

PROTECTING ACCESS FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ACT

NOVEMBER 25, 2025.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WESTERMAN, from the Committee on Natural Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

together with

DISSENTING VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 556]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 556) to prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act”.

SEC. 2. PROTECTING ACCESS FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ON FEDERAL LAND AND WATER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in section 20.21 or 20.108 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act), and subsection (b), the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, and the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service (referred to in this section as the “applicable Secretary”), may not—

(1) prohibit the use of lead ammunition or tackle on Federal land or water that is—

(A) under the jurisdiction of the applicable Secretary; and

(B) made available for hunting or fishing activities; or

(2) issue regulations relating to the level of lead in ammunition or tackle to be used on Federal land or water described in paragraph (1).

(b) EXCEPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply to a prohibition or regulations described in that subsection that are limited to a specific unit of Federal land or water, if the applicable Secretary determines that—

(1) a decline in wildlife population at the specific unit of Federal land or water is primarily caused by the use of lead in ammunition or tackle, based on the field data from the specific unit of Federal land or water; and

(2) the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, are—

(A) consistent with the law of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located;

(B) consistent with an applicable policy of the fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located; or

(C) approved by the applicable fish and wildlife department of the State in which the specific Federal land or water is located.

(c) FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE.—The applicable Secretary shall include in a Federal Register notice with respect to any prohibition or regulations that meet the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (b) an explanation of how the prohibition or regulations, as applicable, meet those requirements.

PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

The purpose of H.R. 556 is to prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

H.R. 556 bars the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service from prohibiting or regulating the use of lead ammunition or tackle on federal lands or waters.

In 2021, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) sued the Department of the Interior (DOI) after the latter had announced that it was expanding hunting and fishing opportunities on 2.3 million acres across 147 refuges and national fish hatcheries.¹ In its suit, CBD stated the effects of lead ammunition and tackle would negatively impact endangered species that inhabit the National Wildlife Refuge System (System).²

On November 30, 2022, the FWS and CBD reached a settlement agreement that mandated FWS to take steps to protect wildlife “harmed by expanded hunting and fishing” on refuges.³ Also included in the settlement were FWS’s promises to expand lead ammunition bans as a part of the 2023–2024 annual rule governing management of the System. The FWS also agreed to respond to CBD’s petition to ban lead ammunition and fishing tackle across all refuges,⁴ but ultimately rejected the petition on June 7, 2023.⁵

On June 22, 2023, the FWS followed through on the settlement agreement by proposing to ban the use of lead ammunition and tackle by 2026 in seven refuges: the Blackwater, Eastern Neck, and Patuxent Research refuges in Maryland; the Erie refuge in Penn-

¹ See CBD’s Complaint in *Center for Biological Diversity v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*, U.S. District Court for the District of Montana. <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3-wagtail.biologicialdiversity.org/documents/Complaint-Hunting-NWR.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ “Biden’s war on hunting faces blowback from Republicans, sportsmen groups,” Thomas Catenucci. Fox News. April 30, 2023. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/bidens-war-hunting-faces-blowback-republicans-sportsmen-groups>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ “The Association Support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Decision to Reject CBD’s petition.” Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. June 7, 2023. <https://www.fishwildlife.org/landing/blog/afwa-supports-usfws-decision-reject-cbds-petition>.

sylvania; the Great Thicket and Rachel Carson refuges in Maine; and the Wallops Island refuge in Virginia.⁶ In addition, lead ammunition, but not tackle, would be banned in the Chincoteague refuge in Virginia and Maryland.⁷

A ban on cost-effective traditional lead ammunition and tackle threatens sportsmen's participation in, and funding of, wildlife conservation. The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act⁸ and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fishing Restoration Act⁹ require sales of hunting and fishing equipment to be subject to an excise tax paid by manufacturers, which is generally passed on to consumers.¹⁰ In Fiscal Year 2025, the FWS received nearly \$1 billion in receipts from Pittman-Robertson,¹¹ and \$416 million in receipts from Dingell-Johnson.¹²

In 2021, the National Shooting Sports Foundation concluded that lead-free hunting ammunition is, on average, 24.66 percent more expensive than lead ammunition. The cost of raw materials to manufacture lead alternatives is substantial, with copper (for ammunition) being five times more expensive than lead and the cost of tungsten (fishing tackle) over two to four times more expensive. Raising costs on consumers could result in a substantial decrease in hunting and fishing participation, and ultimately a decrease in conservation funding.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 556 was introduced on January 16, 2025, by Representative Rob Wittman (R-VA). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources. The bill was also referred to the Committee on Agriculture. On July 15, 2025, the Committee on Natural Resources met to consider the bill. Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA) offered an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute designated Wittman_018 ANS. The Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute was agreed to by voice vote. Ranking Member Jared Huffman (D-CA) offered an amendment to the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute designated Dingell #1. The amendment was not agreed to by a roll call vote of 17 yeas to 23 nays, as follows:

⁶ 88 FR 41058.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ 16 USC 669 et seq.

