



# NEW ENGLAND BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

May 17th, 2022

To: Ashley Schipritt, RI Department of Environmental Management

Re: BHA Comments on Hunting and Trapping Regulations (250-RICR-60-00-9)

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) seeks to ensure North America's outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting. Our members advocate for access and opportunity to hunt and fish on public lands and science-based management of wildlife to ensure healthy fish and game populations are on the landscape.

With these things in mind, we respectfully submit the following comments on the Department's proposed Hunting and Trapping Regulations for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 Seasons:

## **9.13 Wild Turkey**

BHA supports the proposed changes in 9.13 (I), which would allow additional gauge and shot sizes to be allowed for taking Wild Turkey in Rhode Island.

Scientifically speaking, higher density materials like Tungsten Super Shot (TSS) allow smaller pellets to carry more momentum downrange because their material is considerably denser than lead. Additionally, TSS material is harder than lead, which results in a tighter and more reliable pattern because variables resulting from pellet deformation are minimized. As a result, most states that allow wild turkey hunting allow shot sizes down to #9 and shotgun gauges down to .410 bore, and the proposed changes would bring Rhode Island in line with this standard.

TSS is also recognized as an accepted non-lead alternative, which is of significance to BHA. In 2018 BHA's North American board adopted a position supporting the voluntary use of non-lead ammunition and in 2020 signed on in support of the North American Non-Lead Partnership, a national leader in promoting the voluntary use of non-lead ammunition for hunting. In 2019 the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, of which the Department of Environmental Management is a member, also signed on as a supporter of the Non-Lead Partnership. As new technologies like TSS becomes available and present non-lead alternatives that can be used by hunters, and so long as they are capable of ethically taking game, we believe that the choice to use these alternatives should be provided.

## **9.17 General**

BHA supports the proposed changes in 9.17 (I), which would clarify that shooting preserve and/or propagation licenses do not permit the release of mammals in connection with field trials and shooting preserves, and suggest a technical amendment related to the regulation's reference to RI General Laws.

Our understanding of current RI General Law is that while § 20-17-1 provides guidance from the legislature for the Department to promulgate regulations allowing the "the rearing within an enclosure of any wild birds, game quadrupeds, or domestic game... for liberation at field trials or upon game preserves" this section of law

is limited in its scope to the possession, transportation, purchase and sale of the propagated game and does not facilitate its release in connection with field trials and shooting preserves within Rhode Island or elsewhere. § 20-19 in its entirety describes permissible activities in connection with field trials and shooting preserves in Rhode Island, and this section of law is limited specifically in its terminology to “domestic game birds”. We support the proposed changes because they bring the promulgated regulations in sync with RI General Law.

As written, 9.17 (I) relates to two separate matters – importation and possession of game birds and liberating game in connection with field trials and shooting preserves. On the latter, the RI General Assembly is clear on its guidance in § 20-19-3, stating that:

*“Only domestic game birds may be utilized by persons conducting a field trial or operating a shooting preserve subject to the provisions of this Chapter”*

As a result, **we respectfully request that § 20-19-3 is included as a reference for 9.17 (I)** because of its direct and applicable guidance on the subject matter of the proposed regulation.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,

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Chair, New England Chapter Board  
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