**“Outdoor Shooting Ranges[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Just as shooters at indoor ranges fired away for decades ignorant of the public health risks, so have outdoor range shooters poured millions of tons of lead downrange, ignorant (or heedless) of the damage they have been inflicting on the environment. Although human lead poisoning is less of a problem at outdoor ranges, negative effects on the environment are far greater. Lead bullets and shot used in outdoor shooting ranges present at least three dangers to the environment:

 • poisoning of wildlife, especially waterfowl, that ingest lead pellets;

 • contamination of ground water, poisoning wells and other water sources; and,

 • contamination of wetlands or waterways into which lead falls.

Shotgun shell casing, wads, and assorted packaging materials can also contain lead, chemicals, and other materials potentially harmful to the environment.65 For example, certain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons found in clay targets are said to be known carcinogens.66 (It is worth noting that shotgun shooters rejected a biodegradable clay target Winchester tried to market because it discharged white smoke when hit rather than the black smoke they were used to.)67

“Poisonous Pastime: The Health Risks of Shooting Ranges and Lead to Children, Families and the Environment.” Violence Policy Center, 2001. Web. 03 April 2014 < <https://www.vpc.org/studies/leadone.htm> >.

Dealing with these problems is complicated by the esoteric nature of the state and federal laws and regulations protecting the environment.k Several key issues of federal environmental law have been roughly focused in a handful of shooting range cases litigated to conclusion. But the NSSF notes that the relatively low number of reported law cases is not a true measure of the activity going on because "many shooting range cases are resolved in the early stages of litigation through consent orders under which the ranges agree to close down and perform further environmental investigations and cleanup at the range."68

Three federal laws have been found to be especially relevant to outdoor shooting ranges: the Clean Water Act (CWA),l the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA),m and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA or "Superfund").n Other federal laws may apply to a particular case, and state protections may be more stringent than the applicable federal laws.”

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)