⁹ Officially the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950, now referred to as the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 USC 777 et seq.).

¹⁰ "The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act." Erin H. Ward, Pervaze A. Sheikh, and Mark K. DeSantis, Congressional Research Service. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12229>. "Sport Fish Restoration." U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. <https://www.fws.gov/program/sport-fish-restoration>.

¹¹ "Final Apportionment of Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Funds for Fiscal Year 2025." U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. [fy-25-wr-final-apportionment-table.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/program/sport-fish-restoration).

¹² "Final Apportionment of Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Funds for Fiscal Year 2025." U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. [fy-25-sfr-final-apportionment-table.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/program/sport-fish-restoration).

Committee on Natural Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

119th Congress

Date: July 15, 2025

Recorded Vote #: 7

Meeting on / Amendment on: **Dingell #1 amendment offered by Ranking Member Huffman to Westerman_018** ANS to H.R. 556 (Rep. Wittman), "*Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025*"

MEMBERS	Yea	Nay	Pres	MEMBERS	Yea	Nay	Pres
Mr. Westerman, AR, Chairman		X		Mr. Huffman, CA	X		
Mr. Wittman, VA		X		Mr. Neguse, CO	X		
Mr. McClintock, CA		X		Ms. Leger Fernandez, NM	X		
Mr. Gosar, AZ		X		Ms. Stansbury, NM	X		
Mrs. Radewagen, AS				Ms. Hoyle, OR	X		
Mr. LaMalfa, CA		X		Mr. Magaziner, RI	X		
Mr. Webster, FL		X		Mr. Golden, ME		X	
Mr. Fulcher, ID		X		Mr. Min, CA	X		
Mr. Stauber, MN		X		Ms. Dexter, OR	X		
Mr. Tiffany, WI				Mr. Hernández, PR	X		
Ms. Boebert, CO		X		Ms. Randall, WA	X		
Mr. Bentz, OR		X		Ms. Ansari, AZ	X		
Ms. Kiggans, VA		X		Ms. Elfreth, MD	X		
Mr. Hunt, TX				Mr. Gray, CA		X	
Mr. Collins, GA		X		Ms. Rivas, CA	X		
Ms. Hageman, WY		X		Ms. Velázquez, NY			
Mr. Amodei, NV		X		Mrs. Dingell, MI	X		
Mr. Walberg, MI				Mr. Soto, FL	X		
Mr. Ezell, MS		X		Ms. Brownley, CA	X		
Ms. Maloy, UT		X		Ms. Lee, NV	X		
Mr. McDowell, NC		X					
Mr. Crank, CO		X					
Mr. Begich, AK		X					
Mr. Hurd, CO		X					
Mr. Kennedy, UT		X		TOTAL:	17	23	

The bill, as amended, was ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by a roll call vote of 23 yeas to 17 nays, as follows:

Committee on Natural Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

119th Congress

Date: July 15, 2025

Recorded Vote #:8

Meeting on / Amendment on: **On Favorably Reporting, as amended, H.R. 556 (Rep. Wittman),**
“Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025”

MEMBERS	Yea	Nay	Pres	MEMBERS	Yea	Nay	Pres
Mr. Westerman, AR, Chairman	X			Mr. Huffman, CA		X	
Mr. Wittman, VA	X			Mr. Neguse, CO		X	
Mr. McClintock, CA	X			Ms. Leger Fernandez, NM			
Mr. Gosar, AZ	X			Ms. Stansbury, NM		X	
Mrs. Radewagen, AS				Ms. Hoyle, OR		X	
Mr. LaMalfa, CA	X			Mr. Magaziner, RI		X	
Mr. Webster, FL	X			Mr. Golden, ME	X		
Mr. Fulcher, ID	X			Mr. Min, CA		X	
Mr. Stauber, MN	X			Ms. Dexter, OR		X	
Mr. Tiffany, WI				Mr. Hernández, PR		X	
Ms. Boebert, CO	X			Ms. Randall, WA		X	
Mr. Bentz, OR	X			Ms. Ansari, AZ		X	
Ms. Kiggans, VA	X			Ms. Elfreth, MD		X	
Mr. Hunt, TX				Mr. Gray, CA	X		
Mr. Collins, GA	X			Ms. Rivas, CA		X	
Ms. Hageman, WY	X			Ms. Velázquez, NY			
Mr. Amodei, NV	X			Mrs. Dingell, MI		X	
Mr. Walberg, MI				Mr. Soto, FL		X	
Mr. Ezell, MS	X			Ms. Brownley, CA		X	
Ms. Maloy, UT	X			Ms. Lee, NV		X	
Mr. McDowell, NC	X						
Mr. Crank, CO	X						
Mr. Begich, AK	X						
Mr. Hurd, CO	X						
Mr. Kennedy, UT	X			TOTAL:	23	17	

