



Conservationists Ask Feds to Get Lead Out of Ammunition

Several Bay Area conservation groups joined a nationwide coalition of 100 organizations Tuesday in asking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to halt or limit the use of lead in hunting ammunition

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By Bay City News Service

The groups say toxic lead in hunting bullets and shot causes the widespread poisoning of birds -- including the endangered California condor -- that consume lead bullet fragments left in the wild after hunting.

The groups, led by the San Francisco branch of the Center for Biological Diversity, filed a petition with the EPA in Washington, D.C., asking the agency to initiate a rule-making process to regulate lead in ammunition.

The petition says 75 species are harmed by the lead ammunition, including bald and golden eagles, trumpeter swans and the California condor.

People who eat game killed by lead bullets also incur health risks, the petition said.

Center for Biological Diversity spokesman Jeff Miller said, "The unnecessary poisoning of eagles, condors and other wildlife is a national tragedy that the EPA can easily put an end to.

"There are safe, available alternatives to lead ammo for all hunting and shooting sports, so there's no reason for this poisoning to go on," he said.

Miller said the center estimates that up to 20 million birds of all species die each year from lead poisoning.

Other Bay Area groups signing the petition include the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Marin Audubon Society, Santa Clara Audubon Society, Alameda Creek Alliance, Environmental Action Coalition of West Marin, Stream Systems and Wild Equity Institute.

An EPA spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

In 2010, the agency rejected a similar petition filed by a different set of environmental groups. The agency said the U.S. Toxic Substances Control Act specifically excludes regulation of guns and shells.

Today's petition argues that the new request is different because it is aimed at the chemicals in ammunition, which the conservation groups contend is within the EPA's authority to regulate