

OUTDOOR AMERICA™

PUBLISHED BY THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

2024 ISSUE 3

Making a Difference: How the League Serves Local Communities



ALSO INSIDE:

Award-Winning Ikes
across America

Convention Recap,
Endowment Update

Suburbia:
The New Frontier
for Deer Hunting



celebrating
100
Years
of conservation partnership



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Creation of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge in 1924 Kicked Off the Modern Conservation Movement

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is an enduring example of how we can and must take action to save the nation's waterways and ensure a future with clean water. We will need bold steps and new generations of stewardship to address a range of problems—polluted runoff, habitat degradation and invasive species to name a few.

Visit iwla.org/upperMiss for details about the history and events celebrating the refuge centennial.

During 2024, Americans are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Upper Mississippi refuge. In events, exhibits and publications during the year, the refuge will be recognized for its value as wildlife habitat and a resource for outdoor recreation while also acknowledging that the river

faces a host of environmental challenges today.

Establishing the refuge in 1924 was a monumental achievement due almost wholly to the efforts of the Izaak Walton League of America. In response to plans to drain and fill wetland habitat from Lake Pepin, Minnesota south to Rock Island, Illinois, the League leveraged its 100,000 members to urge Congress, the White House and four states to protect these vital resources within a new national wildlife and fish refuge.

The campaign didn't just establish the largest wildlife refuge of its time, it created the template for the modern conservation movement that helped produce a wave of grassroots actions that would ultimately drive dozens of major conservation achievements in the decades that followed.

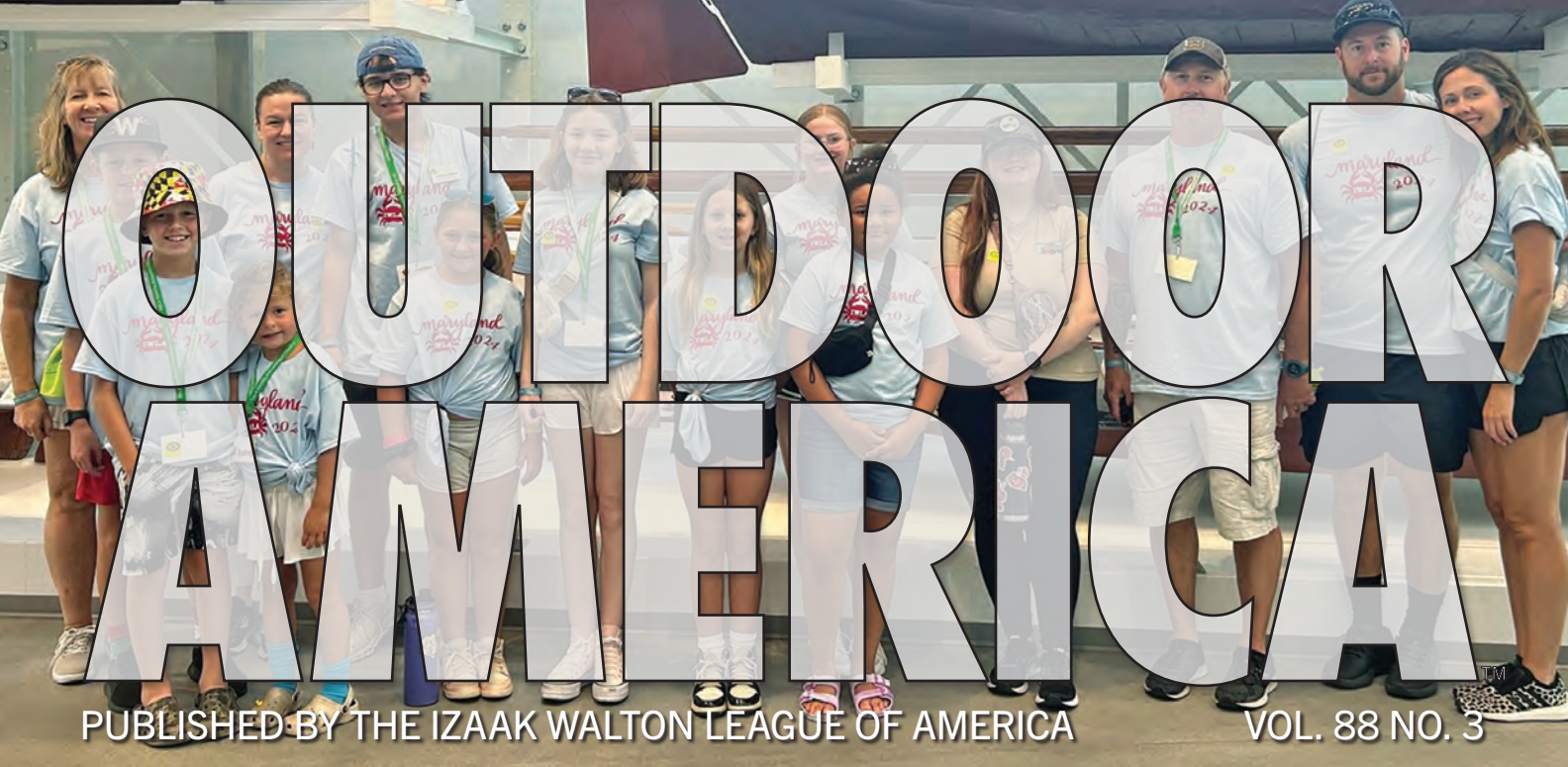
Describing the League's work to save the Upper Mississippi wetlands, historian Stephen Fox wrote, "It was a phenomenon—the first conservation group with a mass membership... It brought new

pressures on Congress through its sheer size and because it spoke for a different area of the country."

In his book, *The Great River*, historian Phillip Scarpino called the League's grassroots effort to save the Upper Mississippi in the 1920s, "the first modern environmental campaign."

Today, this refuge protects 250,000 acres of the Mississippi floodplain and wetlands along 261 miles of the river. The refuge continues to provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife species in the region including 57 mammals, 260 fish, 37 freshwater mussels and 45 amphibians and reptiles. The Upper Mississippi is a globally important flyway for more than 300 bird species and 40 percent of all North American waterfowl.

The bluffs, vistas and trails found in the refuge host about 3.7 million visits each year for hiking, boating, wildlife observations, fishing, hunting and other recreation, which support \$125 million in outdoor recreation and tourism.



CONTENTS

2024, ISSUE 3

Features

8 Helping a Community to Recover from a Catastrophic Flood
By Michael Reinemer



KCAU-TV

12 Restoring Our Great Waters: Convention Recap
By Michael Reinemer



MICHAEL REINEMER

20 National Awards: People and Organizations that Make a Difference
By Earl Hower



PORTER COUNTY CHAPTER

44 Suburbia: A New Frontier for White-Tailed Deer Hunting?
By Bruce Ingram



ISTOCK

Departments

League Leader..... 2

Director's Chair 4

Ikes in Action..... 8

Clean Water Corner 34

Policy Pulse..... 36

Soil Matters..... 38

News & Views..... 42

ON THE COVER ▶ Summer Machnik, a high school senior and student member of the Porter County Chapter, has provided leadership in community programs.

CONTENTS ▶ Participants in the National Youth Convention tour a maritime museum in Maryland.

ABOUT THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA ▶

Founded in 1922, the Izaak Walton League of America is a national conservation organization headquartered in Gaithersburg, MD. Our more than 40,000 members protect and enjoy America's soil, air, woods, waters and wildlife. For membership information, call (800) IKE-LINE (453-5463) or visit our website at www.iwla.org.



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Proud of Our Past, We Have Major Achievements ahead of Us

JODI LABS | National President

I want to first thank the Maryland Division for hosting this year's national convention in Cambridge. The Division went above and beyond to make sure that Ikes from across the country had a memorable experience. There is no question that the Maryland Ikes take pride in the natural resources of their region, pride that drives their desire and passion to advance the League's conservation and outdoor recreation mission in the State of Maryland and beyond. This pride came through in the Division's efforts to share as much as they could with those who attended.

This issue of *Outdoor America* includes a recap of the 2024 convention. As you will see from the coverage, the convention provided a great opportunity for members to come together to not only discuss the efforts the League and its members are undertaking to advance the League's mission, but also celebrate the Izaak Walton League's successes over the past year. We also discussed the abundant opportunities in front of us.

There was a lot of positive energy during the convention, energy that hopefully reignited

a spark for some. Among other things, I observed Ikes who are excited about the work they are doing at their chapters and share their stories with others, including many of the first-time attendees. I am confident that the excitement was contagious, resulting in many of us going back home and sharing new ideas with our chapters. Perhaps they are even encouraging others to attend next year's convention in my backyard, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

We'll need bold steps and new generations of stewardship to address the range of problems impacting our waterways

The theme of this year's convention, *Restoring Our Great Waters: Taking Action Today to Secure a Better Future*, reminded us of the League's original roots in conservation and that there is still much work ahead to restore and protect our waterways, not only for today's generation but tomorrow's.

Past as prologue

The places the League has



played an integral role in protecting, including the Chesapeake Bay, the Upper Mississippi River and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, serve as examples of the enduring value of conserving natural resources and special places. However, hearing about the ongoing challenges facing such waterways reminds me that maintaining those values and benefits requires constant vigilance, hard work and sustained advocacy.

Over the past year, we have heard the story of Will Dilg and the formation of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. There is no question that the work started by Will Dilg and the early members of the League—and

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so many others—100-plus years ago continues today; it's work we all need to do. And we must never lose sight of the fact that conservation work is never done.

For example, despite the fact that we were able to preserve the Upper Mississippi Refuge for the last 100 years, we are dealing with many of the same issues that were facing the river in the early 1920s. While some of these issues may present themselves in a different way, they are no less serious in that they pose a real threat to water quality today. The same is true for many of the waterways we have worked hard to protect over the past century.

Challenges ahead of us

The conservation challenges facing many of our natural areas include polluted runoff, soil erosion, habitat degradation and invasive plants and animals, as well as new challenges such as climate change and forever chemicals. There is no question that we will need a new

generation of conservationists and folks like Will Dilg.

Protecting habitat, fish and wildlife, and outdoor recreation in our natural areas requires scaling up conservation across the surrounding landscape, reducing pollution at the source and redoubling efforts to address problems that seem so last century, but are still serious today. This is work that the League will continue to proudly undertake over the coming years.

I encourage each of us to reflect on how we can (and must) take action to save the nation's waterways and ensure a future with clean water. We'll need bold steps and new generations of stewardship to address the range of problems impacting our waterways. It is important to set aside our differences and work toward the common goal of clean water and healthy habitat for our fish and wildlife, as well as a healthy economy fueled by the outdoor recreation opportunities our waterways provide.

In closing, I want to thank our membership for their faith and vote of confidence in electing me to serve another year as the League's president. I look forward to working with our members over the next year as we continue to inspire the next generation of conservationists and natural area protectors, whether it be through the creation of new chapters, the continued expansion of our volunteer science programs or one of the many other conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities offered by the League's chapters and membership.

I am confident that we have a lot of major achievements ahead of us. After all, we have no excuse to not achieve great things in our continued fight for clean water and healthy habitat.

