and seeking their opposition to this petition."

And he's watching over the criminals in Illinois? Perhaps it's time for people to really get scared.

Make no mistake about it, I've not read all 3,523 (and growing) list of comments. After all, I have virtually anything better to do.

What dismays me, however, is that we -- hunters, anglers, you know, the sportsmen of the world -- are fighting a rule that we probably should have suggested in the first place.

Instead, for the world to hear, we proclaim aloud how wonderful we are for encouraging a tax on firearms, ammunition and fishing gear to give back to the environment.

And then we toss out perhaps the most lethal element there is.

Never mind that the California Condor is struggling to avoid extinction because of lead, we're killing other animals.

If we're poisoning the environment by what we do, shouldn't we stop? Is that what being a sportsman is all about?

Instead, the EPA talks lightly about regulating lead in fishing sinkers, and we raise caine about the idea of taking lead out of ammunition. Rather than shout down something we've gotten used to, perhaps we should consider the environment first.

The makers of ammunition shouldn't hide behind the bright lights of websites with whiz-bang features, to avoid the limelight. They need to step up to the plate as well, and sell the alternatives. They'll still make a ton of money, they'll just have to retool a bit.

Lead is simply a bad thing. It kills people, it kills animals.

Yet, people who call themselves sportsmen -- champions of the environment -- hide when it's their turn to do what's right.