THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
ALASKA CHAPTER

2627 Ingra Street
Anchorage, AK 99508

The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society is a professional society founded in 1971. With over 200 members, the Alaska Chapter is one of the largest chapters of The Wildlife Society, an international organization representing wildlife biologists and managers employed by state, federal, and borough resource agencies, academic institutions, non-governmental conservation organizations, and private industry. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve biological diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources in Alaska for the benefit of society.

4 March 2013

Mr. Karl Johnstone, Chairman
Alaska Board of Fisheries
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Chairman Johnstone:

The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society supports Proposal 234 which bans lead weights weighing 1 ounce or less, and lead jigs less than 1 inch for use in sport fishing.

Lost lead tackle can remain intact in aquatic environments for decades, resulting in an accumulation of sinkers and jigheads in popular fishing areas. Ingestion of lead tackle can poison loons, swans, and other waterbird species when they mistake sinkers and jigheads for small stones they pick up from the bottom of lakes and rivers to help digest food. Ingestion of one sinker can be sufficient to result in mortality. In a nationwide study by the U.S. Geological Survey, 3.5% of common loons examined were found to have ingested lead sinkers (Waterbirds. 2003. 26:345-352). In some regions of the United States, ingestion of lead tackle is the cause of approximately 50% of mortality among common loons during the breeding season. Lead toxicity can be magnified in eagles and scavengers that feed on waterbirds that have been weakened or died from lead ingestion.

The Wildlife Society has adopted a position that advocates for the replacement of lead-based fishing tackle with nontoxic products[1]. The American Fisheries Society also encourages the use of nontoxic alternatives to lead fishing tackle[2]. The recommendations of these professional societies are based on a large body of published research that documents the adverse effects of lead in the environment.

[1] http://joomla.wildlife.org/documents/positionstatements/Lead_final_2009.pdf
[2] http://fisheries.org/docs/policy_statements/ policy_35f.pdf

Nontoxic alternatives such as bismuth, steel, and tin are available as replacements for lead fishing tackle. These are especially suitable as replacements for the small-sized lead tackle that poses the greatest hazard to waterbirds and that is the focus of Proposal 234. These nontoxic substitutes for small lead tackle are increasingly available in Alaskan sporting goods stores, and will become more so with passage of this proposal.

We believe adoption of this proposal will not pose a significant burden to sport fisherman, will demonstrate the willingness of the sport fishing community to reduce lead in the environment, and will benefit Alaska's wildlife. We hope you and others on the Board will support this proposal.

Sincerely,

Jerry Hupp, Ph.D.
President