Today, we have a lot more resources available to us than Dilg and other League members had in the early years when they scored huge conservation victories.

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Award-Winning Ikes: Thank You!

SCOTT KOVAROVICS | Executive Director

In this issue, we celebrate League members and others who received national awards for their service in 2023. Some of the people are well known to you and the accomplishments overall are incredible.

As I read through the highlights of individual achievements, some common themes emerge:

Commitment over time

Many of the award summaries highlight the honoree's work over decades, over their career or even a lifetime. Members and volunteers are incredibly dedicated, providing leadership and inspiration over many years.

One person makes a difference

Reading through the individual awards reaffirms so powerfully how one person can make a difference. Some award winners work independently while others lead a group or an entire chapter effort. Regardless of how they do it, their hard work has much broader and enduring impact.

Working across the mission

The League's mission is broad-based and the awards showcase engagement across

the spectrum—from water quality monitoring and habitat restoration to connecting people to the outdoors and engaging youth.

The awards appropriately recognize specific individuals. At the same time, the service, dedication and hard work you will read about are replicated by members and volunteers throughout the League. These qualities are inherent in many Ikes and have been for generations.

Folks doing the work—almost without exception—shy away from attention, give credit to others and never think about getting recognition. Yet, with the League's national awards and the awards many chapters and divisions confer separately, the rest of us can help celebrate others for their positive impacts on conservation, young people and the communities in which they live.

I encourage everyone to start thinking now about nominating a deserving member or volunteer (or two) for a 2024 national, chapter or division award. Make the awards committees' job more challenging next year by nominating more deserving candidates!



Finally, a personal note about Paul Lepisto, who received the 54 Founders award this year. After nearly 18 years as a League staff member, Paul retired at the end of September. This award honors a select few for outstanding contributions to conservation and advancing the League's mission. This certainly describes Paul, for his work on behalf of the League and for a decades-long career dedicated to educating youth and engaging people in conservation. I know Paul will stay involved, and he will have more personal time to fish, hunt and relax. We wish Paul all the best.

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To conserve, restore and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including soil, air, woods, waters and wildlife.

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Izaak Walton League

ENJOYING & PROTECTING AMERICA'S OUTDOORS

Not a member? It's easy to join!

Visit www.iwla.org to locate a chapter near you or join as a national or corporate member. You can also call 800-IKE-LINE and ask for the membership department. Your membership supports our conservation and education efforts and links you with a nationwide network of people working on common-sense solutions to environmental issues.

By Way of Introduction...

DALE BRAUN | Chair, Executive Board

At our national convention in July, I was elected chair of the Izaak Walton League's Executive Board, and in this new role, I look forward to working with all our members. By way of introduction, I'll briefly share the story of my engagement with the League going back several decades.

I joined my local Linn County Chapter in 1986 here in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Like many other League members, I joined to use the shooting ranges. A snafu with membership acknowledgement led me to volunteer to fix the poor record-keeping, which was caused by too many people ignoring that job.

One thing led to another and with the help of my wife and two very young daughters, we straightened out the membership roster and folded, stamped, licked envelope flaps and mailed off the renewal notices—all of which was pre-computer days. Fun times, but I have no doubt my daughters grew tired of it.

It was also at this time that I became attuned to the larger League message. I became acquainted with some key Ikes figures, such as executive directors Jack Lorenz and his successor Paul Hansen as well as past national presidents and fellow Iowans Dale Brentnall and Don Freeman. All of whom I've treated as mentors,

and like a hungry bass I was hooked on the Izaak Walton League and its conservation message.

Through them I learned about Aldo Leopold and Ding Darling. I learned about Will Dilg's efforts to create the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and the founding of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and the constant "care and feeding" it needs for preservation and protection from destructive development.

I also learned that many, many League chapters across the country participate in local programs such as Save Our Streams, Nitrate Watch and Salt Watch, hunter education, wildlife identification classes, fishing derbies, 4-H and Scouting—as sponsors and program hosts.

I could go on, but the reason I mention all of the above is that it falls under our mission statement: "To conserve, restore, and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including soil, air, woods, waters and wildlife."

We, as Izaak Walton League members, need to keep that mission statement in the forefront of our continuing efforts. As members, we need to make that our everyday thinking. Clean water is paramount to a



healthy family and community. Soil conservation—the Good Lord doesn't make soil anymore and what we have needs to be protected as much as possible with best practices. At the national level, we have key staff members whose job is to help us and our communities learn more about our natural resources.

Let's be vocal with our local, state and federally elected officials to make sure they understand our mission and why we're concerned. We can use our small but mighty voice just like Will Dilg and Ding Darling did so many years ago to emphasize where we are coming from and where we should be going.

I look forward to working with all of you in carrying out the League's mission.

Veterans: Hidden Gems

I grew up learning to enjoy outdoor activities. My grandfather and father taught me to hunt and fish. Many veterans like me enjoy hunting, fishing and shooting. Good news—many Ike chapters offer these opportunities.

Veterans bring a sense of commitment and organizational skills and can contribute to chapters. Tom Christiansen, a veteran at the Des Plaines Chapter, contributes to many events. He volunteers his time and money to help.

I would encourage embracing veterans. Get them involved to advance your chapter.

“Put out your flags, cheer the marchers at parades, and go to tributes. But when you wake up the next day, November 12, remember it’s still Veterans Day for our veterans—and it will be every day of their lives. So thank



them. Talk to them. Invite them to schools so they can share their experiences and teach our children that we all must take care of each other, on the battlefield and in life.”

-- Retired General Colin Powell

*Dean Farr, Chicago #1 Chapter
Izaak Walton League*

Letters to the editor

Letters can be mailed to the managing editor at 707 Conservation Lane, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 or emailed to oa@iwla.org. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

[**Editors note:** Dating back to the 1940s or farther, the Izaak Walton League has a long history of providing outdoor recreation opportunities for veterans. For more information, see *Outdoor America* issue 4, 2022, “America’s Veterans Find Healing in the Great Outdoors.”]

Send Us Your News

Have you begun a new activity, held an event or tackled a local conservation project?

Share your news and programs with all **Outdoor America** readers. Send a brief write up along with photos (as attachments, 3-5 MB) to appear in our “Ikes in Action” section. For photos, please include descriptions and the name of the photographer. Email mreinemer@iwla.org





More than 40 homes were lost or severely damaged by flooding in June at McCook Lake.

“A Beacon of Aid” in a Time of Crisis: McCook Lake Chapter Steps in to Help a Flood-Ravaged Community

By MICHAEL REINEMER, Editor

In late June, McCook Lake, South Dakota, was hit by a flood that rapidly swamped the community following two days of thunderstorms that dumped as much as 13 inches of rain on the region.

At McCook Lake, at least 40 homes crumbled into the water or were severely damaged and hundreds of residents were suddenly without food, electricity and in many cases, a place to live. Kim Delaney of the **McCook Lake Chapter** described it as “gut wrenching” devastation.

Renae Hansen, the Chapter’s caretaker, had been

monitoring the weather and water levels. Once it became clear the flood was going to be catastrophic, she used Facebook Live to keep the community up to date. And she would continue to work at the hub of a makeshift—but effective—emergency response system in the absence of a state or local agency that could immediately help.

Hansen, along with husband Mike, Chapter president Joshua Stokes and other Chapter members, quickly established the McCook Lake Chapter grounds and clubhouse as the resource hub



In the days following the flooding, the McCook Lake Chapter provided food and supplies to those who could not return to their homes.

for the community. In the immediate aftermath, Hansen explained, people were anxious to get back to their homes to assess the damage.

“Providing a space for the community to gather for a meal was more than a meal,” Hansen says. “It was comfort knowing they were not alone in the disaster.”

Local businesses pitched in. Tyson Foods came one weekend and fed 1,200 people each day. Working with the McCook Lake volunteers, local organizations provided cleaning supplies, shovels, first-aid items and portable restrooms.

Thanks to a fundraising effort by the Chapter that raised \$40,000, Joshua Stokes and other members were able to turn those donations into food and emergency hardware supplies, like dehumidifiers and wet-dry vacuums.

The material items supplied were essential to those who had lost everything. But the Chapter also provided a sense of hope.



Renae Hansen of the McCook Lake Chapter describes efforts to help local residents displaced by a devastating flood.

“Emotional and physical support were essential,” Hansen said. “It was also an opportunity for us to find out what the community needed during the disaster.”

One local television station told viewers the Izaak Walton League has been “a beacon of aid” throughout the tragedy.

In a July 4 message to the Ike community, Stokes wrote, “It’s going to be a long, tedious task, but the Izaak Walton League, the McCook Lake Association and several other local organizations are preparing to do everything in our power to return life to normal.”

Hansen says it was four days before the Red Cross provided assistance and five days before the South Dakota Office of Emergency Management got involved. In August, some homeowners were still waiting to hear whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) would provide them with assistance.

The restoration of the area has continued with community-wide efforts to collect debris from the

flooded areas and lake. In September, the Chapter worked on replacing more than 700 trees they had planted three years ago. During the flooding in June, virtually all the trees were lost.

At the Izaak Walton League’s national convention in July, League President Jodi Labs took a moment in her opening address to praise the remarkable efforts of the McCook Lake Chapter and

the tireless leadership of Renae Hansen and her crew during the crisis.

The Chapter’s work serves as a model for how local organizations like the Izaak Walton League can step in to fill a void during a crisis.

The material items supplied were essential to those who had lost everything. But the Chapter also provided a sense of hope.

...PREPARE FOR THE WORST

The toll of Hurricane Helene and Milton throughout the southeastern United States includes more than 200 lives lost and many communities destroyed. The McCook Lake flooding, extreme weather and other threats underscore the need for community organizations, like League chapters, as well as individuals and households to prepare emergency response plans that include:

- Essential supplies. Materials and equipment for first aid, food, water, power, sanitation and other needs.
- Who to contact. Phone numbers for local emergency response services like police, fire, utilities and public health.

Share contact information with specific people at agencies, businesses and other organizations in the community who would take part in an emergency response.

- Types of threats. Imagine threats your community could face that might require evacuation, sheltering in place or other steps—flooding, tornado, wildfire, public health emergency or prolonged loss of electricity, drinking water or other utilities.
- Communication plans. Establish lists and protocols for how to communicate internally and externally in emergencies.

Un-muting Members: Remote Meeting Software Provides Big Benefits

By PORTER COUNTY CHAPTER

Zoom, the remote meeting service provider, issued 385,200 new licenses in 2020. One of those was to the Indiana Division of the Izaak Walton League. That year, many League chapters across America went into slow motion due to a shutdown of groups meeting in person throughout the COVID pandemic.

But the **Porter County Chapter** (PCC) wanted to continue meeting with its members during COVID by offering a teleconferencing option.

“As an elementary school teacher, I was introduced to eLearning and the use of telecommunication to continue teaching children their lessons,” said the Chapter’s executive director, Annette Hansen.

“First PCC was using Teams, then we tried Google Meet and then the free version of Zoom. Zoom was the best option for us because of its compatibility with so many platforms.”

