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**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**

Legislative Hearing

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Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Sablan, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. National Wildlife Federation is a non-partisan, non-profit organization. Our mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. Founded by well-known conservationist and political cartoonist J.N. "Ding" Darling in 1934, the National Wildlife Federation is today comprised of 48 state and territorial affiliates and more than 4 million members and supporters. Our members include hunters, anglers, backyard gardeners, birdwatchers and many other outdoor enthusiasts from throughout the nation.

Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act (H.R. 3065)

It is an honor for the National Wildlife Federation to testify today regarding a bill which concerns the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Restoration Act). This is because one of the very first lobbying accomplishments of the National Wildlife Federation was securing Congressional passage in 1937 of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (Wildlife Restoration Act). This landmark legislation, now celebrating its 75th anniversary, directs that excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition be dedicated to restoring wildlife, development of access facilities to public lands, and hunter education programs, including construction and operation of public target ranges.

Since its inception, the Wildlife Restoration Act has generated \$6.8 billion for program implementation and is strongly supported by hunters and shooters because they know that the special excise taxes (up to 11%) on guns, ammunition and archery equipment are dedicated to Wildlife Restoration Act purposes. More than 62% of the revenue is used to buy, develop, maintain, and operate wildlife management areas across the nation. In partnership with the state wildlife agencies, the Act's many outstanding conservation successes include restoration of pronghorn, elk, wild turkey, deer and many other wildlife species. The \$22 billion hunters expended for hunting activities in 2006 (National Hunting and Fishing Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) was, in part, made possible by the success of the Wildlife Restoration Act in restoring game wildlife.

The Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act (H.R. 3065) would further the states' abilities to use Wildlife Restoration Act funds "to facilitate the construction and expansion of public target ranges, including ranges on Federal land managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management." We recognize the need to ensure that people of all ages have proper training and facilities to ensure safety in hunting. While supporting this concept, we encourage consideration of several factors.

The toxicity of lead to wildlife, including lead used in ammunition and fishing tackle in certain situations, is well established (Rattner, B.A., J.C. Franson, S.R. Sheffield, C.I. Goddard, N.J. Leonard, D. Stang and P.J. Wingate. 2008. Sources and implications of lead ammunition and fishing tackle on natural resources. The Wildlife Society). In fact, the National Wildlife Federation successfully led the charge to ban the use of lead and other toxic substances in shot used for waterfowl hunting because of widespread ingestion of spent lead shot by ducks, geese and other wildlife, thereby causing their death by lead poisoning. And, we have long supported anglers voluntarily using non-toxic fishing tackle.

While it is well known that shooting ranges can accumulate very large quantities of lead, the report previously cited states: "There are only limited data on lead ingestion at shooting ranges by terrestrial vertebrates, and reproductive rates and estimation of population parameters of wildlife at these sites have not been adequately investigated." In light of this, they go on to urge that research on the "the hazards of spent ammunition and mobilized lead to wildlife at or near shooting ranges" be a top priority. Based on the report, The Wildlife Society in 2009 adopted a policy (Final Position Statement: Lead in Ammunition and Fishing Tackle) calling for elimination of lead-based ammunition where possible and "supporting educational efforts to promote greater public awareness and understanding of the consequences of lead exposure to wildlife populations, and emphasize the potential gains for wildlife and environmental quality from use of nontoxic ammunition."

Given the known toxicity of lead, and death of wildlife due to ingestion of spent lead shot in some situations, it is prudent to avoid placing wildlife at further risk from ingestion of spent lead shot. In the interest of wildlife conservation, we encourage this committee to consider ways in which any newly constructed shooting ranges can be managed to encourage education about the risks to wildlife of spent lead ammunition, and voluntary conversion by the public at the shooting range and in their hunting activities, to non-toxic forms of ammunition.

We are also concerned that reduction in the non-federal matching proportion from 25% to 10% reduces the ability to maximize total dollars for Restoration Act purposes, and also comes at the expense of the Restoration Act dollars dedicated specifically to conservation purposes. It is important to avoid reducing the proportion of Restoration Act funds dedicated to conservation. In addition, higher match requirements by the states stretches the federal dollars to cover more projects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we appreciate the committee's effort in today's hearing, and look forward to working with you to further develop the proposed bill.

Thank you.