



SUPPORT AB 821

The Ridley-Tree Condor Preservation Act (Nava)

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

To protect vulnerable wildlife species, including the extremely endangered California condor, from the ongoing threat of lead poisoning. The bill would require the use of non-lead ammunition when taking big game (including deer, elk, wild pigs, pronghorn, bighorn, and black bear) and coyote within the current and historic range of the condor within California. To the extent funding is available, this legislation would also establish a process that will provide hunters within this same geographic region with non-lead ammunition at no or reduced charge.

PROBLEM & NEED FOR THE BILL

Each year, lead ammunition can poison and kill extremely endangered California condors, North America's largest terrestrial birds. There is ample evidence to support the assertion that lead ammunition is having a devastating effect on the highly endangered condor and the efforts to recover this population, and that lead ammunition is also adversely impacting other wildlife, particularly raptors, as well as humans. [See, Assessment of Lead Contamination Sources Exposing California Condors (April 2003) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Recovery Plan for California Condors (April 1996).] Despite vigorous ongoing efforts to test free-flying condors' blood lead levels and administer chelation treatment as needed, wild condors continue to die from lead poisoning.

California condors routinely scavenge on prey species that have been killed by lead ammunition, and accidentally ingest or mistake bullet fragments for the calcium-rich bone fragments they require. The resulting lead poisoning is jeopardizing the long-term survival of the species. Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service California Condor Recovery Team and the



California Department of Fish and Game have concluded that lead poisoning is one of the most serious obstacles to the recovery of the California condor.

Lead in ammunition doesn't just threaten wildlife – it can also harm humans. People that use lead ammunition are exposed to lead residues and airborne particles. They can also accidentally ingest small fragments of lead in wildlife meat.

Hunter education alone will not solve this problem. The existing efforts in California to reduce the impacts of lead ammunition on condors and other wildlife have been slow to start and less than successful. While the state, the federal government, non-profit organizations, and private individuals have worked to educate and encourage hunters to use non-lead ammunition and to bury or remove their gut piles (i.e., the unusable portion of the game carcass) from the field, these efforts have been sporadic, at best, and have not resulted in eliminating lead ammunition as a major threat to condors and other wildlife. Therefore, we do not believe that public education alone is enough to adequately address the ongoing threat to condor recovery.

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AB 821 will not end hunting within the limited area of the ban. The supporters of AB 821 are not opposed to hunting. Rather, these organizations are dedicated to recovering one California's most unique birds. In order to facilitate the transition to non-lead alternatives, we are supporting the inclusion of a non-lead ammunition coupon program that will provide free non-lead ammunition to big game hunters.

Protections for wildlife from lead poisoning are long overdue. Lead has already been eliminated from products like gasoline and paint, even shot for hunting waterfowl – so why not from centerfire ammunition?

WHAT THIS BILL WOULD DO

This bill would direct the California Fish & Game Commission to require the use of non-lead centerfire ammunition when taking big game and coyote within the Department of Fish and Game's Deer Hunting Zones D7, D8, D9, D10, D11, D13, and Zone A South excluding Santa Cruz, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and San Joaquin counties, areas west of Highway 101 within Santa Clara County, and areas between Interstate 5 and Highway 99 within Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern counties.

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*A Reasonable Approach to Protecting
Endangered California Condors from
Lead Poisoning*



Moreover, in an effort to make the transition to non-lead ammunition easier, this legislation would also establish a process that will provide hunters within this same geographic region with non-lead centerfire ammunition at no or reduced charge. This non-lead ammunition coupon program is modeled after a similar program in Arizona.

Finally, if the non-lead ammunition coupon program is implemented, the bill would require the Fish and Game Commission to issue a report on the usage and redemption rates of ammunition coupons, and report on the levels of lead in condors found in California.

SUPPORT

Defenders of Wildlife
Action for Animals
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO
Animal Switchboard
Audubon Society of California
California Coastal Protection Network
California League of Conservation Voters
Cooper Ornithological Society
Environment California
Humane Society of the United States
National Parks Conservation Association
Planning and Conservation League
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)
Sierra Club California
Ventana Wildlife Society
Vote the Coast
Western Alliance for Nature
Zoological Society of San Diego