The free version of Zoom allows only a short meeting window of one hour at a time. “We’d have to hang up and sign back in. It worked, but it was frustrating,” Hansen continues. “When Indiana Division offered us the use of a licensed copy, everything was easier.”

Licensed copies offer any length

a meeting requires. By providing a licensed copy of Zoom to their state’s chapters, the Division hoped other chapters would follow PCC’s lead.

“By late 2022, we saw a need for our own license and have been using it enthusiastically ever since,” Hansen says. PCC members can’t always be available in person, but they can join from home, the road or convalescence. “Monthly and committee meetings are too important to miss. We want everyone in the loop and participating.”

The Chapter uses Zoom to allow opinions to be heard by all members, record meetings for secretarial accuracy and keep track of each other visually like a caring Izaak Walton family does.

The Chapter uses Zoom to allow opinions to be heard by all members, record meetings for secretarial accuracy and keep track of each other visually like a caring Izaak Walton family does. Up to 100 viewers can join at a time.

Dean Farr, a PCC member living in Illinois, said, “Given today’s realities, hybrid Zoom meetings represent a practical



Virtual or hybrid meetings allow members to participate from home, the road or convalescence, says Annette Hansen.

solution. They will enable Ikes still working with family obligations an opportunity to attend meetings. Additionally Zoom meetings are a good option for guests to attend.”

PCC purchased a USB speaker to attach to Hansen’s laptop, which opened yet another door to better audio clarity for meeting attendees.

“It costs us about \$150/year for the Zoom license and the speaker was \$60. And, for the good that it does for our members, it’s well worth the expense,” Hansen says.

Contact Annette Hansen at executivedirector@iwlapcc@gmail.com.

RESTORING OUR GREAT WATERS:

Taking Action Today to Secure a Better Future



2024 National Convention
July 14-16 Cambridge, Md.

Convention Sparks Engagement on Local and National Clean Water Priorities

By **MICHAEL REINEMER, Editor**

With experts from across the U.S. providing insights and inspiration, the League's annual convention in July focused on "Restoring Our Great Waters."

League National President Jodi Labs welcomed a crowd in Cambridge, Maryland, that included many first-time attendees. She asserted that the League will continue the fight to defend America's woods, waters and wildlife. In the face of the Supreme Court *Sackett v. EPA* decision that will likely accelerate the loss of wetlands in the nation, "volunteer science is even more important," Labs said.

In her remarks, Labs gave a special shout-out to Renae Hansen of the **McCook Lake Chapter** in South Dakota, who helped organize recovery efforts for the chapter's community following devastating flooding near Sioux City in June. While official agencies struggled to respond, Hansen and the chapter served as a hub for people to get food,

supplies and support. (Read details on page 8.)

Executive Director Scott Kovarovics highlighted early progress toward the League's vision for the future of conservation that then-president Vicki Arnold presented at the convention in 2022. The League's vision is a roadmap for action, he said. For instance, the League's thriving water monitoring programs and the Clean Water Hub database make water quality information available to decision-makers and the general public, serving as vital resources for education and advocacy.

"Monitoring is a means to an end, not an end in itself," Kovarovics noted. The national office now offers a pair of new toolkits to help volunteers through the process of engaging their communities in Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch water monitoring programs with an aim of using test results to drive change on the ground. (See more at page 34.)

“We need your network”

Benita Best-Wong, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water at the EPA, delivered a stirring keynote address about America’s natural resources and our power to protect them, which requires coordinated efforts and an all-of-the-above approach.

She described some of the regulatory and environmental challenges facing the nation’s waterways and drinking water. Volunteer water quality monitoring is “more important than ever” in terms of understanding threats to water quality and advocacy for clean water.

“We need the Izaak Walton League,” she said. “We need your network. We need the programs that you have in order to achieve water quality standards.”

Responding to a question from Kovarovics about increasing public awareness about the impact of the *Sackett* decision on sources of drinking water, Best-Wong agreed that government agencies “need to do a better job of making those connections.”

The Assistant Administrator answered questions from the convention participants and stayed for conversations with a half-dozen League members after her keynote address.

Different regions face similar challenges

Experts from three regions of the U.S. discussed habitat restoration, invasive species, nonpoint-source pollution and other challenges. While working in



EPA Deputy Administrator Benita Best-Wong took questions from League members after her keynote address.

different environments, many of their challenges are similar.

Peter Tango, monitoring coordinator for the Chesapeake Bay Program, discussed major cross-

cutting problems—excess nutrients that contribute to a “summer dead zone” in the Bay, heat and flooding attributed to climate change and toxic chemicals that impair about 70 percent of the Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership between government agencies and other stakeholders and partners that collaborate to meet the pollution-reduction goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. The work to protect the Bay encompasses many different programs, and Tango told the League audience that “monitoring is key.”

Teresa Seidel is director of EPA’s Great Lakes

“We need the Izaak Walton League. We need your network. We need the programs that you have in order to achieve water quality standards.”
-- Benita Best-Wong, EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water

National Program Office, and she described some of the agency's top challenges there. Given the long legacy of pollution in the region, the agency works to address chemical pollution, climate change and invasive species, among other threats. Seidel's office focuses on specific areas that require restoration.

For people who live in the vast Mississippi River watershed, it would help if more of them connected with that "sense of place," and understood its issues, says Jeff Janvrin. That might motivate more action to improve the region. Janvrin is Mississippi River Habitat Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Echoing the "all of the above" approach described by EPA Assistant Administrator Benita Best-Wong, Janvrin said "there is no single tool that will fix the ecosystem."

Success amidst change in wildlife refuges

At the conservation lunch, the League heard inspiring stories from Marcia Pradines Long, refuge manager and project leader for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Long pointed to successes with a variety of previously threatened species—like bald eagles and the Delmarva fox squirrel—in the nearby Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

She also reported on success in eradicating nutria, an invasive rodent that has caused serious soil erosion, crop damage and destruction of native vegetation in the Bay region. That effort required many years of work, with a history of help from volunteers with the Izaak Walton League. At the same time, Fish and Wildlife staff are trying to reverse loss of habitat due to rising sea levels in the Refuge.

Youth enjoy a deep dive into Bay ecosystems

Young attendees stopped by the general session to summarize activities of the League's National Youth Convention, which included tours of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, the oyster hatchery at Horn Point Laboratory and the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The exposure to the science and nature was mixed with equal measures of social events and fun.

Visits from Will Dilg and Harriet Tubman

To an enthusiastic audience, Steven Marking presented a live version of his narrative about the creation of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. "A Visit from Will Dilg" combines the impassioned words and stories of Dilg, one of the League's founders and the chief force behind the successful, precedent-setting campaign to protect the wetlands in the region through congressional action in 1924.

An equally engaging tribute to American history was presented by Millicent Sparks, whose one-woman show portrays Harriet Tubman's heroic



Participants report to the members about their experiences during the National Youth Convention.

MICHAEL REINEMER



Tours of a wildlife refuge and marine science institutions in the Chesapeake Bay region were among the highlights for the National Youth Convention.

work to free enslaved people during the 1850s. Marshalling courage, cunning and stealth, Tubman led more than 70 people north to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

League receives national Scouting award

At the convention, the Boy Scouts of America presented the Distinguished Conservation Service Award Certificate to the Izaak Walton League. That award recognizes “demonstrated leadership and a commitment to the education of youth on a regional, national or international level.”

The citation states, in part, that “the Izaak Walton League of America provides a valuable gateway to the outdoors for thousands of Scouts and all Americans who enjoy fishing, hunting,

shooting sports, boating, birding, and other outdoor activities.”

Separately, Earl Hower, the League’s Director of Chapter Relations, was awarded a Distinguished Conservationist Award for many years of conservation work that includes programs for youth.

National officers elected at convention

League members present at convention elected a slate of national officers:

- President - Jodi Labs
- Vice President - Herbert Pritchett, Sr.
- Secretary - Jim Storer
- Treasurer - Scott Meyer

Izaak Walton League of America Endowment Meeting

Endowment Treasurer Craig Enneking reported that 25 grants were awarded this year, totaling \$116,364. (See details on page 19.) Executive Secretary George Guyant recognized the donors who make these gifts possible by showing consistent support to the Endowment year after year.

Endowment President Patty Nunn reminded the audience that every member of the League is a member of the Endowment. She encouraged chapters to contact Endowment board members for advice on submitting grant applications.



Steven Marking presented a live version of his performance “A Visit from Will Dilg,” which celebrates the League’s role in establishing the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

Following a revised resolutions process that gave delegates more time to consult with the chapters they represent, delegates debated and voted on resolutions addressing conservation issues.

After a robust discussion, delegates approved a resolution embracing best practices for dredging in the Mississippi River. An amendment to delete one of the provisions in the resolution passed. The amended and approved resolution text is below and has been added to the League’s policy handbook.

The League calls for the regulation of dredging effluents quality and “beneficial use” of dredge spoils, including:

- a) waters disposals shall be formulated to address the resuspension and dispersal of contained pollutants within the dredge material,
- b) water effluent and dredge spoils shall be tested according to local, state, and

federal regulations to assure all lands and waterways are protected from degradation,

- c) the establishment of a baseline of the current state of pollutants on adjacent land or waterways,
- d) containment areas utilized for dredge spoils runoff shall be monitored and regulated as point sources.

Delegates voted not to adopt a resolution related to incentivizing alternatives to gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment.

2025 CONVENTION

The 2025 convention will be held in Green Bay, Wisconsin, July 17-19 with a two-day format on Friday and Saturday and the 2026 convention will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Your Endowment in Action

Trap Range for the Community at the Mountaineer Chapter

By PATTY NUNN, Izaak Walton League of America Endowment President

Volunteers at the Mountaineer Chapter in West Virginia built two trap fields on their property, with help from the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment.

The more than 50 adults and youth who regularly shoot trap underscore the popularity of the project. The Mountaineer Chapter continues to expand the use of their facilities by partnering with local schools, 4-H clubs and Scouts to form youth trap teams.

The Chapter volunteers identified range boundaries and prepared two trap fields complete with 16-yard concrete

shooting pads. The fields comply with Amateur Trapshooting Association standards. The Mountaineer Chapter is committed to ensuring safe trapshooting for their members and community.

They also improved vehicle access to the fields. Funds from the Endowment supported the purchase of two new trap machines, batteries, a solar battery charger and other supplies.

This project exemplifies the shared vision and financial partnership that happens between chapters and the Endowment.

The Izaak Walton League of America Endowment encourages all chapters to consider projects that support conservation, education and outdoor recreation. The Endowment Board members are available to guide and advise chapters and state divisions on projects that may lead to grant funding.

Visit iwla-endowment.org for contact and grant application information.



Local youth and community groups are encouraged to use the new trap shooting facilities at the Mountaineer Chapter in West Virginia, funded by the League's Endowment.

Your Endowment in Action

2024 Grants Fund Youth Engagement, Conservation, Education Programs

By PATTY NUNN, Endowment President

The mission of the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment is to fund conservation, education and outdoor recreation across the League. At the League's national convention on July 14th, the Endowment Board held its business meeting and announced grants it will make this year.

