

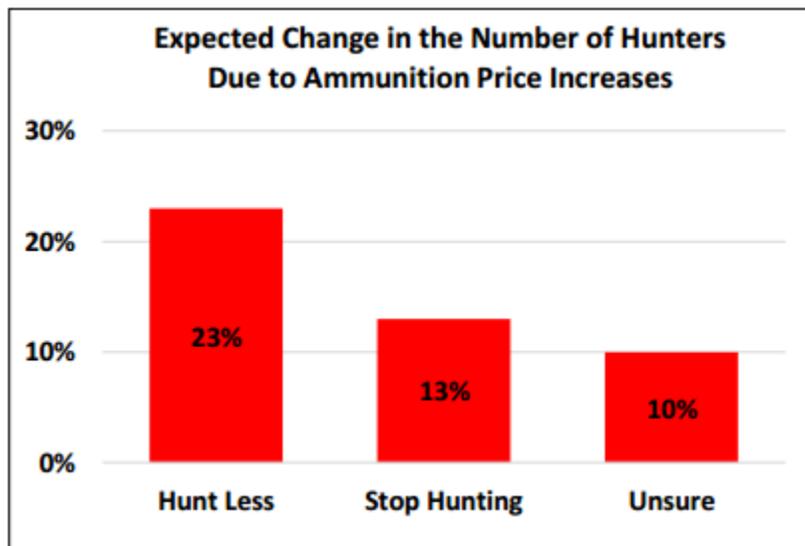
Traditional Ammunition Bans Are Costly and Ineffective: The California Experience

In October 2013, California Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 711 (AB 711), which called for a total statewide ban on traditional ammunition for hunting by 2019. The bill was an expansion of a 2008 law that banned the use of traditional ammunition in the part of California designated as the “Condor zone”. The thinking was that the California Condor was getting lead poisoning from eating gut piles with lead bullet fragments left behind by hunters.

However, despite there being a ban on traditional lead ammunition in the Condor zone for five years prior to AB 711, Condor blood lead levels had not decreased (see quotes on final page for source). The bill was passed, and shortly thereafter, a report on blood levels in Condors was released by the Department of the Interior, [after having been withheld past its statutory due date](#). The report stated that there are sources of lead in the Condor’s environment other than hunting ammunition, and there is no consensus on what is actually poisoning the birds.

[In September 2014, nearly a year after the passage of the ban, the National Shooting Sports Foundation released an economic impact report detailing the effects of the ban on hunting and the economy.](#)

According to a hunter survey conducted as part of the report, ammunition prices are projected to increase by approximately 300% which will cause at least 13% of California hunters to stop hunting.



[Source: NSSF, "Effects of the Ban on Traditional Ammunition for Hunting in California on Hunting Participation and Associated Economic Measures", 9/15/14]

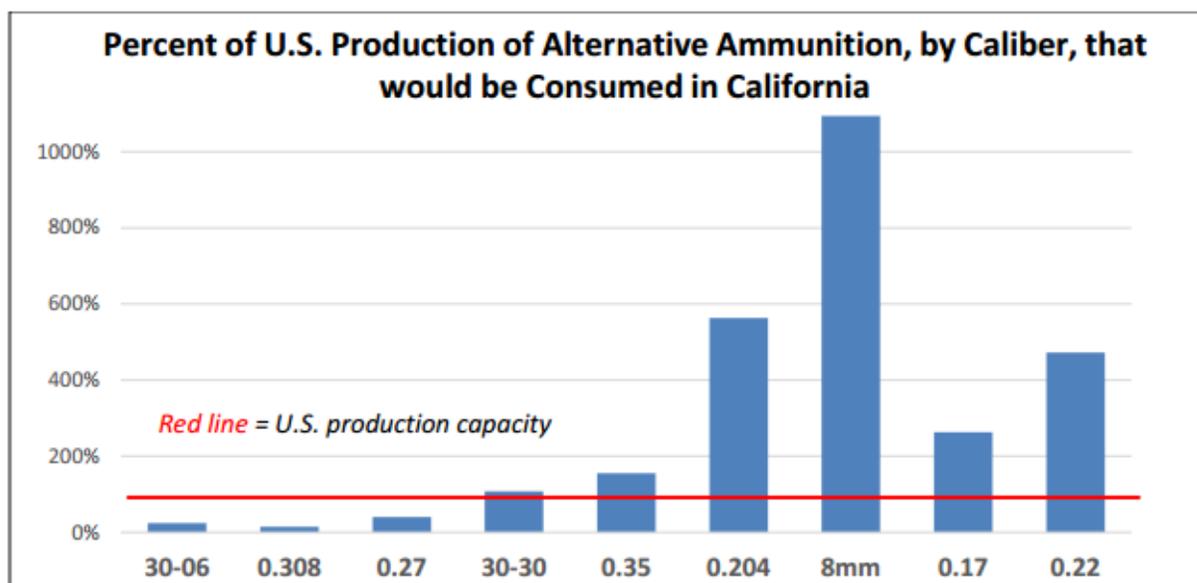
This drop in hunting is based solely on an increase in the cost of ammunition. It does not take into account any other factor that may come into play during the implementation of the ban, such as unavailability of alternative ammunition due to the ATF's ruling that many non-lead bullets meet the criteria for being considered "armor piercing".

