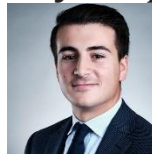


Biden admin takes aim at hunters in latest regulation: 'Preventing Americans from hunting'

Biden admin's action will 'create substantial cost barriers' for hunters across the country, expert tells Fox News Digital



By **Thomas Catenacci** | Fox News
Published June 22, 2023 4:38pm EDT

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-admin-takes-aim-hunters-latest-regulation-preventing-americans-from-hunting>



Video

Biden administration pushing for restrictions on hunting and equipment
Safari Club International's Ben Cassidy explains the problem with the Biden administration's push for restrictions on hunting.

The Biden administration announced Thursday that it is moving ahead with [prohibitions on the type of equipment](#) hunters are allowed to use on federal refuges, a move strongly opposed by sportsmen groups.

The **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)** released its 2023-2024 [hunting and fishing rule](#) — an annual plan laying out regulations for the upcoming hunting season — **banning cost-effective lead ammunition and fishing tackle across eight national wildlife refuges by 2026**. Such an action has been supported by eco groups, but opposed by hunters, who argue that it could serve as a backdoor attack on hunting broadly.

"This is the latest example of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service creating rules that punish hunters, threaten conservation funding and advance special interests without sound scientific evidence that traditional lead ammunition cause is causing detrimental wildlife population impacts," said **Lawrence Keane, the senior vice president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation**.

"This administration is ignoring its promise to 'follow the science.' In fact, it is ignoring the need for scientific evidence in order to advance an anti-gun and anti-hunting agenda," he continued.



Experts and sportsmen groups have accused the Biden administration of repeatedly attacking hunters and fishers through regulation. (Tom Brenner for The Washington Post via Getty Images)

Under the FWS rule proposed Thursday, **sportsmen will be prohibited from using lead ammunition or tackle across eight federally managed refuges** — Blackwater in Maryland, Chincoteague in Virginia, Eastern Neck in Maryland, Erie in Pennsylvania, Great Thicket in Massachusetts, Patuxent Research Refuge in Maryland, Rachel Carson in Maine and Wallops Island Nation in Virginia — beginning on Sept. 1, 2026.

In its announcement, the FWS said it had formulated the rule using the "best available science," which demonstrates negative impacts of lead equipment on [human health and wildlife](#).

The agency's 2022-2023 hunting and fishing rule, which was finalized in September 2022, only banned lead ammunition throughout the Patoka National Wildlife Refuge in southern Indiana.

"Today's Fish and Wildlife Service proposed rule shows that the Biden administration seeks credit for 'expanding' hunting and fishing access on public land while the lead ammunition and tackle bans threaten the exact opposite

outcome," **Benjamin Cassidy, executive vice president for international government and public affairs at Safari Club International and a former senior Interior Department official**, told Fox News Digital.

"Lead ammunition and tackle bans create substantial cost barriers for sportsmen and women across the country, preventing Americans from hunting and fishing on our public lands," Cassidy said.



An angler is pictured on the Gallatin River in Bozeman, Montana. (David E. Klutho/Sports Illustrated/Getty Images)

In 2021, the Center for Biological Diversity — an [influential environmental group](#) with assets exceeding \$40 million that advocates for stringent federal wildlife protections — sued the federal government over a Trump administration rule expanding hunting and fishing on 2.3 million acres across 147 wildlife refuges and national fish hatcheries.

CONSERVATION GROUPS FIGHT BACK AGAINST BIDEN ADMIN'S 'MISGUIDED' REGULATION EFFORTS ON HUNTING, FISHING

Instead of defending the rule, the Biden administration asked the court to delay proceedings in the case in February 2022, and in November it agreed to a settlement with the group that stipulated the government would take wide-ranging steps to protect wildlife "harmed by expanded hunting and fishing" on national wildlife refuges.

Under the settlement, the FWS promised to expand lead ammunition prohibitions in its 2023-2024 annual rule, the plan proposed Thursday.



Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams said Thursday that offering hunting on federal lands is a "priority in the Service's efforts to offer wildlife-related recreation for all Americans." (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

"While we appreciate USFWS's focus on expanding fishing access for the nation's 52 million anglers, it is deeply disappointing to see the continuation of baseless and harmful restrictions on the types of tackle they can use," said **American Sportfishing Association vice president of government affairs Mike Leonard**.

"As we have stated in our industry position statement, restrictions on lead fishing tackle must be based on sound science documenting that lead tackle has an impact on specific wildlife populations and developed in conjunction with

state fish and wildlife agencies," Leonard continued. "We have repeatedly sought that evidence from USFWS but have yet to receive it."

Hunting groups also urged Congress to work quickly to pass the **Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act**, which [Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont.](#), and 22 fellow Republicans introduced in April. The legislation would block the FWS, Forest Service and [Bureau of Land Management](#) from banning lead ammunition or tackle unless such an action were supported by the best available science.

Thomas Catenacci is a politics writer for Fox News Digital.