This year, the Endowment Board members reviewed 27 grant requests valued at \$287,448 and awarded 24 grants for \$116,364. Two grants were funded through the Zendt Bequest Fund, which is allocated to the greater Chicago metropolitan area. The grant awarded to the Pennsylvania Harry Enstrom Chapter for planting projects and journal manuscript was designated the Grimshaw Habitat and Education Project. Each awardee is assigned to an Endowment board member to support the grantee's successful execution of the project.

We thank everyone who submitted a grant request. The Board recognizes the effort it takes to write a grant request and works diligently to review and discuss every application.

Each grantee receives a letter from the Endowment executive secretary explaining how to request funds. We have received many requests for grant award

extensions due to project delays. If this is necessary, please inform us no later than April 15.

Every grantee is required to provide a final project report no later than July 1st of the year following approval of the grant.

The Endowment supports the James Lawton Childs Award which recognizes two chapters that carried out the most outstanding conservation program during 2023. Congratulations to Minnesota Valley Chapter (with fewer than 500 members) and Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter in Maryland (with more than 500 members) for receiving the award.

The membership meeting for the Endowment was held on Tuesday, July 16, 2024, during the national convention to allow the Board to address the League membership and perform elections for the Board. Every member of the Izaak Walton League is also a member of the Endowment.

Donations and bequests received from membership are critical for the Endowment to enable continued support for good conservation projects across the country. We recognized five new Million Dollar Club members and sent 24 medallions to donors who have continued to contribute \$1,000 or more.

We appreciate the Elgin Chapter of Illinois for its very generous \$50,000 donation.

Endowment election results

This year, I was released from the Board, having served consecutively for nine years. Membership elected the following Directors to the 2024-2025 Board:

- Ron Moore, Illinois
- Pamela Meara, Virginia
- Jim Piatieski, Maryland

The Board of Directors then elected the officers for the 2024-2025 year. The results are:

- Pamela Meara, president
- Steve Labs, vice president
- Craig Enneking, treasurer
- Lisa McIntyre, secretary

We encourage all League chapters to submit grant applications before May 1, 2025 using the iwla-endowment.org website. If you are curious whether your grant would be considered, please reach out to discuss it with the Endowment Board of Directors. They are happy to provide guidance.

2024 Izaak Walton League of America Endowment Grants

At its annual meeting in July, the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment awarded the following grants to League chapters, divisions and the national office.

Project	Applicant	Amount \$
Apiary	Loudoun County Chapter, Va.	3,400
Aquatic Weed Control	Michigan City #7 Chapter, Ind.	1,520
Conservation Education Workshop	Illinois Division, Ill.	3,900
Education & Outreach Events	Nebraska Division, Neb.	2,500
Fishing Deck	Prince William Chapter, Va.	2,440
Fishing Line Receptacles	Monongalia County Chapter, W.Va.	1,800
Handicap Fishing Dock	Lorain County Ely Chapter, Ohio	1,500
Kids' & Seniors' Fishing Contests	Geneseo Chapter, Ill.	1,500
Kids' Fishing Day	Fremont Chapter, Neb.	1,500
Kids' Fishing Derby	Winchester Chapter, Va.	2,000
National Conservation Scholarship	Izaak Walton League, national office	5,000
Natural Playground	Lawrence County Chapter, Ohio	10,000
National Youth Convention	Izaak Walton League, national office	2,500
Nitrate and Salt Watch Kit Distribution	Izaak Walton League, national office	32,350
Planting Projects & Journal Manuscript	Harry Enstrom Chapter, Pa.	62,000
Riparian Restoration, Education Trail	Southwestern Wisconsin Chapter, Wisc.	7,500
Soil Conservation Wind Break	Winchester Chapter, Va.	2,000
State Conservation Camp	West Virginia Division, W.Va.	2,300
Stream Monitoring Chemical Materials	Mount Airy Chapter, Md.	2,882
Teacher Outreach	Iowa Division, Iowa	520
Woodland Habitat, Prairie Restoration	Porter County Chapter, Ind.	9,000
Youth Archery Project	Winchester Chapter, Va.	6,822
Youth Camp Canoe Trip	Indiana Division, Ind.	4,500
Youth GPS Biota Survey	Central Ohio Chapter, Ohio	2,730
TOTAL GRANTS		\$116,364

For more information about the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment, visit iwla-endowment.org.

NATIONAL ★ AWARDS ★ 2023

★ AWARD-WINNING IKES



Each year, the Izaak Walton League recognizes people and organizations within and outside the League for their achievements in conservation, outdoor ethics, water quality, shooting sports, communications and youth-focused work at the local, state and national levels. We also honor members and organizations for their lifelong accomplishments and devotion to natural resources conservation.

It is our honor and pleasure to recognize these individuals and organizations who made a difference in 2023.

NATIONAL AWARDS

54 Founders Award

Considered the League's highest honor, this award is bestowed on an individual or organization for outstanding contributions to the conservation of America's natural resources.



Paul W. Lepisto (South Dakota):

As a member of the League's national staff for 17 years, Paul has been a steady and strong voice in South Dakota, attending meetings, lobbying in the state capital, coordinating river clean-ups and working with the public

at water festivals. He was one of the first members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee, which was formed in 2007 to provide advice and guidance about endangered species and habitat restoration. It is hard to find a more committed, passionate and effective advocate for restoration of the Missouri River. Even prior to joining the League, he was an effective journalist and advocate on wildlife and fisheries conservation issues, especially for waterways in the Dakotas, spending a lifetime promoting the League's values, and conserving our natural resources.

Stanford M. Adams Memorial Award for League Leadership

This Executive Board award recognizes the national director or director-at-large for their continued commitment to the duties and responsibilities that come with their position.



Jeffrey R. Deschamps

(Maryland): A Family Life Benefactor member from Laurel, Maryland, Jeff served as a chapter president from 2011 to 2013 and later as Maryland Division president, 2015-2019. At the national level, he served as chair of the Resolution Committee, a

national director and was elected national president in 2016. He served on the Executive Board until 2021. Continuing his leadership and service spanning two decades, Jeff currently edits the newsletter and serves as executive secretary for the Maryland Division.

Hall of Fame Award

Recognizes a member's outstanding accomplishments in furthering the mission and goals of the League.



William Leaman, Sr.

(Maryland): For almost two decades, as a member of the Rockville Chapter, Bill has organized and managed the Izaak Walton League exhibit at the Montgomery County Fair, promoting the League's presence in the community and

conservation mission while marketing membership to an estimated crowd of 225,000 attendees each year.



William N. Legg (New York):

William is recognized posthumously for his legacy with Project Watershed of Central New York, which he founded 30 years ago. That project evolved from a chapter's volunteer stream monitoring effort into a

regionwide clean water program that recruited high school science teachers, representatives from Syracuse University and staff from the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Richard G. Sommer (South

Carolina): Rick's leadership with the League extends across more than four decades, as chapter president and division secretary and later as a national director, regional governor and director-at-large for the past two decades. A

Family Life Benefactor member, he has served on various resource and special committees and he currently chairs the national awards committee.

Conservation Award

Recognizes members' contributions to conservation in the name of the League.



Ilene Altman (Maryland): As a certified master gardener and a member of the Rockville Chapter, Ilene has worked tirelessly to promote the benefits of native plant landscaping.



Raymond F. Besecker (New York): Ray is best known for his work in conservation education to protect Lake Onondaga and organizing fishing tournaments in central New York.



Andrew B. Cooke (Maryland): In an effort to engage more youth in the outdoors, Andrew developed the Rockville Chapter's innovative Juniors Conservation Education Program, hosting multiple interactive, fun, educational, hands-on events throughout the year.



Donald H. Frame (Indiana): Don and his family owned and farmed the land that later became the Frame Family Little Calumet Conservation Area, now owned and protected by the Porter County Chapter. His knowledge

of the watershed has been invaluable in preserving habitat near the East Branch of the Little Calumet River.



Brian E. King (Maryland): Brian maintains the extensive 13-mile trail system, serves as an advisor on Scout projects and assists the farm manager establishing conservation projects at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter.



James Shaeffer (South Dakota): As a conservationist, hunter and a member of the Sioux Falls Chapter, James has improved and promoted wild habitat on more than 400 acres by planting trees, native grasses and food plots.



Marilyn R. Spencer (Indiana): Marilyn brings decades of knowledge about songbirds, experience in making bird feeders and education, fostering conservation ethics in children as part of the Porter County Chapter's nature education outreach.



Craig R. Sterle (Minnesota): Craig was a forester for the Minnesota DNR for 32 years. Over many years, he has been a courageous voice for the environment at the W. J. McCabe Chapter. He also served as the conservation director for the Minnesota Division, tackling a variety of environmental, public lands, renewable energy and habitat issues.



Bobby R. Wright (Indiana): For many years, this Griffith Chapter Ike has managed the chapter's lakes, organized fish stocking and youth fishing days, planted and maintained pollinator gardens and organized birdhouse building events with children.

Outdoor Ethics Award

Recognizes individuals, groups, or organizations judged to have done outstanding work in outdoor ethics.



Curt Howard (Maryland): A National Director from the Harford County Chapter, Curt is a longtime hunter education instructor, teaching responsible and ethical hunting and conducting simulation hunts during field day events. He has organized monofilament recovery

days at the Susquehanna River Conowingo Dam and delivered many public presentations on nature, wildlife, hunting and angling topics.



Larry Anderson (Maryland): Larry chairs the hunting ethics and wildlife committees for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter, ensuring that the members understand and abide by hunting rules and regulations. He also monitors wildlife populations and works to improve habitat on the Chapter's grounds.

Save Our Streams Award

Recognizes outstanding work in environmental education and citizen activism for clean water.



Dan Dutton (Maryland): First exposed to the League's Save Our Streams (SOS) water monitoring protocol, Dan organizes stream monitoring on multiple sites on and near the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter conservation farm in Montgomery County,

Maryland, as part of their Ponds and Streams Program.



Philip Mariscal (Maryland): When Philip, an avid angler, joined the Rockville Chapter, he took over as the chair of their SOS program, recruited and trained additional monitors. He is a regular at the Maryland Water Monitoring Council's Stream

Roundtable and presented his findings to the Maryland DNR Black Bass Advisory Committee.



Friends of the Minnesota Valley (Minnesota): This volunteer group actively collaborates with a

diverse array of community-based organizations and initiatives to protect and improve the Minnesota River watershed. The Minnesota Valley Chapter is the driving force behind the formation of this organization.

Thelma "Pete" Reed Award

Recognizes the member who has volunteered in many conservation projects, educational efforts, community service or chapter leadership development and is not serving as a national leader of the League but is considered an "up and coming" leader.

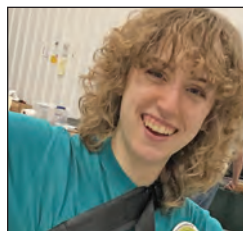


Andrew Wight (Maryland): Andrew has demonstrated leadership in a variety of chapter educational and community outreach events. As first vice president at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter, he has inspired many members to work on

conservation projects, youth engagement, education efforts, community service and family events.

