



The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban

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Dove Protection Coalition Denounces Action by NRC and the Launch of Michigan's First Dove Hunting Season in a Century

Groups Says Dove Hunting Plans Should Not Take Flight Prior to Referendum Vote

(Lansing) -- Today, the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban, a coalition of humane, environmental, and civic groups, denounced the anticipated decision today by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to initiate the first mourning dove shooting season since 1905. The hunt is set to begin in southern Michigan tomorrow. NRC is expected to take the action today in the wake of the move by the Legislature to authorize dove hunting. Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed the legislation even though she had made an explicit and unambiguous campaign promise to veto any dove hunting legislation.

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban has launched a statewide signature gathering effort to place a referendum on the November 2006 ballot to repeal the action of the Legislature and Governor Granholm. The group needs to collect approximately 158,000 signatures by the end of March to meet the qualification requirements for a referendum. If the signatures are certified next year, the law authorizing dove hunting will be suspended until the November 2006 election.

"For 99 years, longer than any other state in the union, doves have been protected in Michigan because the majority of Michigan citizens, including the majority of hunters, oppose the target shooting of what is known as the state's official bird of peace," said Mike Boyce, Director of Southern Michigan Operations of the Michigan Audubon Society. "The needless allowance of toxic lead shot goes against sound science. Countless studies have demonstrated that lead not only poisons mourning doves, but also numerous other wildlife, including species of special concern. Given what we now know, it is unconscionable to allow such a large volume of lead to be deposited over crop growing soils."

"It is regrettable that the Natural Resources Commission is charging forward with a hunt even though the issue is likely to go directly to the people for a vote," said Julie Baker, campaign manager for the Committee. "The responsible course would be to defer action pending a final judgment by the people of Michigan."

"Tomorrow, for the first time in a century, hunters will shoot doves for target practice tomorrow and stack up the broken bodies of these gentle and harmless songbirds," said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States. "Michigan voters have long believed that shooting these birds is inhumane and unnecessary, and we are confident they'll vote to restore the policy of protection that has endured for such a long time."

Today, the NRC will make its decision known to open season to allow shooters to take 15 birds per day through the end of October.

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban consists of The Humane Society of the United States, the Michigan Audubon Society, the Detroit Audubon Society, the Michigan Humane Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, The Songbird Protection Coalition, and The Fund for Animals.

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