

California lawmaker aims to ban lead fishing weights

[Damon Arthur](#), Record Searchlight Published 3:47 p.m. PT Feb. 19, 2018

Walk down the fishing tackle aisle of most sporting goods stores and you are likely to see shelves stocked with lead fishing weights of many shapes and sizes.

While lead weights have been popular for decades among anglers, that could become a thing of the past.

A bill, AB 2787, was introduced into the California Legislature recently that would outlaw making, selling or owning most lead weights used for fishing.

The bill's author, Assemblyman Bill Quirk, D-Hayward, said lead in fishing gear needs to be banned because it is toxic to wildlife.

"Small lead fishing weights, like split shots, are killing California wildlife," Quirk said in a news release posted on his website.

"Many birds consume river gravel to aid in mashing and digesting food. Often they accidentally ingest discarded lead fishing weights. The lead poisons their liver, leading to a slow death. Water fowl, in particular, are common victims," he said.

As for lead's effect on humans, Quirk noted lead has been listed under California's Proposition 65 since 1987 as a substance that can cause reproductive damage and birth defects. It also has been listed as a chemical known to cause cancer since 1992, he said.

However, Marko Mlikotin, executive director of the California Sportfishing League, said there is no scientific proof that lead from fishing weights is harming wildlife.

"There is no science that justifies banning fishing weights found in nearly every California angler's tackle box," Mlikotin said.

"A responsible course of action is for the state to conduct a California specific study. We will continue our dialog with the author, but must oppose AB 2787 in its current form," Mlikotin said.

The alternative to lead is too costly for many anglers, Mlikotin said.

At one fishing tackle shop in the Redding area a package containing five half-ounce lead weights cost \$2.99, while a package of three half-ounce titanium weights cost \$7.99.

"Making fishing too costly and less accessible will have a devastating impact on the state's tourism industry and communities dependent on outdoor recreation for tax revenue and jobs," Mlikotin said. Steve Cline, out fishing on Lake Shasta on Monday, said he didn't mind switching over to a different material for weights

“Can you image how many pieces of lead are in this lake?” said Cline, who has been fishing on the lake for about 30 years. “I think it’s a good thing if they have something decent to replace it with, which I’m sure they will.”

Dave Gallenberger, retail manager at The Fly Shop in Redding, said the store doesn’t even sell lead weights.

In addition to the environmental benefits of nonlead weights, alternative substances such as tin and tungsten putty work better for fly fishing, he said.

While lead split shots can slide up and down fishing line, tungsten and tin tend to stay fixed in one place, Gallenberger said. Tungsten putty sinks faster and is easier to re-use than lead split shots, he said.

Quirk said many other states, including New Hampshire, Maine, New York, Vermont, Massachusetts and Washington, have also introduced bans on lead fishing tackle.

The state’s efforts to reduce lead in the environment extends beyond fishing tackle. California is also phasing in a ban on lead bullets and lead used in shotgun shells.

Starting in 2015 the state began requiring nonlead ammunition when hunting on state lands. By 2019 nonlead bullets and shot will be required for all types of hunting with firearms.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service moved to ban lead fishing weights on lands managed by the agency by 2022. But the effort was reversed under the Trump administration.

<http://www.redding.com/story/news/2018/02/19/california-lawmaker-aims-ban-lead-fishing-weights/351684002/>