Outdoor America's Future Award

Recognizes the Izaak Walton League youth or student member who has volunteered in conservation projects, educational efforts, community service or chapter leadership development and is considered a young "up and coming" future League leader.



Summer Machnik (Indiana): Summer is a high school senior and a student member of the Porter County Chapter. She has provided leadership at the Discovery Trackers 4-H Club, Calumet Nature Exchange, Pollinator Partnership's Project

Wingspan and the Chapter's Family Nature Night events.



Suryash Rawat (Minnesota): As an elected board member of the Minnesota Valley Chapter, Suryash was a founding member of the Chapter's Green Crew program that combines League activities and Scouting. He spearheaded the formation of a Stewardship Committee at the

Chapter including implementation of Leave No Trace for members, energy-efficient appliances, recycling and sustainable supplies.

Honor Roll Award

Recognizes an individual or organization for outstanding accomplishments in conservation, public education and/or publicity in keeping with the League's goals.



Destiny Boggs (Indiana): As a non-member, Destiny's dedication, energy, organization and fundraising in support of the Huntington County Chapter's annual Teddy Bear Hunt and Family Activities Day merits gratitude from the Chapter and the League's Honor Roll Award.



Grant and Dawn Breithkrentz (Minnesota): The couple is honored for their advocacy for soil health and promotion of agricultural best management practices at the Stoney Creek Farm in Redwood Falls, Minnesota.



Greg Cwalina (Maryland): Greg brings his fly fishing and fly-tying expertise to many public events throughout the state, including those held at the Rockville Chapter in Maryland.



General Mills (Minnesota): This U.S.-based food company takes holistic steps to educate management and production plant employees about sound

farming practices, protection of water resources, biodiversity and reduced waste.



Harford Land Trust (Maryland): This land preservation advocacy organization has played a significant role in establishing conservation easements on more than 12,000 acres and assisted in the acquisition of land added to

the Harford County Chapter's Bosely Conservancy.



Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team (South Carolina):

Formed by Duke Energy, this non-profit monitors

and protects water quality in this growing region. This coalition consists of seven organizations working to ensure water is safe for drinking, recreation and energy production.



Dr. John Lill and Dr. Martha Weiss (Washington, DC): These ecology professors studied how Brood X cicadas have impacted ecological interactions and the energy flow in the food webs of oak forests at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter in Maryland.



Ohio Valley Forestry Fellowship (Ohio): As an advocate for increasing the size and diversity of Ohio's tree canopy, the Forestry Fellowship has distributed hundreds of thousands of tree seedlings statewide.



Upstate Forever (South Carolina): Located in northwestern South Carolina, this land trust promotes sound land stewardship practices, including

protecting urban green spaces and promoting water quality.

Shooting Sports Award

Presented to individuals, groups or organizations judged to have done outstanding work to promote shooting sports.



Apollo Archery Program (Maryland): This archery program introduces and instructs current and former members of the U.S. Armed Services and their families to the sport at the League's Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter.



Bob Brino (Virginia): For more than 30 years, Bob has managed and built up the Arlington-Fairfax Chapter's trap and skeet facilities, introduced and trained many new shotgunners, helped coach a local collegiate team at George Mason University and he ran "Crush 'n

Clays," which raised more than \$400,000 to benefit St. Jude Children's Hospital.



Richard Deviers (Virginia): Richard is well known locally as an avid recreational and competitive shooter in his part of Virginia. He was the driving force to convert an old hayloft to an indoor smallbore shooting range at Rockingham-Harrisonburg

Chapter used for youth training programs.



Mountaineer Chapter Shooting Sports Program (West Virginia): Using their facilities, the Mountaineer Ikes partner with like-minded organizations to host recreational shooting, education and training events, including

the National Shooting Sports Foundation's First Shots and National Shooting Sports Month.



Rick Stell (Indiana): At the Huntington County Chapter, Rick has long volunteered and organized many military firearms demonstrations and fun shooting events, called “Veterans Range Days,” affiliated with various local veteran organizations.



Sandy Taylor (Pennsylvania): Sandy is a range safety officer at the Oil City Chapter and she runs the Chapter’s handgun competition. She was instrumental in the creation of a successful Ladies Only Handgun program and formed a YMCA

women’s pistol league that has served the community for years.

Arthur R. Thompson Memorial Award

Recognizes division accomplishments in conservation.



West Virginia Division: In collaboration with the six chapters, the West Virginia Division contributes to conservation across the state through a college scholarship program, support for the West

Virginia Conservation Camp and streamside litter cleanup efforts with installation of nearly 100 fishing line disposal containers.

James Lawton Childs Award

Recognizes chapter accomplishments in conservation.



Minnesota Valley Chapter (Minnesota):

The Chapter is well known locally for its Elm Tree Restoration Project. The Chapter also established the Green Crew (a co-ed Scouting Venturing Crew Unit with conservation mission) and held a

two-day Earth Day tree planting event. Other efforts include invasive species removal, water quality testing and trail restoration.



Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter (Maryland): The Chapter lives up to the motto on its entrance sign, “Conservation Is Our Mission,” by managing invasive species, an American chestnut tree farm,

water monitoring, pollinator gardens, bird counts and habitat improvement. The Chapter is also engaged in roadside clean-ups, fish and wildlife management, soil conservation, interpretive nature trails and wildlife research studies.

Robert C. O’Hair Award

Recognizes outstanding chapter youth programs.



Porter County Chapter (Indiana):

For years, the Chapter’s top priority has been working with local youth including Family Nature Night events, engaging young people in bat monitoring, pollinator habitat projects, removing

invasive plants and hosting a Gnomes Day Out Fairy Festival. The programs have exposed hundreds of children to the outdoors, promoting awareness about wildlife habitats and waterways.



Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter (Maryland):

This Chapter has sponsored multiple Scout units and allowed them to use a dedicated Scout campsite area. They held a kid-friendly interpretive walk-in-the-woods event, an archery seminar for beginner youth, a trout

fishing derby and support for the Poolesville High School global ecology classes for nature studies.

Best Chapter Newsletter

Based on appearance, originality, timeliness and news coverage, including national and state news and community conservation.

Ike’s Newsletter: Published by the Dwight Lydell Chapter (Michigan), this informative newsletter includes articles that highlight chapter events related to local, state and regional natural resources conservation issues. Contributions on nature and outdoor recreation, including color photographs, are welcomed by the editor. It is mailed and emailed on a regular basis and posted online on the chapter website.

Best Chapter Website

Based on appearance, originality, timeliness and news coverage.

Rockville Chapter (Maryland): This website (www.iwlar.org) is informative, colorful and easy to navigate. Information about the Chapter and the League is readily accessible. The website profiles chapter activities, spells out membership requirements and includes a calendar loaded with their many events.

MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

In an effort to continue to promote member recruitment and retention, we recognize several chapters and one division that successfully grew their membership over the past year.

Best Chapter Membership Recruitment and Retention Award

Recognizes the chapter that carried out the most effective membership recruitment and retention program.

Caldwell Chapter (Idaho): The Chapter markets itself as a safe environment for recreational use of firearms for member events and other events open to the public. A motivated membership committee successfully marketed the chapter and benefits of League membership during their many organized public trapshooting events. Their concentrated recruitment efforts paid off as the Chapter grew from 38 to 162 members during a 12-month period in 2023.

John C. Gregory Award

Awarded to the division with the highest numerical increase in members.

Iowa Division: With a net increase of 129 new members in 2023.

Membership Achievement Awards

Recognizes chapters with the largest percentage increase and net gain in membership.

Greatest Percent Increase and Greatest Net Gain:

Caldwell Chapter (Idaho) with a 326% increase and a net gain of 124 members.

Membership Merit Awards

Recognizes membership growth based on chapter size.

50-and-Under Member Class for Percent Increase and Net Gain:

Caldwell Chapter (Idaho)

51-to-250 Member Class for Percent Increase and Net Gain:

Minnesota Valley Chapter (Minnesota)

251-to-500 Member Class for Percent Increase and Net Gain:

Bill Cook Chapter (Wisconsin)

501-and-Over Member Class for Percent Increase and Net Gain:

Dragoon Trail Chapter (Iowa)

110-Percent Awards

These chapters grew by 10 percent or more in 2023.

Florida

Mangrove

Georgia

Greater Atlanta

Idaho

Caldwell

Illinois

Wabash

Indiana

Alexandria

Huntington County

Michigan City #7

Iowa

Keokuk County

Louisa County

Mahaska County

Maquoketa Valley

Ottumwa

Rice Lake

Wapsi Valley

Maryland

Frederick #1

Mid-Shore

Sportsman's

Minnesota

Cass County

Minnesota Valley

Prairie Woods

Rochester

Wapashaw

Will Dilg

Nebraska

Crete

Thayer County

Ohio

Anthony Wayne

Central Ohio

Mount Healthy

Wadsworth

Pennsylvania

Harry Enstrom

South Dakota

Rapid City

Virginia

Christiansburg-Montgomery

West Virginia

Monongalia County

Mountaineer

Zip Little

Wisconsin

A. D.

Sutherland

Beloit

Bill Cook

Wyoming

Charles E.

Piersall

Defenders Chapter Achievement Awards

The following chapters received this annual recognition for their 2023 contributions to the League's mission through successful programs, promoting membership, education, conservation, youth involvement, community outreach and the principles of philanthropy.

Arlington-Fairfax (Virginia)	Elgin (Illinois)	Mid-Shore (Maryland)	W.J. McCabe (Minnesota)
Austin (Minnesota)	Frederick #1 (Maryland)	Minnesota Valley (Minnesota)	Walter J. Breckenridge (Minnesota)
Berkeley County (West Virginia)	Fredericksburg- Rappahannock (Virginia)	Mountaineer (West Virginia)	Warren County (Iowa)
Bethesda-Chevy Chase (Maryland)	Grand Island (Nebraska)	New London (Minnesota)	Warren County (Virginia)
Bill Cook (Wisconsin)	Hamilton (Ohio)	New Ulm #79 (Minnesota)	Wayne County (Ohio)
Brown County (Wisconsin)	Kampeska (South Dakota)	Owatonna (Minnesota)	Wes Libby-Northern Lakes (Minnesota)
Bush Lake (Minnesota)	Lincoln (Nebraska)	Prairie Woods (Minnesota)	West Central (Iowa)
Cass County (Minnesota)	Linn County (Iowa)	Rochester (Minnesota)	Wildlife Achievement (Maryland)
Central New York (New York)	Lois Green-Sligo (Maryland)	Rockville (Maryland)	Will Dilg (Minnesota)
Des Moines (Iowa)	Loudoun County (Virginia)	Sioux Falls (South Dakota)	York #67 (Pennsylvania)
Dwight Lydell (Michigan)	McCook Lake (South Dakota)	Sportsman's (Maryland)	
		Sunshine (South Dakota)	
		Tiffin-Seneca County (Ohio)	



Keep up with Trends Affecting Our Woods, Waters and Wildlife: Subscribe to “Conservation Currents”

Stay up to date on conservation news, issues and work by the League. Take advantage of a free subscription to the League's email newsletter “*Conservation Currents*.” Go to iwla.org/morenews.

