

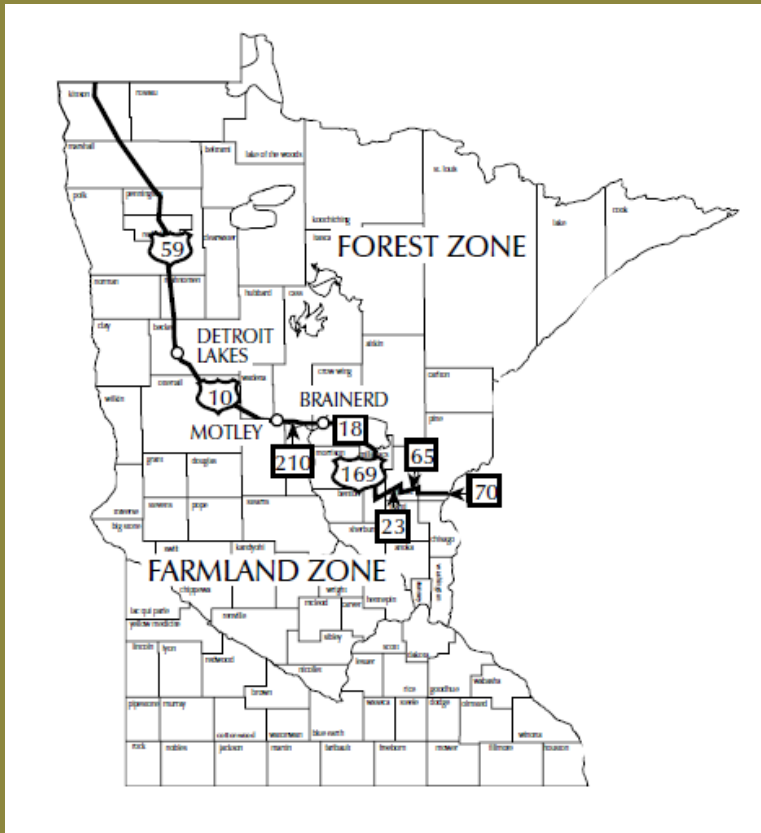


MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Proposed Non-toxic Shot Requirement on WMAs in the Farmland

Paul Telander, Wildlife Chief  
January 15, 2016  
Wildlife Roundtable

# DNR Farmland Zone



- DNR is considering restricting use of lead shot on wildlife management/public hunting areas in the Farmland Zone
- 1.3 million acres of WMAs in MN
- Farmland Zone contains 400,000 WMA acres (31% of total)



# Initial 60-Day Notice

- Under the State's Administrative Procedures Act, agencies are required to provide at least 60 days initial notice for the public to comment on the subject matter of a possible rulemaking
  - The initial request for comments was done on Oct. 12, 2015
- This must occur before publication of notice of intent to adopt a rule, which has its own formal comment period and hearing process
  - This step has not happened yet



# Numerous Public Comments

- Received 3,740 comments over initial 60 days
  - 2,220 support
  - 1,520 opposed

# Most Common Comments From Those Supporting



- It will protect birds and people
- More than 100 bird species have been poisoned
- It simplifies regulations for small game hunting
- Lead is toxic and should not be in the environment
- It will protect wetlands/waterfowl habitat



# Most Common Comments From Those Opposed



- The need is not scientifically proven
- Nontoxic shot is not effective and will cause unnecessary wounding loss
- Nontoxic shot is too expensive
- Hunters will quit hunting or won't start
- Nontoxic shot will damage firearms

# Rationale for the Proposal



- WMAs in Minnesota were purchased for wildlife production and public hunting and are managed for long-term, high quality habitat and hunting
- WMAs in the farmland zone make up less than 1.5% of the total land area in the zone
- WMAs in Minnesota's farmland zone receive high hunting pressure compared to surrounding private lands
- In a South Dakota study, a heavily hunted area had a lead ingestion rate by wild pheasants of 6.5% compared to about 1.34% statewide



# Rationale for the Proposal (cont'd.)

- WMAs in Minnesota's farmland zone have a relatively high concentration of wetlands
- In 1997 (approx. 10 years after non-toxic shot was required to hunt waterfowl), 11% of Minnesota mallards had ingested shot, 33% of which still contained lead (Anderson et. al. 2000)
- Shot deposited in WMA wetlands is still being ingested by waterfowl. Some of the shot deposition is lead from small game hunters





# Rationale for the Proposal (cont'd.)

- Good stewardship of these public lands calls for management that will maintain their quality and productivity for wildlife long-term
- Where effective and readily available alternatives exist, it only makes sense to limit deposition of a known toxic substance that will persist in the environment for decades
- This proposed regulation is consistent with agency management of other public lands in agricultural areas of the region, including federal Waterfowl Production Areas



# Facts about Lead

- Lead is a non-specific toxin to all vertebrate species
- Both acute and chronic effects can occur



# Facts About Game Bird Ingestion of Lead

- 8.9% of hunter harvested waterfowl from 1973-84 (n=170,000+) had ingested lead shot (Sanderson, Glen C. and Frank C. Bellrose 1986)
- An estimated 1.6 to 2.4 million waterfowl died annually (Friend, M and J.C. Franson 1999)
- SD pheasants: 3.4% to 6.5% on study areas and 1.3% statewide (Runia and Solem 2014)
- Utah Chukar: 9.2% (Bingham 2011)
- NM bobwhite: 1.8% (Best et. al. 1992)
- Mourning dove: 0.2% to 6.5% (various)



# Economics-related Facts

- 79% of Minnesota pheasant hunters use  $\leq 2$  boxes of shells/year (Schroeder et. al. 2008)
- The price difference between a box of 12 gauge 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " Federal Premium Waterfowl Steel (\$9.99) and Federal Premium Game-Shok<sup>®</sup> Upland Game Heavy Field Lead (\$8.49) is \$1.50 per box (Cabela's 12/2015); same price difference in Prairie Storm<sup>®</sup> steel vs. Prairie Storm<sup>®</sup> lead
- Average Minnesota hunter spends \$1,540/year (Southwick Associates 2012)



# Facts Related to Loss of Hunters

- South Dakota state-owned lands have required non-toxic shot for all shotgun hunting since 1998
- Iowa WMAs in 16 counties require non-toxic shot along with select WMAs in another 7 counties
- Federal WPAs and NWRs have required non-toxic shot for all shotgun hunting since 1999
- 75% of MN small game hunters surveyed said a lead shot ban is something most hunters would adjust to after a few seasons (Schroeder et. al. 2008)



# Steel Shot Effectiveness

- Self reported (HIP) crippling rates of waterfowl in 2012 were the lowest since the 1950's when the data was first collected (Richkus USFWS)
- After recording more than 5,000 shots fired by Texas hunters during a two-year project, and then necropsying 1,100 mourning doves, researchers determined no statistical significant difference in harvest efficiencies between the three loads tested (1 lead, 2 steel), regardless of distance (Pierce et. al. 2015)



# Next Steps

- Convene a larger information sharing and comment gathering meeting with opponents and proponents in March 2016
- Outreach to stakeholders prior to the March meeting
- Final decision on whether or not to move forward with the rule proposal will be made after the March meeting, and after the 2016 legislature has had an opportunity to discuss this issue