California will be hurt economically by this ban. Based on the 13% of hunters who quit hunting due to the increased cost of participation, California will see a loss of 1,868 jobs, which equates to loss of \$68.7 million in salaries and wages. The state will also see a decrease of \$13.9 million in state and local tax revenue and \$5.8 million in federal tax revenues.

Furthermore, wildlife conservation funding in California will take a significant hit. The expected decreases in hunters and their spending will cause a direct loss of \$2.7 million in revenue from reduced license sales and a nearly 6% reduction in its share of funds from the Wilderness Restoration Trust Fund from excise taxes.

Currently, manufacturers are hard pressed to meet current demand for traditional ammunition. Adding an entirely new line of product stretches most manufacturers well past their limits. In California, the demand generated for non-lead ammunition will in many cases exceed the entire production capacity of the entire country. Current production levels are nowhere near where they need to be to support just one state switching to non-lead ammunition, let alone adding Oregon with its many hunters to the mix.

In the chart below, the red line represents current ability to produce non-lead ammunition. This shows only California's projected demand for alternative ammunition. For example, the 30-06 caliber category indicates demand for this caliber in California constitutes 24% of the entire US production of alternative 30-06 rounds. California demand for 8mm alternative rounds exceeds the entire US production of this ammunition by a shocking 1,094%.



[Source: NSSF, "Effects of the Ban on Traditional Ammunition for Hunting in California on Hunting Participation and Associated Economic Measures". 9/15/14]

This is just for California. If Oregon bans lead ammunition, hunters in the Beaver State will be competing with California hunters for ammunition. Manufacturers do not have the current capacity to meet this demand, and there are limited or no options for many hunters.

The California experience is one of higher costs, lower hunting participation rates, lost tax revenue, decreased wildlife conservation funds, and loss of jobs and economic activity. California banned lead in the Condor zone and that effort abjectly failed. Rather than learn from the experience, legislators expanded the ban statewide without considering the possibility that other sources of lead were playing a role. Manufacturers will not be able to meet California's demand for alternative ammunition, and hunters will be left without ammunition to shoot.

An Ammo Ban Is Not The Answer

Oregon should not follow the lead of California in what amounts to a ban on hunting. This is especially true when one considers that there are other science-based voluntary measures supported by the industry, hunters and wildlife management experts that can effectively interrupt the possible pathway of lead from hunters' ammunition to condors. There are simply too many unanswered questions and unconsidered factors relative to the potential impact of banning lead ammunition.

Other states that are home to the California condor, namely Arizona and Utah, have successfully implemented voluntary lead removal programs that have engaged hunters in a meaningful way. The California approach of ramming down an unpopular and poorly thought out ban is detrimental to conservation as it casts hunters as the enemy, rather than as the original conservationists that they are. A voluntary program engages the hunting community, allows time for manufacturers to increase production capabilities over time, and most importantly, doesn't suddenly leave hunters without ammunition.

Why are condors in California continuing to be exposed to lead at similar rates before and after the adoption of the Ridley-Tree Condor Protection Act and the banning of lead ammunition for big game and nongame species hunting in the condor zone? Many hypotheses have been discussed by the condor program, though no allocation of the proportion of impact of any given factor has been assigned.

[Source: Department of Interior, California Condor Recovery Program Update, 2013]

California banned lead ammunition in condor range in 2008, but a recent study by the University of California/Davis concluded that condor lead poisoning has not been significantly reduced in that condor population.

[Source: Arizona Game and Fish believes voluntary non-lead ammo program more effective than a regulated ban for endangered condors, Press Release, 6/30/14]

The five-year-old lead ammunition ban in the California condor region has proven ineffective. Despite a 99 percent compliance rate by hunters, researchers now admit that "lead exposures continue" and condor blood-levels have not dropped. Supporters of lead ammunition bans continue to ignore alternative sources of lead in the environment as the primary cause of lead poisoning.

[Source: "Bans on lead ammunition are misguided and ineffective." NRA Wildlife Director Susan Reece, The Oregonian, 7/26/14]

Lasting change takes time and partnerships, but results in lasting cooperation. It is naïve to think a regulation or lawsuit will fix the problem of ingested lead in condors," said Arizona Department of Fish and Game Assistant Director of Wildlife Management Jim deVos. "Even with a complete ban on the use of lead bullets in the condors' California range, birds continue to die from ingesting lead, demonstrating the ineffectiveness of a mandatory ban of lead ammunition in condor range."

[Source: Arizona Game and Fish believes voluntary non-lead ammo program more effective than a regulated ban for endangered condors, Press Release, 6/30/14]