No organization has done more than the Izaak Walton League to defend woods, waters and wildlife. We've carved out a unique role, promoting conservation and community science locally while advocating for strong state and national policies to protect natural resources.



The Future Is Theirs!

The Izaak Walton League builds a brighter future through conservation and engaging Americans in outdoor traditions.

For generations, the League's tireless work and unprecedented success has protected our woods, waters and wildlife—and promoted outdoor recreation in every corner of the U.S.

Through your will, retirement plan, life insurance or trust, you can help continue this legacy.

Plan your gift to the Izaak Walton League and pass along a lifetime of benefits.

Email develop@iwla.org or visit www.iwla.org/support to get started.



Izaak Walton League of America
707 Conservation Lane
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Contact us today for information about including the Izaak Walton League in your will or naming the League as the beneficiary for insurance or other investments.

2023 Financial Highlights

Combined balance sheet and statement of activities and changes in net assets for the year ending December 31, 2023.

PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions and Grants	1,371,406
Grants from Federal and State Governments	79,143
Member Dues	1,771,149
Investment Income, Net	96,979
Charitable Remainder Unitrust	344,479
Rental Income	411,939
In-Kind Services	197,492
Other	566,136
Total Public Support and Revenue	4,838,723

EXPENSES: CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION

Conservation	498,284
Membership	401,173
<i>Outdoor America</i> magazine	241,435
Annual National Convention	134,714
Chapter Relations	209,835
Communications and Media	329,323
Water	793,704
Agriculture	119,274
Missouri River Initiative	132,128

Total Program Services **2,859,870**

Supporting and Planning Services

Management and General	230,337
Fundraising	342,528

Total Supporting and Planning Services **572,865**

Total Expenses **3,432,735**

Changes in Net Assets from Operations	1,405,988
Unrealized (Loss) Gain on Investments	305,047

Changes in Net Assets **1,711,035**

Net Assets, Beginning of Year **9,761,860**

Net Assets, End of Year **11,472,895**

BALANCE SHEET

Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,153,156
Grants Receivables	15,190
Contributions and Other Receivables	153
Rent Receivable	3,282
Prepaid Expenses	33,611
Property and Equipment, Net	1,119,365
Investments	3,954,431
Rent Receivable, Net Current Portion	94,253
Charitable Remainder Unitrust	3,327,755
Total Assets	11,701,196

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities	
Accounts Payable and Other	111,769
Accrued Expenses	88,457
Refundable Advances	-
Security Deposits	28,075
Total Liabilities	228,301

Net Assets

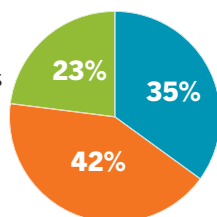
Without Donor Restriction	6,170,867
With Donor Restriction	5,302,028

Total Net Assets **11,472,895**

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **11,701,196**

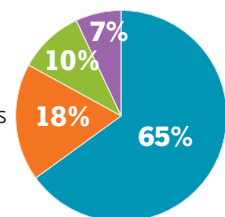
REVENUE

- Contributions and Grants
- Membership Dues
- Rent and Other Income



USE OF FUNDS

- Conservation and Education
- Membership and Chapter Relations
- Fundraising
- Support and Planning



Did you know?

1 teaspoon of salt can permanently pollute **5 gallons of water.**



Road salt keeps us safe on roads and sidewalks, but it can also pose a threat to fish and wildlife as well as human health.

Salt Watch is helping volunteers and communities become smarter salters.

This national community science project...

- Provides **free** water testing kits to identify chloride pollution
- Compiles volunteer data from across the country
- Educates the public on responsible salt application
- Helps volunteers advocate for smart salting practices in their communities



Get involved! Join the Salt Watch.

Learn what it means to “salt smart” and request your free Salt Watch test kit at ***www.saltwatch.org***





In the 1920s, the League began work to safeguard what is now called the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota, which was protected in the 1964 Wilderness Act.

After a Century of Support for Wilderness, the Izaak Walton League Celebrates the 1964 Act

By MICHAEL REINEMER, Editor

A band of Izaak Walton League members was instrumental in blazing the trail that led to passage of the Wilderness Act in September, 1964. That path wound through many states, including Minnesota and the Superior National Forest, to a place that would be designated as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, now the nation's most visited wilderness area.

Indelible efforts by Sigurd Olson and Will Dilg—who were both early leaders in the young Izaak Walton League—led directly to the 1926 protections for that region. The Boundary Waters would become emblematic of the wilderness cause that gained momentum over four decades, and the area was included in the initial nine million acres protected by the 1964 law.

The Act established a congressional process to add acres to the new National Wilderness Preservation System.

A native of Wisconsin, Olson first explored northern Minnesota as a young man in 1921. By 1923, he had relocated to Ely, Minnesota where he worked as a guide for trips to the nearby forest and waterways. Izaak Walton League founder Will Dilg and other members traveled to Minnesota where Olson briefed them on the unsustainable logging operations in the Superior National Forest.

Dilg and the League vowed to help. The immediate threat to the Boundary Waters was a U.S. Forest Service plan to build roads into the Superior, which would have hastened the loss of forest and degradation of the waterways. Conservation

prevailed. The road was cancelled, and Agriculture Secretary William Jardine declared protection in 1926 for “not less than 1,000 square miles of the best canoe country in the Superior without roads of any character.”

These early efforts to prevent roads into wilderness area foreshadowed many battles that would follow to preserve roadless areas that protect wilderness, healthy streams and wildlife habitat—and provide incredible opportunities for fishing, hunting, hiking and other outdoor recreation.

But there were more early battles over the Boundary Waters. A proposed hydroelectric dam was opposed and stopped, thanks to advocacy by the League and an act of Congress in 1930. Continuing development and logging pressure in the region prompted President Franklin Roosevelt to appoint a commission to monitor the U.S.-Canada border region in 1934.

That Quetico-Superior Committee included conservation advocates Ernest Oberholtzer and Bob Marshall, who with several others, decided to create a national organization devoted to protecting wilderness, which they would call the Wilderness Society, founded in January 1935.

The 1940s brought another challenge—dozens of daily float-plane flights into the Boundary Waters that dramatically altered the wilderness character of the region. Again, Olson and colleagues argued their case to Congress, and the 1948 Thye-Blatnik Act provided funds to buy the private resorts within the Boundary Waters, thereby eliminating the demand for the float-plane flights. That act of Congress borrowed a long-standing strategy employed by the Izaak Walton League Endowment to purchase private inholdings for resale to the Forest Service. The purchases of the private cabins and lands reduced the conflicts over use and promoted better management as wilderness.

During the mid-1950s, Olson joined the national staff of the Izaak Walton League where he served as its wilderness ecologist. His colleague Joe Penfold, the League’s conservation director, was also deeply immersed in the push for getting the wilderness bill through Congress.

Penfold was the prime mover behind the influential Outdoor Recreation Resources Review



League Conservation Director Joe Penfold (right) played a significant role in passing laws that created the National Wilderness Preservation System and the Land and Water Conservation Act. He attended the ceremony in September 1964 where President Johnson (center) signed both bills into law.

Committee, created in 1958, that developed a constituency, policy foundation and momentum for the Wilderness Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other bedrock laws and policies that would be adopted in the 1960s.

Mike Penfold, Joe’s son, served for 35 years in the Forest Service and then the U.S. Bureau of Land Management beginning in 1960. Mike recalled how a final hurdle was cleared for passage of the wilderness bill. There was a sticking point between Representatives John Saylor and Wayne Aspinall over legislative language.

“Pop sat down with Aspinall, knowing the problem that Saylor had with the bill, and he drafted alternative language that he knew Saylor would accept,” Penfold recalled. “With that problem solved, the path to passing the Wilderness Act into law would be easy.” Read more about Joe Penfold’s legacy in *Outdoor America* Issue 2, 2022.

When enacted in 1964, the National Wilderness Preservation System included 9.1 million acres spread across 54 wilderness areas in 13 states. Today, the Act protects more than 111 million acres across 806 wilderness areas in 44 states.



CLEAN WATER CORNER

Getting Started with Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch at Your Chapter

By SAM PUCKETT, Clean Water Program Director and
HEATHER WILSON, Save Our Streams Coordinator

Are you interested in Salt Watch or Nitrate Watch, but not sure how to get your chapter involved? Are you looking to broaden the reach of these programs in your community?

Our new Chapter Toolkits for Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch are a great place to start. These new resources, created by Clean Water program staff, were presented to League members as a virtual workshop prior to the annual convention in July.

Each toolkit contains the following sections to assist any League member or partner with getting involved—whether they are new to the program or an experienced monitor.

Background

Need more details about nitrate or chloride pollution and their environmental, human health and economic impacts? This section has the background information you need to get started as a monitor or clean water advocate.

Monitoring

This section equips you to get your feet wet—from requesting a free Nitrate Watch or Salt Watch kit to making a plan to monitor, actually using your test

strips and sharing your results (by submitting your data to the Clean Water Hub website.)

Outreach

Want to get others involved at your chapter or in your community but not sure where to start? This section leads you through key messages for Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch as well as available resources, including presentations, videos to share, sign-up sheets, postcards, stickers and factsheets.

Advocacy

Are you ready to make a splash in your community? It's time to advocate for water quality solutions. This can look like:

- building community partnerships,
- advocating for local policy change,
- engaging new people in your cause,
- installing signage that educates the public or
- writing a letter to the editor.

This section walks you through these different types of advocacy and how to recruit new audiences to your cause.

Our hope is that chapters across the country—no

CHAPTER TAKES SALT CONCERNS TO THE STATEHOUSE!

Members of the W.J. McCabe Chapter near Duluth, Minn. have taken Salt Watch's smart salting best practices to the statehouse. Ikes from the Chapter, in partnership with likeminded local organizations, have pushed for legislation that would grant free limited liability coverage to salt applicators who obtain a smart salting certification, maintain best practices and keep records of their salt application.

Salt applicators who obtain such a certification are better educated about smart salting techniques, can reduce their salt usage between 30 and 70 percent and can confidently apply a responsible amount of road salt and maintain public safety. The work of the Chapter members to raise awareness and build support for this legislation has the potential to make a massive impact on chloride pollution across the state.

matter how engaged they already are with these programs—will take on Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch at the chapter level to get more folks involved, to monitor, submit data and educate their local communities and finally to advocate for solutions to these pressing water quality challenges.

As always, Clean Water program staff are available to support your chapter with implementing one of these programs. Ask for assistance by emailing either saltwatch@iwla.org or nitratewatch@iwla.org.

Visit iwla.org/toolkit to download the Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch toolkits, watch the recording of the convention workshop and request resources for your chapter. For more information, visit iwla.org/sos.

MEMBERS JOIN IN!

Members of the Floyd County Chapter in northeast Iowa wasted no time getting involved with Nitrate Watch. When the program launched in early 2023, Doug Johnson, a Chapter member and Watershed Coordinator for the county's Soil and Water Conservation District, was quick to request a kit. When he brought up the program at a chapter meeting, other members decided to join in.

In the first year of the program, Floyd County Ikes monitored nine sites on a monthly basis, reporting their results on the Clean Water Hub. They also made plans to alert local media should they detect troubling levels of the contaminant.

