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Carrol L. Henderson, Retired DNR Nongame Wildlife Program supervisor, 1977-2018.

May 4, 2022

Re: Get the Lead Out Provisions

Honorable legislators,

This session, the Legislature has heard numerous bills related to lead in our environment. While the bills face separate legislative paths, they are united in the desire to significantly reduce lead exposure for both humans and wildlife.

Public health and environmental risks of lead

As you know, there is no safe level of exposure to this irreversible neurotoxin. Some of the health impacts include attention difficulties, behavior changes, lowered IQ, and overall slowed development which can lead to lifelong inequities.

The impacts of lead are highly inequitable. Lead exposure disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, and Indigenous Minnesotans, children, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

Lead persists in our environment today. It's still found in toys, paint and lead water service lines. Even remote wilderness lakes are impacted by lead fishing tackle and lead ammunition. Lead in drinking water is especially harmful to human health - particularly children. In Minnesota, more than 100,000 homes still have lead service lines. While lead was banned for plumbing in 1986, existing lead pipes remain a threat in Minnesota. Lead service lines are a major source of harmful lead exposure via drinking water. The most effective way to limit toxic lead exposure in drinking water is to remove these lead service lines connecting a home or building to the public water main.

Lead contamination in the environment is having [population-level impact on bald eagles](#). The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources estimates that [178 tons](#) of lead shot was deposited on state lands during the 2017 small game hunting season alone.

Lead poisoning has nothing to do with individual behaviors but is the result of policies. Everyone deserves safe drinking water and a healthy environment. That's why we ask you to support numerous lead pollution prevention and remediation bills this year.

Lead Service Lines replacement

Several bills are under consideration in the House and Senate that provide support for lead service line inventory and replacement.

- **Capital Investment bills:** Both the House ([HF 4115](#)) and Senate ([SF 4121](#)) are considering bills to invest \$10 million for lead service lines inventory and \$300 million for replacement over 10 years. Importantly, both bills also establish a long-overdue goal of removing all lead service lines by 2032.
- **Health & Human Services (HHS):** The House Omnibus Human Services Finance and Policy bill ([HF 4579](#)) includes \$11.8 million for grants to public water suppliers to complete a lead service line inventory of their distribution systems through 2025, and an additional \$5 million for lead service lines replacement. The Senate version ([SF 4165](#)) does not include this funding.
- **House Environment Bill:** The House Omnibus Environment Finance & Policy bill ([HF 4492](#)) provides \$2.3 million for grants to cities and other public water suppliers to replace the privately-owned portion of residential lead service lines. The Senate version ([SF 4062](#)) does not include this funding.
- **ENRTF Renewal Bill (proposed Water Protection Fund):** The Senate's ENRTF renewal package ([SF 4131](#)) includes language to re-allocate some lottery proceeds from the general fund to a new water protection fund. While the specific language isn't final (and a specific dollar figure is not yet available), this could provide another pathway to funding lead service line replacement through 2050 (following a successful public constitutional vote). The House has not taken action on ENRTF renewal legislation ([HF 4649](#)):.

Lead-free schools

The House Omnibus Human Services Finance and Policy bill ([HF 4579](#)) includes a grant program to provide \$5.135 million to address lead in drinking water in schools and childcare settings through 2025. The Senate companion ([SF 4165](#)) does not include this funding.

Lead in daycare centers

The House Omnibus Human Services Finance and Policy bill ([HF 4579](#)) includes \$1 million for statewide testing and remediation of lead in drinking water at daycare facilities. The Senate companion ([SF 4165](#)) does not include this funding.

Lead in consumer products

The House Omnibus Environment Finance & Policy bill ([HF 4492](#)) includes \$74,000 for compliance monitoring and testing of lead and cadmium in consumer products. The Senate version ([SF 4062](#)) does not include this language.

Lead sinkers and tackle

- **Swan Protection Act:** The House Omnibus Environment Finance & Policy bill ([HF 4492](#)) includes Swan protection Act language that provides \$3 million funding for the state to establish designating swan resting areas, in which the use of lead sinkers is prohibited. The funding will allow for increased education and outreach promoting the protection of swans. The Senate version ([SF 4062](#)) does not include this language.
- **Lead tackle collection:** The House Omnibus Environment Finance & Policy bill ([HF 4492](#)) \$1 million for a lead tackle collection program to establish collection sites throughout the state where anglers may safely dispose of lead tackle. The Senate version ([SF 4062](#)) does not include this language.

Lead ammunition

The House Omnibus Environment Finance & Policy bill ([HF 4492](#)) requires the use of nontoxic shot (lead-free) when hunting small game on Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in the state's "farmland zone" beginning July 1, 2023. The Senate version ([SF 4062](#)) does not include this language

Looking ahead

The next five to six weeks will likely be a whirlwind of legislative negotiations. Both sides have said they're committed to wrapping up by May 23rd, and not going into a "special session," any movement toward a lead-free Minnesota must come soon.

The organizations sponsoring this letter appreciate your support.