

Wildlife Division Expands Community Hunter Stewardship Program

In recent months the Tribe's Wildlife Division secured a federal grant through the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) to fully develop a conservation hunting and firearms safety program for the benefit of the Tribe. Over the next three years the program aims to expand their focus on empowering hunters to reduce lead across the landscape by increasing their use of copper-based ammunition. Since 2017, when the program originally started on a smaller scale, Wildlife Division biologists have been sharing awareness about the broad, positive, impacts hunters are having to improve both wildlife and family health conditions by making the switch to non-lead ammunition.

Each year studies continue to demonstrate the impacts of lead fragments from spent ammunition in the food web are far reaching. One of the Tribe's conservation biologists David Moen, who is spearheading the effort, says, "Annual exposure to even small amounts of lead results in stymied growth of wildlife populations and can especially impact birds of prey and the health of families among subsistence hunting communities." Nez Perce Elder Silas Whitman recently expressed his support for the program by stating, "Nature is one community, if we treat our land the way we want to be treated we thrive together. If not, we need to make up the difference before we no longer have that opportunity. What we put out there, we put in here. Tamaálwit helps us understand this. It is the way it has always worked. The gifts of the land come with our contributions; a balance we must be increasingly aware of."

Nez Perce Historian Allen Pinkham also expressed similar sentiment about the program: "We are the voice of the elder kin folk [the animals]. They can't offer prayers with their words, so we have that responsibility for them. They sacrifice their lives for us, and will continue to do so, as long as we honor their gift by treating them in a good way and speak up for them. This back and forth giving is what makes life continue moving forward. Us humans are the junior kin and we all have a responsibility to act on it."

Moen points out, "Using non-lead ammunition across the landscape can have wide-ranging benefits, from helping eagle (wéepes) populations thrive and increase to preventing condor (qú'nes) extinction and harm to other culturally important species- including grizzly (hiyúum), wolf (hímiin), fox (tilípe?) and even magpie (?éek?ex)- not to mention protecting families." According to the national Center for Disease Control's website addressing the issue, there is no safe level for lead detected in children. Research also indicates, among other things, that preventing the risk of exposure can safeguard healthy child development and protect against male infertility and female miscarriages in families. Additionally, multiple studies have correlated lead exposure with increased aggression and elevated crime and incarceration rates among adults in vulnerable communities.

The Wildlife Division's expanding program will include several new outreach components as well as community awareness tools, such as program baseball caps, magnets, stickers, and their own unique line of "Hunter Lip Balm" that they will provide folks interested in getting involved in the "non-lead movement." New efforts will also broaden the Division's ammunition exchange program for community members interested in swapping a box of lead shells to try out the high performance non-lead equivalent. Moen indicates the program currently has 150 boxes of non-

lead shells of various calibers in familiar brands, such as Hornady, Nosler, Barns, Remington, Norma, Federal, Winchester, etc. He and others involved will also be working with the Tribe's Fish and Wildlife Commission to distribute the solid copper ammunition to active community hunters. This includes Tribal hunters that provide for elders and ceremonial needs, or those that answered the late call to Yellowstone this year to help distribute buffalo meat to Tribal members. The Wildlife Division is now working on the final details of an application for this with the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Furthermore, Wildlife staff experts are also working closely with a community steering group comprised of Nimiipuu hunters across diverse generations to develop hunting education material that will be used as supplemental curriculum in several hunter education classes the project plans to make available to Tribe members each year. These resources will include an introductory guide to successful big-game hunting for first-time hunters, around which the program plans to develop a cultural "Hunt Camp" that will involve inviting top students from hunter ed classes to experience a multi-day hunting trip in the mountains with volunteer mentoring hunters and elders.

Classes will be conducted in collaboration with a Shooting Sports Club currently being organized by Danielle Scott as part of the Nez Perce Tribe 4-H program. The expanding hunting stewardship initiative will also work in conjunction with other lead abatement efforts, such as those conducted throughout Indian Country by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as well as with other more regionally-based programs, like those the Zummwalt Prairie Preserve in Wallowa County and the Oregon Hunter's Association (OHA) are involved with.

Programing will also include shooting demonstrations during which participants can test the ballistics of lead versus non-lead rounds and see the similarities and differences for themselves. Over the next two summers, a select group of student leaders from the community will also be invited to take a multi-media film making workshop to learn how to use the appropriate tools to write, produce, direct, and shoot two instructive short films based on the current hunting culture of the reservation and traditional hunting themes.

Wildlife Division biologists are also working to involve local sporting goods stores to take more initiative. For example, Sportsman's Warehouse recently added two new lines of non-lead ammunition to their inventory (Hornady Outfitter and Remington HTP Copper) and has been involved with the Wildlife Division through sponsorships and donations. As in the past two years, these expanded efforts are being rolled out by the Division with a Community Hunt Survey that will offer participants a chance to win a variety of Sportsman's Warehouse gift cards set between \$50 and \$300. Seven participants will be drawn to win this year in mid-July. To participate in the latest community hunt survey and enter the drawing, please visit: www.surveymonkey.com/r/huntsurvey_2020 (also see flyer in this issue of the newsletter).

For questions about these new resources being made available to the Tribe please contact the Wildlife Division: (208) 843-2162 qe'ci'yew'yew'. Photos and new program logos being developed are following:



Non-lead ammo used this year by Nez Perce Tribe members in Yellowstone.



Tribe member Morgan Sublett shows the copper round she used to harvest her buffalo.