HEARINGS

For the purposes of clause 3(c)(6) of House rule XIII, the following hearing was used to develop or consider this measure: hearing in the 118th Congress by the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries held on May 10, 2023.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

Section 1 names the bill the “Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act”.

Section 2. Protecting access for hunters and anglers on federal land and water

Section 2 prohibits the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture from banning the use of lead ammunition or tackle on federal lands or waters that are made available for hunting or fishing, unless certain requirements are met. The Secretaries may prohibit the use of lead in a particular unit of federal land or water if they determine that a decline in wildlife population at that unit is primarily caused by the use of lead in ammunition or tackle, and if the prohibition is consistent with state law, or state fish and wildlife policy, or regulations governing that unit. In addition, the Secretaries may not issue regulations relating to the level of lead in ammunition or tackle to be used on federal lands or waters.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources’ oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill is to prohibit the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture from prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on certain Federal land or water under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY, ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY, AND TAX EXPENDITURES

In compliance with clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee adopts as its own the estimate of new budget authority, entitlement authority, or tax expenditures or revenues contained in the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE ESTIMATES

Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of House rule XIII, the Committee adopts as its own the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

The Committee adopts as its own the estimate of the Federal mandates prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Directed Rule Making. This bill does not contain any directed rule makings.

Duplication of Existing Programs. This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pursuant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95–220, as amended by Public Law 98–169) as relating to other programs.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

Any preemptive effect of this bill over state, local, or tribal law is intended to be consistent with the bill's purposes and text and the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

As ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources, H.R. 556 would make no changes in existing law.

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Room 1301, Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6001

ANGIE CHARR, MAINE/ST
RANKING MEMBER/STAFF

DAVID SCOTT, GEORGIA
JAMES CHAMBERLAIN, CALIFORNIA
JAMES P. McGOVERN, MASSACHUSETTS
ALMA F. ANDERSON, NORTH CAROLINA
JAMES E. COOPER, CALIFORNIA
SHONTA M. BIRDSON, OHIO
JAMES A. ANDERSON, OHIO/STAFF

SHARON L. DENNIS, MAINE
VANCE A. ADAMS, OHIO/ST
DORIS L. DUNN, CALIFORNIA
J. M. FENIGAN, MAINE
NANCY B. JOHNSON, CALIFORNIA
ALICE L. KAPLAN, CALIFORNIA
DAIRY VASSILOU, ALABAMA/ST
JOHN HALL, ALABAMA, CALIFORNIA
JAMES L. HARRIS, CALIFORNIA
ADAM GARR, CALIFORNIA/ST
KRISTEN M. DONAGHUE, VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
ROBERTA FLORES, ALABAMA
ELLEN SUMMERS VITKAMP, ALABAMA
JAMES W. NEW, NEW YORK
JOHN W. MANNOX, NEW YORK
APRIL MAC, DELEAF, NEW YORK
CHRIS M. MANNING, MAINE
SALUD O. CARABAL, CALIFORNIA

PATRICK BROOKIN, STAFF/BRITISH COLUMBIA
BRIAN SOWDER, MINORITY STAFF/DIRECTOR

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

This letter confirms our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 556, the “Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025.” Thank you for collaborating with the Committee on Agriculture on the matters within our jurisdiction.

We would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 556 and request a copy of our letters on this matter be published in the Congressional Record during Floor consideration.

Dean GT Thompson

Cc: The Honorable Angie Craig, Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture
The Honorable Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Jason Smith, Parliamentarian, U.S. House of Representatives

BRUCE WESTERMAN OF ARKANSAS
CHAIRMAN

VIVIAN MOEGLEN
STAFF DIRECTOR

JARED HUFFMAN OF CALIFORNIA
RANKING DEMOCRAT

ANA UNRUH COHEN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 7, 2025

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

I write regarding H.R. 556, the "Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025," which was ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on July 15, 2025.

I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture and appreciate your willingness to forgo further consideration of the bill. I acknowledge that the Committee on Agriculture will not formally consider H.R. 556 and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained therein.

