



# NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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## SERVICE APPROVES TUNGSTEN-MATRIX SHOT FOR CURRENT WATERFOWL SEASON

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has given temporary approval for the use of tungsten-matrix shot during the 1998-99 waterfowl hunting season, after reviewing preliminary tests that show no harm to birds that ingest the pellets.

Hunters can use the new shot, manufactured by the Kent Cartridge Manufacturing Co. of Kearneysville, West Virginia, only during the remaining months of the current season. More extensive tests to determine the shot's impact on birds' long-term health and reproductive cycles must be conducted next year before the shot can be considered for permanent approval.

"The Service wants to provide waterfowl hunters with as many options as possible for choosing shot while still protecting birds," said Robert Blohm, acting chief of Service's Migratory Bird Management Office. "By giving temporary approval to tungsten-matrix shot, we're continuing that commitment."

In 1991, lead shot was phased out for use in waterfowl hunting because it was found to be toxic to ducks and geese that ingest it while feeding. At that time, steel shot became the only legal load for waterfowl hunting. The Service's decision to approve tungsten-matrix shot gives hunters a choice of five different loads for the current season.

In addition to steel, the Service has already given permanent approval to bismuth-tin shot. Tungsten-iron and tungsten-polymer shot were given temporary approval for the 1998-99 season only.

The decision to extend temporary approval to tungsten-matrix shot for the remainder of the season poses little risk to the resource and would provide Kent Cartridge the time to complete the full range of required tests on the shot material. The new shot material was submitted for Service approval by Kent Cartridge in late 1997.

As with prior approvals of tungsten-based shot, the Service did not approve the use of tungsten-matrix shot in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta because of concern that the absorption of

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tungsten into the femur, kidney, and liver could potentially affect the threatened spectacled eider, a species already vulnerable to adverse weather, predation, and lead poisoning.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies.