

CLEAN FISHING

Keeping Haywood County Waterways Safe for Waterfowl

Residents of Haywood County are surrounded by wonderful waterways that wind through the mountains of this area. Many, if not all, of those waterways spill directly into Lake Junaluska. Volunteers at Lake Junaluska in conjunction with Lake Junaluska Assembly, Inc. are preparing to launch a Clean Fishing Campaign this spring. We are thankful to the Haywood County Recreation Department for sharing this information on our behalf.

The Clean Fishing Campaign was born out of concern for the waterfowl that live at Lake Junaluska and those that migrate through the area each year. Over 170 species have been identified! Lead split shot fishing weights are sometimes accidentally left in the lake when a fishing line breaks. These weights may then be ingested by waterfowl feeding on the lake bottom. Once they are ingested these birds are very likely to develop fatal lead poisoning. At least two bird deaths by lead poisoning were confirmed by X-Ray. Other suspicious bird deaths over the last three years may well have been related to lead poisoning.

As we began to explore this topic, we learned that the National Wildlife Federation has raised concern about the presence of lead in both hunting ammunition and in fishing tackle. You may learn more about their campaign for a lead-free landscape and alternatives to lead ammunition and fishing tackle at nwf.org.

The Clean Fishing Campaign at Lake Junaluska has determined that the most readily available alternative to the lead split shot sinkers are those made of tin. Our Clean Fishing Campaign will distribute free tin split shot sinkers beginning this spring and throughout the summer to individuals and families fishing at Lake Junaluska. This is an entirely voluntary choice for everyone. Our first goal is to prevent lead poisoning in the waterfowl and our second is to continue to create an environment that is healthy and safe for all wildlife and humans here at Lake Junaluska.

Unfortunately, the lead split shot sinkers are not the only hazard for waterfowl in our waters. Another hazard is the fishing line that sometimes gets hooked on a rock or branch and is left there. A Canadian goose was

recently found to be missing a leg that had been entwined with fishing line.

Providing a safe environment free of toxic lead, excess trash and dangerous fishing line is a responsibility that we all share. Please consider the following best practices when fishing at Lake Junaluska or at your favorite fishing spot:

- Use tin sinkers and other lead-free tackle
- Dispose of trash and excess fishing line properly at the site or take it home with you for safe disposal.

As the Campaign progresses, additional tin weights and information about the Clean Fishing Campaign will be available at The Bethea Welcome Center at 91 North Lakeshore Drive.

Should you desire to dispose of lead weights (sinkers), please take them to the Lake Junaluska Public Works building located at 19 Sleepy Hollow Road.

We hope that you will support this environmental program and help spread the word to all who enjoy fishing at Lake Junaluska and beyond. We will be at The HCC Fishing Festival on April 5 from noon until 4:00 if you would like to come learn more about this program. If you would like additional information or would like someone to do a presentation about the program for your organization, please contact cleanfishinglakejunaluska@gmail.com.

Patricia Parrish for The Clean Fishing Campaign