Want to promote water quality monitoring at your chapter? WE WANT TO HELP!



The new **Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch Chapter Toolkits** include everything you need to know about participating in these community science programs as well as resources to help do relevant outreach and advocacy at your chapter.



Download the Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch Izaak Walton League Chapter Toolkits at

WWW.IWLA.ORG/TOOLKIT



League Marks Progress toward Conservation Priorities in Congress

By JARED MOTT, Conservation Director



The America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge sets a national goal to protect, restore and reconnect eight million acres of wetlands and 100,000 miles of our nation's rivers and streams by 2030.

League joins White House Freshwater Challenge

The League has joined more than 160 organizations, states and cities in a national partnership with the White House Council on Environmental Quality to protect and restore the nation's threatened wetlands and streams. The America the Beautiful Freshwater Challenge sets a bold new national goal to protect, restore and reconnect eight million acres of wetlands and 100,000 miles of our nation's rivers and streams by 2030.

Our nation's lakes, rivers, streams, estuaries and wetlands are essential to the health, prosperity and resilience of our communities. These resources provide clean drinking water to our homes, absorb excess water during storms and floods and store water during droughts.

Despite their importance, freshwater resources in the U.S. and worldwide are under threat.

Wetlands are disappearing at three times the rate of forests globally, and freshwater animal populations are declining at twice the rate of terrestrial species. In the U.S., over 50 percent of wetlands in the Lower 48 states have been lost since colonization.

In 2023, the Supreme Court's *Sackett v. EPA* decision stripped protections from more than half of all remaining wetlands and millions of miles of streams, leaving even more American freshwater resources vulnerable to pollution and destruction.

There is still time to safeguard these crucial freshwater resources for future generations, but we all must step up. The League has been committed to stopping water pollution at the source for more than 100 years. Through

our advocacy and our volunteer community science programs like Save Our Streams, Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch, we continue to lead the fight for clean water.

Legislation to save grasslands introduced after League co-hosts congressional briefing

The North American Grasslands Conservation Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in October, before Congress recessed until after the election. This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Rep. Sharice Davids (D-Kan.), Rep. Nancy Mace (R-S.C.), Rep. Mike Thompson (D-Calif.) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.) and would create a landowner-driven, voluntary, incentive-based program to conserve and protect grasslands across North America.

In July, the League worked with

partners to host a congressional briefing on the importance of restoring and conserving native grasslands across the country. The briefing highlighted the fact that grasslands play a crucial role in storing carbon and providing habitat for birds and other wildlife, and yet are the most endangered ecosystem in North America.

About 50 people, mostly staff from congressional offices, attended the briefing and learned about legislation the Izaak Walton League is helping craft to protect these valuable and rapidly disappearing landscapes.

By facilitating partnerships between private landowners, states, Tribes, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and conservation organizations, the Act would help conserve these vital ecosystems and prevent the conversion of grasslands to row crop production or development.

Bill to clean up hard rock mine pollution passes in the Senate

The Izaak Walton League applauds unanimous passage by the U.S. Senate of the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024. The bill, S. 2781, reflects a bipartisan effort led by Senators Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) with 40 co-sponsors. This legislation addresses water pollution from abandoned hardrock mines in the West by providing limited liability protections for up to 15 pilot cleanup projects.

For decades, abandoned mines

have been polluting rivers and streams with millions of gallons of water containing toxic metals, sulfuric acid and radioactive material. But because these sites have been abandoned, some for more than a century, no operator of record exists that can be held responsible for cleaning them up. Consequently, they continue to leak dangerous pollution into rivers and streams.

S. 2781 allows state agencies or private entities to help tackle cleanup of some of these abandoned mines without taking on the significant liability that federal law places upon the original polluter. By removing some of the legal and financial obstacles for volunteer organizations and state agencies, cleanups that otherwise would not happen can move forward to halt pollution, improve drinking water and restore fish and wildlife habitat. We urge the House of Representatives to follow suit and pass the bill.

Utah sues to control federal lands

State officials in Utah delivered a long-promised legal challenge over control of federal public lands in the state. The state's attorney general filed a lawsuit at the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to gain control of 18.5 million acres of federal public lands in Utah. The long-shot attempt to assert state powers would bring federal land roughly the size of South Carolina under state control.

The Utah acreage in question is under the jurisdiction of the

Bureau of Land Management, which has a mandate to manage public lands for a variety of uses such as energy development, livestock grazing, recreation and timber harvesting while ensuring natural, cultural and historic resources are maintained for present and future use.

The League opposes this effort to turn this federal land over to Utah.

The move is part of a broader effort by some Western states to challenge federal authority over public lands. However, when Utah territory became a state in 1894, the law admitting it to the Union specifically limited the amount of land the state could control. The rest of the federally owned land at the time of statehood would continue to be managed by the federal government as public land, owned by all Americans.

By attacking the concept of federally owned public lands, Utah aims to replace a proven, effective land management system for conserving natural landscapes within a multiple-use mandate. For this and many other reasons, the League opposes large-scale divestment of federal public lands, whether to states or private entities, and urges leaders in Utah to reconsider their approach. In addition to threatening the public's access to outdoor recreation on lands owned by all Americans, this lawsuit could dramatically compromise the conservation functions of public land, like improving water quality, providing critical habitat for fish and wildlife and preserving biodiversity.



SOIL MATTERS



The eastern meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) thrives in native grasslands, but three out of four have disappeared since 1970.

Cover Crop Impact on Grassland Birds: A Conversation with Dr. Adam Janke

By KATE HANSEN, Agriculture Program Director

There are countless reasons to conserve soil, water and wildlife on our nation's 900 million acres of agricultural lands. Some practices help keep nutrients—like nitrogen and phosphorus—out of our waterways and drinking water. Others help rebuild the health of our precious topsoil. Some practices can help combat climate change or improve conditions for wildlife.

The practice of planting cover crops, in particular, can serve as a utility infielder and fill multiple

roles—improve water quality and soil health while fighting climate change. These benefits have been well documented.

Less investigated has been the impact of cover crops on wildlife. Dr. Adam Janke of Iowa State University is one of the experts trying to better understand this connection. Between 2019-2021, he and his colleagues monitored breeding grassland birds in Iowa and their relationship with cover cropped fields.

There are three billion fewer

birds in the U.S. and Canada than in 1970. Grassland birds—such as red-winged blackbirds, lesser prairie chickens and meadowlarks—are the canaries in the coal mine. They are the best indicator we have of the health of grassland ecosystems and environmental changes. In the period since 1970, the most severe decline in bird populations has been among grassland birds, which decreased by more than half.

Conservation Director Jared

SANDI SMOLKER ISTOCK; IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Mott and I sat down with Dr. Janke to discuss his research and findings. He said the best way to reverse the decline of grassland birds is to get more of the native habitat they need onto the landscape.

Q: What questions drove you to do this research?

Janke: Oftentimes when we look at the portfolio of goods that agricultural landscapes provide, we think about water, carbon, greenhouse gas, soil health, biodiversity. That’s how the bird experts became involved, to examine that biodiversity question. We wanted to try to understand if there are secondary positive outcomes associated with cover crops that may help us address some of the challenges we have with grassland bird declines.

The other side of the coin is that some people were worried that perhaps cover crops could actually be doing harm to grassland birds. There was concern they could be “falling for ecological traps” in which they might perceive the cover crops to be an attractive nesting habitat, just before farm work begins and makes it the opposite.

So, there were three plausible outcomes of our research. We could find that cover crops provide a boon for wildlife, helping them nest and thrive. They could be a trap for wildlife,



Dr. Adam Janke of Iowa State University has studied the impacts of cover crops on wildlife.

exposing them to harm, risk, or failed reproduction. Or they could be totally neutral.

Cover crops are not going to reverse grassland bird declines, but they’re also not going to imperil the grassland birds that we’re worried about.

Q: What did you find?

Janke: My research specifically was looking at grassland birds and cover cropped fields in Iowa, wedged between the growing seasons for corn and soybeans. The conclusion we came to was the neutral scenario. No consequence. It seemed like almost nothing was using the cover crops differently to what we

would see in a field without cover crops. It wasn’t a trap, but it also wasn’t a boon for nesting birds.

Additionally, the types of avian communities you find on cropland with cover crops and cropland without cover crops are very similar. Think horned larks, vesper sparrows, upland sandpipers. Plus red-winged blackbirds, dickcissels and meadowlarks in the landscape. In contrast, if you walked into a grassland environment, you would see much broader diversity and much greater abundance.

Q: How should we interpret this neutral relationship between cover crops and grassland birds in your study?

Janke: For me personally, the result was sort of like, “cool!” Because we have this portfolio of other benefits that cover crops provide—clean water, healthy soil, reduced erosion, improved economics, and more. And it happens at no cost to wildlife. That’s a pretty positive outcome. Cover crops are not going to reverse grassland bird declines, but they’re also not going to imperil the grassland birds that we’re worried about.

With that said, it depends on the context. There’s great work out of western Kansas that shows pheasants are thriving in cover crops that functionally replace

a summer fallow with a diverse mix of annuals. So, you can't say cover crops aren't good for wildlife across the board, because in that example they're amazing for wildlife.

But cover crops are not going to be our solution to declines in terrestrial wildlife diversity. To address that, I'd rather talk about how to put more grass out on the landscape.

Q: Can you tell us more about the plight of grassland birds?

Janke: We know from research there has been an estimated 54 percent decline in grassland bird populations. One that is relevant to corn belt states is a 75 percent decline in eastern meadowlark populations.

That is arguably exclusively driven by the loss of grassland

ecosystems. The causes have varied, but conversion to annual cropping systems is a major one. That was especially true in the biofuel mandate era when a lot of land that was in grass was converted to annual crops. Then there are also forces like degradation of grassland ecosystems, mainly through invasive species.

The solution to reversing grassland bird declines is figuring out how to get more grass out into those landscapes where the birds are looking for it.

Q: What are the steps forward?

Janke: We've got to find ways to work within and around those cropping systems to make sure that they improve environmental outcomes while they feed us, fuel

us, fiber us and all the other good they do.

But we also need to get more grass back into our systems. I always try to challenge people to think about ways they can integrate diversity and perennial vegetation back into the landscape, specifically along margins, flood-prone areas, eroded hillsides, et cetera.

Plus, there's such a winning proposition between grass and cattle production positively coexisting with biological diversity. That's what prevails across the Great Plains, which is unequivocally our grassland bird stronghold. Any efforts to try to expand that would also do right by rural communities, the soil, the climate and all the good that comes with perennial ecosystems.

ACTION NEEDED TO SAVE GRASSLANDS AND THEIR WILDLIFE

Through public policy, we can advocate to protect and grow the habitats that grassland birds depend on. That's why the League has helped lead efforts in Congress to introduce legislation to conserve and restore America's grasslands.

If passed into law, the North American Grasslands Conservation Act will help conserve these vital ecosystems and prevent the conversion of grasslands to crop production or development. By leveraging state, local and non-profit dollars with federal grants,

the legislation would provide critical incentives to landowners who want to protect existing grasslands and restore degraded ones.

