

The Wilmette League of Women Voters wishes to register concern with the U.S. Coast Guard Live-Fire training plans as proposed for the Great Lakes.

First, we are unconvinced that training with live ammunition is necessary. Though Dr. Maughan assured those present at the Waukegan meeting that the lead levels were within acceptable ranges, it is difficult to see that any level of lead introduction into the lake ecosystem is acceptable. Lake Michigan is already in a fragile state without any addition of potential toxins. In addition, it seems foolhardy to put more lead into what is our major source of drinking water for the metropolitan areas on the Great Lakes.

Besides the toxins, there is concern about the risk of injury to the recreational boaters and the fishermen. True, warnings can be broadcast, but training with live ammunition within five miles of the shoreline seems unnecessarily risky.

We strongly urge the Coast Guard to choose the most prudent, conservative training methods. This would include exploring use of "green" ammunition and utilization of computer simulations wherever possible. Above all, it is important to avoid a situation in which the public is more endangered by Coast Guard training than by the actual threat of terrorist activity.

There is no doubt that we live in times of elevated risks and that some compromise may be necessary. However, it is incumbent upon those charged with protecting us to respond in proportion to the actual risk.

Thank you for this opportunity to communicate our concerns.

Georgia Gebhardt, VP  
Wilmette League of Women Voters