



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON CRITERIA TO BE USED FOR ESTABLISHING NONTOXIC SHOT ZONES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is asking for public comment and recommendations concerning specific criteria to be used for identifying nontoxic shot zones for waterfowl hunting.

The agency published a notice in the September 25, 1984, Federal Register, announcing its intention to propose in December 1984 specific criteria for identifying nontoxic shot zones, and asking for comments and recommendations before the proposal is developed. Interested parties have until October 30 to respond.

Most ammunition used for hunting waterfowl is made of lead. Waterfowl may get lead poisoning when they swallow spent lead shot pellets that they pick up while feeding. In 1976 the Fish and Wildlife Service began requiring hunters to use nontoxic steel shot in certain designated zones where lead poisoning was thought to be a problem.

Over the years a number of techniques have been used for identifying lead poisoning problem areas. In 1976, the Service's final environmental impact statement on the use of steel shot stated that nontoxic shot zones would be determined on the basis of the magnitude of waterfowl harvest, the density of deposited shot, the incidence of shot in waterfowl gizzards, measurements of lead levels in wing bones, visible evidence of mortality, and enforcement considerations in establishing easily identifiable boundaries, as well as other appropriate factors. More recently the Service has also considered the occurrence of lead in the soft tissue of waterfowl, such as liver and kidney, and measurements of blood enzyme levels indicating lead ingestion.

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These techniques have been used individually or in combination in various parts of the country. No single technique or combination of techniques has been generally accepted by all Federal and State authorities involved in designating nontoxic shot zones. As a result, the zones have not been established in a uniform manner throughout the country, resulting in inequities in the application of nontoxic shot requirements for waterfowl hunting.

In an effort to resolve this issue, the Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking to establish uniform scientific criteria for identifying lead poisoning problem areas. By seeking public comments before its proposal is developed, the Service hopes to facilitate the establishment of criteria that will be generally acceptable to all interested parties.

Comments or recommendations concerning nontoxic shot zone criteria should be addressed to the Director (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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