I am pleased to support your request to name members of the Committee on Agriculture to any conference committee to consider such provisions. I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the *Congressional Record* during floor consideration of the bill and will include such letters in the committee report on H.R. 556. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources

cc: The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Angie Craig, Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture
The Honorable Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources
The Honorable Jason Smith, Parliamentarian

DISSENTING VIEWS

H.R. 556, the “Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act of 2025,” would undermine science-based wildlife conservation by prohibiting federal land managers from regulating lead ammunition and tackle—known pollutants that have devastated wildlife populations across the United States. This legislation ignores decades of scientific evidence demonstrating that lead ammunition and fishing tackle pose grave threats to over 130 species,¹ including iconic birds like bald eagles, California condors, and common loons.

The scientific consensus is clear: when lead ammunition is used in hunting, bullets fragment and contaminate gut piles that scavenger animals consume, while lead fishing tackle is mistaken for food or grit by waterbirds.² It takes only tiny amounts of lead to kill large birds, making this a significant conservation concern on federal lands specifically managed to protect wildlife.

Rather than supporting evidence-based land management, H.R. 556 would strip federal agencies of their fundamental authority to regulate pollutants on lands under their stewardship. This legislation would effectively handcuff land managers from protecting wildlife on National Wildlife Refuges—areas explicitly managed with the mission of conserving wildlife. By requiring agencies to prove that wildlife population declines are “primarily caused” by lead ammunition in each specific management unit, the bill would create an impossibly high and cost-prohibitive standard that most land units lack the budget or staff capacity to meet.

Ironically, as written, this bill could also preempt the authority of states to limit the use of lead in hunting or fishing. At least 38 states currently have lead ammunition and tackle restrictions in place, demonstrating that this is not a federal overreach but a widespread conservation strategy. States like Arizona, New Hampshire, Maine, and Minnesota have demonstrated remarkable success with lead fishing tackle bans, protecting wildlife while ensuring continued access for sportsmen and women through gear exchange programs, non-lead materials discounts, and incentives for lead removal.

By blocking federal agencies from using the best available science to make determinations about lead restrictions, this bill prioritizes ideology over evidence and threatens the long-term stewardship of our public lands and wildlife. The legislation could have numerous unintended consequences, including forcing land closures

¹D. Bellinger, A., et al. 2013. Health Risks from Lead-Based Ammunition in the Environment—A Consensus Statement of Scientists. Microbiology and Environmental Toxicology, UC Santa Cruz; Groundbreaking study finds widespread lead poisoning in bald and golden eagles. USGS. February 17, 2022. <https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/groundbreaking-study-finds-widespread-lead-poisoning-bald-and-golden>

²J.C. Franson, Scott P. Hansen, T.E. Creekmore, C.J. Brand, D.C. Evers, A.E. Duerr, S. DeStefano. “Lead fishing weights and other fishing tackle in selected waterbirds”. (003) DOI: 10.1675/1524-4695(2003)026[0345:LFWAOF]2.0.CO;2.

to protect species that could otherwise be managed through targeted lead restrictions.

This bill represents a dangerous step backward for wildlife conservation at a time when we should be building on the proven success of existing lead reduction programs. Rather than addressing the documented impacts of lead on wildlife, H.R. 556 would make conservation and management more difficult while undermining the very lands and wildlife that provide hunting and fishing opportunities for future generations.

Previous analyses have shown no significant price difference between lead-free and lead-core ammunition in popular calibers, with annual cost differences for anglers of only \$5–25 per year³—comparable to other minor hunting expenses. In contrast, the Trump administration’s sweeping tariffs on imported metals and ammunition components are driving up costs for all ammunition—both lead and non-lead—making the modest price differences between ammunition types a negligible concern compared to the broader affordability crisis facing sportsmen and women.⁴

The robust body of scientific literature supporting lead restrictions reflects decades of research and successful implementation. H.R. 556 ignores this evidence and sets a troubling precedent for politics to override science in federal land management decisions, ultimately threatening both wildlife conservation and sustainable hunting and fishing opportunities.

JARED HUFFMAN,
Ranking Member.



³Thomas VG. Lead-free hunting rifle ammunition: product availability, price, effectiveness, and role in global wildlife conservation. *Ambio*. 2013 Oct;42(6):737–45. doi: 10.1007/s13280-012-0361-7. Epub 2013 Jan 4. PMID: 23288616; PMCID: PMC3758820.

⁴Gun Tests. “How Tariffs Will Likely Drive Up Your Ammo Prices”. April 13, 2025. Last visited on August 14, 2025.