



Attn: Conference Committee on HF 2310/SF 2438
Re: Lead Sinker Ban in Swan Protection Areas
Date: April 28, 2023
Position: Oppose

Honorable Members of this Conference Committee,

I write you today on behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation to respectfully request that while reconciling the differences between the omnibus Environment, Natural Resources, Climate, and Energy bills (House File 2310 and Senate File 2438) that were adopted by your respective chambers, you reject the inclusion of the HF 2310 language that prohibits the use of lead sinkers in designated Swan Protection Areas. Wildlife management decisions made by state agencies across the country, including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), are made at the population-level rather than based on individual instances, and there is no known scientific evidence that suggests lead sinkers impact fish and wildlife species, including swans, at the population-level. Given the scarcity of functionally equivalent non-lead alternatives, a ban on lead sinkers would have deleterious impacts on both conservation funding and on the robust Minnesota sportfishing industry. I respectfully request that you reject any language that would prohibit the use of lead sinkers in any waters.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

A functional ban on lead sinkers would jeopardize the state's recreational fishing industry as anglers would have significant difficulties in complying with the requirements of this proposed bill and would therefore be unable to participate. In 2022, DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen reversed an emergency rule that would have required non-lead ammunition while hunting on specific state lands, citing that such ammunition is "not readily available and could significantly reduce participation."¹ Like non-lead ammunition, there is not enough functionally equivalent, non-lead sinkers to meet the demand of the many sportsmen and women that annually contribute to Minnesota's storied outdoor traditions and bolster its economy.

Minnesota enjoys extreme benefits from its recreational fishing industry. According to the Minnesota Sportfishing Foundation Coalition, fishing supports over 28,000 jobs and generates more than \$4.4 billion annually for the state's economy, and more than a quarter of Minnesotans participated in fishing in 2022.² Further, through the unique "user pays – public benefits" approach of the American System of Conservation Funding, state fish and wildlife management agencies derive significant portions of their funding through license sales and excise taxes on outdoor goods such as fishing rods, tackle, motorboat fuel, and other angling-necessities.³ Because anglers would be challenged to fully comply with the requirements of HF 2368, they would likely be discouraged from purchasing a fishing license or these outdoor goods. In 2021, the sale of fishing licenses alone provided the Minnesota DNR with more than \$36.5 million, and excise taxes on

¹ *Minnesota State Register*, 47 SR 394, October 24, 2022. https://mn.gov/admin/assets/SR47_17%20-%20Accessible_tcm36-544924.pdf

² *MN-Fish*, "State of Minnesota Fishing Summit 'Great Success'" Accessed January 27, 2023. https://mn-fish.com/state-of-minnesota-fishing-summit-great-success/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=state-of-minnesota-fishing-summit-great-success

³ *Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*, "American System of Conservation Funding," Accessed January 30, 2023. <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policies/state/ascf>

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outdoor goods generated an additional \$14.7 million.⁴ Banning lead sinkers creates a significant barrier to participation and puts this much-needed conservation funding at risk.

Finally, science-based management decisions made by state fish and wildlife agencies across the country are not made based on individual instances, but rather at the population-level, and yet there is no scientific evidence that suggests that lead sinkers impact fish and wildlife populations at the population-level. Management of swan populations should not follow a different standard than is applied to other Minnesota species managed by the DNR.

I respectfully urge the members of this Conference Committee to reject the inclusion of any language that prohibits the use of lead sinkers in Minnesota's waters. There is no scientific evidence that indicates lead sinkers threaten fish and wildlife at the population level in Minnesota, but lead sinkers are a foundational component of an extremely strong and important pillar of Minnesota's economy and conservation funding. This ban would render many Minnesotans unable to participate in fishing, a time-honored tradition that has supported the state for generations, due to a significant lack of available functionally equivalent and affordable non-lead sinkers.

Sincerely,



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⁴ *Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*, "2022 ASCF Fact Sheet – Minnesota."