

ASA Meets With National Park Service on Lead Ban in National Parks

In March the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), along with a number of fish and wildlife management conservation groups, asked the National Park Service (NPS) to reconsider its ban on the use of fishing tackle made with lead components in national parks by 2010.

“The sportfishing industry is surprised and dismayed by the March 10 announcement made by the National Park Service,” said ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson. “Its intention to eliminate the use of lead in fishing tackle in national parks was made without prior consultation of the sportfishing industry or the millions of recreational anglers who fish within the national park system.”

Robertson further said, “In his January 21, 2009, Executive Memo to federal agency and department heads, President Obama made it very clear that he expects the federal government to be transparent,

participatory and collaborative and that ‘executive departments and agencies should offer Americans increased opportunities to participate in policymaking and to provide their Government with the benefits of their collective expertise and information.’ We expect the National Park Service to follow the President’s order.”

In the normal course of events, the NPS would have notified the sportfishing and shooting sports industries (lead component ammunition is also included in the ban) about this change in policy and they would have been invited to discuss this decision with NPS staff.

On April 6, ASA staff and Government Affairs committee members met with William Shafroth, deputy assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior and NPS staff to discuss the NPS’s intended ban. ASA stressed that any change in federal policy that affects the sportfishing industry must

follow appropriate rule-making guidelines, including an evaluation of relevant science and an open public-comment process. The NPS announcement was made without prior consultation of the sportfishing industry or the millions of recreational anglers who fish within the national park system.

Robertson said, “The NPS policy announcement, issued by a press release, does not explain how this decision was reached, why it may be necessary or how this rule will be implemented. To our knowledge, there has been no proposed rule, nor any opportunity for public comment. We request that the NPS withdraw this proposal and discuss the rationale for it with the appropriate stakeholders before taking further action.”

ASA continues to encourage and support voluntary angler education programs for the use and proper disposal of lead sinkers and urges state and federal fish and wildlife agencies to do the same. ■