

Huffman celebrates BLM's decision to cease use of cyanide bombs on public lands

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Recently, U.S. Representative Jared Huffman (CA-02) celebrated the announcement from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that Director Stone-Manning has signed a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) to stop the use of M-44 ejector devices – also known as cyanide bombs – on BLM lands.

“Cyanide bombs are a cruel and indiscriminate device that have proven to be deadly for pets, humans, and wildlife – and they have no business being on our public lands. The Mansfield family, Predator Defense, and many others have been champions of this effort for decades, and I am glad I was able to join them by leading letters and legislation that pushed the BLM to reach this decision,” said Rep. Huffman. “We are now on a path forward for families to enjoy the outdoors without the fear of accidentally detonating these devices and suffering the lethal repercussions. Now, we can focus our efforts on pushing other federal agencies like the USDA to follow suit and getting Canyon’s Law passed to ensure a ban on these cruel devices is codified into law.”

“I’m encouraged to see the Administration taking a positive step forward to keep cyanide bombs off of our public lands, but our bill is still needed to ensure M-44’s are never again used across all land management agencies,” said Senator Jeff Merkley. “More effective, safe, and humane predator control options are available, and should be the only options used on public lands.”

“Cyanide bombs are inhumane, indiscriminate and dangerous devices. I am pleased to know that the Bureau of Land Management is no longer allowing them to be used on the 245 million acres of public land that they manage. This is reassuring news for people who work on or enjoy visiting BLM sites or live nearby that they, their family members, or their pets will not be harmed by accidentally activating poisonous and deadly cyanide bombs,” said Congressman Steve Cohen.

“I am immensely relieved that countless people and animals will now be spared death and/or poisoning on a huge portion of the American landscape,” said Brooks Fahy, executive director of Predator Defense, a national wildlife advocacy group. “Working with victims of M-44 tragedies for over 30 years, I’ve seen what these indiscriminate devices do to families who have lost beloved pets, been poisoned themselves, or potentially lost a child. I commend the Interior Department for making BLM lands immeasurably safer.”

M-44s are small traps made up of a stake that is driven into the ground with a spring and a canister loaded with the powdered poison, sodium cyanide. Once they’re set, the traps resemble sprinkler heads, and when triggered, the M-44 ejects a cloud of cyanide meant to kill coyotes, wild dogs, or foxes. Science has shown that lethal predator control is unnecessary and ineffective. Poisoning predators like coyotes with M-44 devices has not been shown to significantly reduce predation pressure on livestock and game species.

Rep. Huffman, along with Steve Cohen (TN-09) and U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) led Canyon’s Law, legislation to ban M-44 ejectors from all public lands. Canyon’s Law is named after Canyon Mansfield, an Idaho boy who took a customary walk with his dog Kasey in 2017 on BLM lands on a hill behind his home. He touched what he thought was a sprinkler head, inadvertently triggering an M-44 device. Canyon watched helplessly as his beloved companion suffered a cruel and painful death. Fortunately for Canyon, the wind pushed much of the cyanide away from him, yet he still suffers health effects years later.

“We are so happy to finally see one federal government department banning another’s reckless and indiscriminate actions, telling Wildlife Services their use of these barbaric and antiquated devices must stop,” said Dr. Mark Mansfield, Canyon’s father. “We celebrate this critical move forward--ridding the BLM of cyanide bombs. But there is more to do. Congress must enact Canyon’s Law as a final act to ban M-44s on all public lands in America.”

“This win is for you, Kasey Mansfield, and for all the other living creatures that have lost their lives to an M-44,” said Theresa Mansfield, Canyon’s mother.

In October 2022, Huffman led a letter to U.S. Interior Department Secretary Deb Haaland calling on the Department to take swift action and ban these devices on all its public lands and remove any that remain. Representative Huffman also oversaw the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife

hearing on this topic in the 117th Congress. View his line of questioning with Dr. Mark Mansfield, Canyon's father.