

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

IN OPPOSITION to S.B. No. 59 (RAISED) ENVIRONMENT. (COMM) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OR USE OF FISHING SINKERS, JIGS AND TIRE WEIGHTS THAT CONTAIN LEAD.

by Robert T. Crook, Director

January 31, 2011

The ban proposed by S.B. 59 is unjustified. A ban of lead sinkers and jigs in Connecticut is not reasonable or warranted without the scientific data to support such a ban. Fishermen will not accept alternatives without justification.

The impact on Loons is singularly the most often cited reason for bans on lead fishing tackle in a few other states, yet Connecticut does not support a Loon population.

These laws are intended to protect Loons that can accidentally ingest lead sinkers as they pick pebbles up from lake bottoms. It has been proposed that Loons mistake lost sinkers for the small stones they regularly ingest in the birds' gizzards to help grind food fish bones and crustacean shell in their stomach.

Fishing tackle alternatives to lead can be much more expensive and do not perform as well. Alternatives to lead now available in sinkers and jigs include steel, bismuth, tin, tungsten, zinc, alloys of these metals, metal/plastic or metal/ceramic combinations, and stone.

There is a cost to CT manufacturers, retail dealers and fishermen by eliminating sales of a product which is a common and necessary element in recreational fishing. Adopting this proposal will severely affect manufacturers, distributors and retail dealers, who currently have such lead products in stock and unable to sell, will suffer a revenue loss. Large stores such as Cabala's and the many smaller retailers may have thousands of items in stock. Establishment of such a ban/restriction will drive sales to the internet or to other states resulting in a loss of State revenue through business income and sales tax. Passage would affect both fresh and salt water fishermen.

The bill proposes a \$500 fine per violation, while the penalty for fishing without a license in Connecticut is \$77. It's also well known CT has inadequate conservation law enforcement to address current laws.

The bottom line is that this proposed ban on lead sinkers and jigs is not supported by science or an identified need. We urge rejection.