

Lobbying for Lead

Fresh from a successful campaign to allow loaded weapons in some national parks, gun rights groups and their allies in Congress are working to prevent the government from limiting lead ammunition and fishing gear on federal land in an effort to ward off lead pollution.

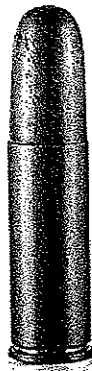
Last week, Oklahoma Democrat **Dan Boren** and Georgia Republican **Paul Broun**, both National Rifle Association members, were denied permission to propose an amendment to the House's Energy-Water appropriations bill that would have stopped the government from curbing lead-based ammo and tackle — at least in fiscal 2010.

The effort is in response to a National Park Service announcement in March that it wants to "Get the Lead Out" of national parks. In a memo to his staff, Acting Director **Daniel N. Wenk** said lead's ability to contaminate land and water means the Park Service will propose regulations "prohibiting the use of lead in hunting and fishing activities" — by park rangers and the public alike — before the end of next year.

Sports, conservation and gun rights groups had not been consulted, and they condemned the idea. It "demonstrates

complete ignorance or complete arrogance as to the effect that this policy will have on hunters," said NRA lobbyist **Chris W. Cox**. "There is no science" that ties lead ammunition to environmental contamination, he wrote.

Environmentalists differ, of course. A joint report by the Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society says that ingesting spent lead shot, bullet fragments or fishing sinkers can cause behavioral, physiological and biochemical effects and death in fish and waterfowl. Gun rights advocates dispute those findings, as well as those of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report sug-



gesting children who eat venison felled with lead bullets are at a significant risk of elevated lead levels in their own blood.

The Park Service has since issued a "clarification" that it was talking only about lead in the hands of its rangers, not by the public. "We do intend to investigate how to eliminate recreational use of lead shot in the future in a separate process with input from the public and stakeholder groups," said spokeswoman **Jody Lyle**.

Sportsmen's groups see this as an attempt to undo the damage of the earlier announcement; environmentalists say the agency is just knuckling under to the gun lobby.

— **ANDREW NORMAN**