

## COMMENTARY

MILTON FRIEND

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*Transcribed from Conference Expert Panel 15 May 2008.*

FRIEND, M. 2009. Commentary. *In* R. T. Watson, M. Fuller, M. Pokras, and W. G. Hunt (Eds.). *Ingestion of Lead from Spent Ammunition: Implications for Wildlife and Humans*. The Peregrine Fund, Boise, Idaho, USA. DOI 10.4080/ilsa.2009.0314

Key words: Ammunition, competitive, industry, lead, non-lead, science, shooting, stakeholders.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK The Peregrine Fund for putting this program together. It's nice to be re-immersed in an issue that I spent so much of my professional career working on. I have learned a lot from the conference, particularly of the potential association of lead from ammunition that I had not considered previously, such as lead in the food that I am eating. A couple of important thoughts come to mind.

When I left the Wildlife Health Center after directing it for 23 years, I guessed I had moved away from the lead issue. The Secretary of the Interior asked me to go out to California and take on the issue of putting the scientific underpinning to the Salton Sea Restoration Project so that political and management decisions could be made in terms of that particular issue. The Salton Sea is near the California-Mexican border and supports 418 species of birds, so there are a lot of conservation consequences to what takes place there. As the Executive Director of the Salton Sea Science Committee I was handed a large group of political appointees representing a wide diversity of backgrounds, and I thought it was going to be impossible to come to any kind of consensus. When the process started, for example, there was absolutely no consideration of the 418 species of birds that were there. This was

a water issue and a development issue in terms of major cities like Los Angeles and San Diego. Yet, I was absolutely flabbergasted at the ability of such diverse stakeholders to come together, because we were able to put together a good underpinning of science. We walked away from that experience with one of the common goals being the preservation of the bird life. Now that was a major advancement in an otherwise totally hostile environment.

I mention that experience because it reflects one of the challenges in front of us here. We've not had participation, even though there are a few people in the audience, of the major stakeholders in the lead vs. non-lead ammunition debate. So, it becomes our task to visit and engage them, take our ideas to them and try to find common ground to move forward. If we do not do that, we will probably be unsuccessful in getting to where we need to be.

There were a lot of very good presentations in the conference. I want to focus on one. I commend Dr. Oliver Krone for doing it right in Germany, but some of you may not have picked up on an important issue, and I'm using this as an example of the nuances of dealing with lead and dealing with hunter-killed venison in Germany, compared to dealing with it in this country. There is an eco-

conomic incentive associated with hunting game in Germany because game is marketed in Europe, whereas it is not in the U.S. The thought I want to convey, from my perspective, is that to change human behavior in the direction that we would like it to go involves two powerful motivating factors. One is that you are experiencing personal, unwanted impacts so it becomes a personal situation, not an abstraction in dealing with the conservation of something “out there.” But if you are impacted personally, you are inclined to pursue solutions. So, for example, we have shifted from eating red meat to depleting the oceans because we were concerned that red meat was bad for our diet. Likewise, I see the human health aspect here as weighing more heavily, potentially, than it did in the waterfowl wars.

Another stakeholder and driving force is the competitive shooters. As a former competitor I understand that if you think you have an advantage, or if there is something that will give you an advantage, you are going to pursue it. I think here is an opportunity to work with industry in terms of product enhancement that would cause people to want to go out and use it. Look at the quality of the steel shot today compared with early offerings – they were

awful. That is because of the competitive marketplace. I strongly encourage the involvement of industry to work together to develop a product that is in the best interest of competitive shooters and the best interest of wildlife conservation.

*Biography.*—**Milton Friend, Ph.D.**, is Director Emeritus at the US Geographical Survey’s National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin. He has worked as a university researcher and with state and federal conservation organizations. Dr. Friend entered the wildlife conservation field in 1956 with the Vermont Department of Fish and Game. In 1975 he was assigned to Madison, Wisconsin, to develop the National Wildlife Health Center. He served as Center Director until 1998, when he was asked by the Secretary of Interior to accept a special assignment as the Executive Director of the Salton Sea Science Committee to develop and oversee the science program for the Salton Sea Restoration Project. He returned to the Center in 2002 to complete a book on emerging diseases. His many honors and awards include the Department of the Interior’s Meritorious Service and Distinguished Service Awards.