We can also work against incentives to convert more grassland to agricultural uses. In August, the League took steps to counteract a change made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that would incentivize plowing up new acres of grasslands and native sod for farming. We, along with partners, recently issued a stern comment to the Risk Management Agency describing why this was a

misstep and why it should be rectified so that these critical grassland ecosystems are not further harmed.

We encourage you to get involved. Keep an eye out for future updates and action alerts from the League regarding the North American Grasslands Conservation Act and sign up for our Soil Matters e-newsletter to learn more about agricultural conservation practices.

To learn more about the changes to grasslands in your area, and how they impact specific species, visit mapforgrasslands.org.

Renew your 2025 League membership and help us conserve outdoor America!



Leading community-based conservation
of our natural resources



Informing and engaging the next generations



Conserving and expanding access to the great outdoors



Shaping conservation policy
nationally and locally

Help conserve our nation's woods, waters and wildlife.
The Izaak Walton League depends on members to support
the programs that connect people to the great outdoors.

**Please return dues payments
to your chapter today.**

Plants' Improvements, Marine Corps Carbon Victory, Replacing Lead Pipes

| Editor

Health of the Chesapeake Bay improves with underwater grass

Underwater grass in the Chesapeake Bay is thriving, according to numbers from the Chesapeake Bay Program. The abundance of submerged aquatic vegetation serves as an indicator of habitat and water quality. Across the Bay and its tidal tributaries, there were nearly 83,000 acres of underwater grass in 2023 representing a seven percent increase over 2022. [*Outdoor News*, Pennsylvania, August 16, 2024]

By absorbing methane, trees provide an additional climate benefit

The role of trees and other vegetation in removing carbon from the atmosphere is well known, but recent research suggests that trees also remove a significant amount of methane gas.

As a greenhouse gas, "methane is more than 28 times as potent as carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere," according to EPA, and "significant reductions would have a rapid and significant effect on atmospheric warming potential."

Authors of a paper published in the journal *Nature* conclude that "the climate benefits of tropical and temperate forest protection and reforestation may be greater than previously assumed." [*Nature*, July 24, 2024]

One email using ChatGPT consumes one bottle of water

Working with researchers at the University of California at Riverside, reporters at the *Washington Post* determined that using ChatGPT to create a 100-word email uses roughly one bottle of water, or 519 milliliters.

ChatGPT is a computer program that uses



Recent research suggests that in addition to carbon, trees remove a significant amount of methane--a potent greenhouse gas.

artificial intelligence to answer questions or generate content. That requires computer servers that run thousands of calculations to frame a response to a question, and the data centers that house these servers require an immense amount of water to keep the computers cool. [*Washington Post*, September 23, 2024]

Talking 'bout his generation

Addressing a group of youth in an Izaak Walton League event, a speaker described his own age as “over 65” and spoke about the importance of conservation and the role of youth.

He spoke about the threats to the great outdoors and the need to deal with them.

“Conservation implies not only preservation but also restoration of that which has disappeared, and it is much more difficult to restore than it is to preserve.”

The speaker went on to describe the dire state of the world these youth were inheriting, referring to the “mistakes and blunders of my generation.” He said, “You are entitled to something better than that... I apologize to you on behalf of my generation.”

The speaker was a former president of the Izaak Walton League, Preston Bradley, one of the 54 founders who created the League in 1922. He was speaking to the Young Outdoor Americans conference, a meeting sponsored by the League and held in Chicago in 1955. The young women and men he apologized to then are now in their 80s. [*Outdoor America*, 1955]

Marine Corps base achieves net-zero carbon emissions

With an eye toward sustainability, resilience and smart use of energy, a Marine Corps base in Georgia has achieved net-zero for carbon emissions. Logistics Base Albany uses solar panels to heat water and captures methane at a landfill to generate power, earning the distinction of net-zero for electricity: the base produces as much from renewable sources as it consumes from its electric utility provider. [*National Defense*, July 17, 2024]



The Biden administration's 10-year plan to replace pipes targets nine million homes, schools and businesses that get water through a lead pipe.

PIXABAY

Biden administration announces plan to replace lead pipes

A program to be administered by EPA aims to replace millions of lead pipes across the U.S. over the decade ahead. In May, the White House announced the plan, stating that “over 9 million homes, schools, daycares, and businesses receive their water through a lead pipe, putting people at risk of lead exposure. Lead is a neurotoxin that can irreversibly harm brain development in children...” [White House fact sheet, May 2, 2024] In a final rule published in October, EPA requires water utilities to replace all lead pipes over the next 10 years.

Thinking Like a **MOUNTAIN**

IDEAS AS BIG AS THE OUTDOORS



Suburban Frontiers: Hunting for Healthy Food and Wildlife Management

By **BRUCE INGRAM,**
Field Editor

Decades from now, deer hunting will survive, I have no doubt. But to thrive, this pastime may have to undergo a metamorphosis that capitalizes on real needs. For instance, the imperative of reducing deer populations in some regions, the importance of providing healthy food, and the need to introduce folks, including people of color, to outdoor traditions like hunting and fishing.

Here are some things that may need to happen.

We need more meat hunters

Ryan Brown, executive director for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, says new hunters tend to be adults who hunt “for food and for the experience of being outdoors.”

“I’m not at all knocking the excitement of harvesting a big buck, but nationally with hunter numbers decreasing and deer populations increasing in many areas, sound herd management depends on more than holding out for that one special animal.”

Only 29 percent of the American public favor trophy hunting, but 84 percent approve of hunting for meat, according to research by Responsive Management. In an era where only six percent of the population hunts (according to a 2023 U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service survey) recruiting more “meat hunters” is essential to the future and acceptance of this tradition.

Frankly, the outdoor press has not been helpful in this area. Big buck stories predominate. More articles about field dressing, butchering, preparing venison, as well as the joys of being outdoors, could help increase participation and approval.

Hunt in urban and suburban areas

With human populations increasing and more land lost to development, urban and suburban archery seasons could be a huge part of the future of deer hunting. Deer numbers are high in these same areas.

Yet many of these metropolitan areas pay professional sharpshooters to shoot deer instead of developing management policies that would safely expand bowhunting, for example, and help address the problem while providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

Reducing deer numbers in densely populated areas may also lead to fewer vehicle collisions, less damage to gardens and landscaping and lower tick populations.

“State wildlife agencies should be—and many are—conducting outreach to local communities to



Suburban areas like Virginia’s Fairfax County encourage bow hunting to reduce deer populations.

promote more bow hunting in these areas,” says Jared Mott, the League’s conservation director. “Homeowners’ associations and other neighborhood umbrella organizations can also be part of this outreach.”

Mott also notes that many of these cities and towns issue some different regulations than deer hunters may be used to, like requiring archers to hunt from elevated stands or use setback distances that prevent hunters from getting too close to houses or property lines.

While more restrictive regulations might be necessary to safely hunt in an urban or suburban setting, hunters should work with homeowners to

establish positive relationships and portray hunting in a responsible manner. Often, homeowners want to work with hunters to remove deer and will allow trusted hunters with whom they have a relationship to gain access to properties.

“League chapters are often located in suburban areas and can take the lead in urban and suburban archery by advocating for seasons when there

aren’t any, educating hunters about the differences of hunting in suburban versus rural settings and by welcoming suburban and urban people into the hunting community,” Mott said.

Often, homeowners want to work with hunters to remove deer.



Dense populations in urban and suburban neighborhoods may create a new frontier for deer hunting.

ISTOCK; MICHAEL REINEMER; BRUCE INGRAM

Reach out to people of color

Hunters of Color (HOC) was launched in 2020 to increase the participation of Black, Indigenous and other people of color in hunting for the sake of conservation, food sovereignty and tradition.

“I grew up in the Bay Area of California, the second most diverse area in the country,” says Jimmy Flatt, HOC co-founder and executive director. “We rarely thought about our racial differences; in fact, they were celebrated. I went fishing and hunting with my dad and never thought that was unusual.

“But when I grew up and moved away, I realized that today many people of color are disconnected from the hunting and outdoor experience. I also saw that they experienced the same barriers that many white hunters experience.” Those barriers include limited access to hunting land, including public lands, and a lack of mentors to help them get started.

With 750 members in 47 states, Hunters of Color hopes to have members and events in every state by 2030. In the past year, the organization hosted some 1,300 hunters in 52 events. Among them, 83 percent were first-time hunters, and 10 percent overall were white.

Flatt believes the outdoors is for everyone. “We promote culturally diverse curricula and events so that people can experience the transformative power of the outdoors, and that includes our white brothers and sisters.”

Ban baiting and feeding of deer

I have had a number of wildlife biologists tell me, off the record, that baiting and feeding white-tails is a major concern and accelerates the spread of chronic wasting disease, or CWD, which is similar to mad cow disease. While it spreads and kills deer,



Speaking to the Outdoor Writers Association of America, Outdoor Afro founder Rue Mapp thanks mentors who guided her first hunting experience.

CWD has not spread to humans.

The political will to ban baiting and feeding is just not there in many states but that needs to change—for the sake of deer and for our image as hunters. A 2014 study by Responsive Management showed that 59 percent of Americans oppose these practices.

Virginia has never allowed baiting, something that Ryan

Brown is thankful for. “Culturally, we’ve had a long history of promoting fair chase hunting and banning hunting over bait,” he said. “We know that concentrating deer in one spot potentially promotes the spread of CWD. Virginia prohibits the feeding of deer year-round in our CWD management zones, and we’ve had very little negative feedback of that.”

Kip Adams, chief conservation officer for the National Deer Association, says that baiting and feeding come with many negatives including changing deer behavior, degrading habitat near bait and feed locales and increasing odds of predation. And possibly spreading CWD. His organization opposes baiting and feeding in disease zones.

So how should hunters go about attracting whitetails? “We encourage providing adequate food and cover for deer through habitat management programs,” Adams said.

C.J. Winand, a wildlife biologist and a board member for the National Bowhunter Education Foundation, notes that “hunting deer over bait can be one of the best tools wildlife biologists have when the goal is to reduce overabundant populations. That is until CWD is identified as being present, then hunting deer that way becomes not worth the consequences.”

Winand offers a pro tip. “Studies have shown that when bait sites are first created, there is a quick uptick in deer killed,” he said. “But later, deer start avoiding those bait sites during the day and often

only come at night. Nearby hunters not hunting over bait actually have higher success rates.”

Consider crossbows

Crossbows play a major part in the future of bow hunting and hunting in general and need to be emphasized. Marilyn Bentz, executive director, National Bowhunter Education Foundation, explains, “Crossbows are very adaptable for any type of shooter, whether they have a small frame, are physically challenged or are new to the sport.

“Crossbows can get people into the woods and keep them there, which very much fits in with hunting’s R3 movement of recruitment, retention, and reactivation. Most hunters (new or experienced) can quickly learn to shoot a crossbow, both safely and proficiently.”

She says ethical hunters want to dispatch the animal as quickly as possible and avoid wounding a critter. Bentz recommends an online course for prospective crossbow hunters at crossbow-ed.com.

Mentor new hunters

I did not take up pursuit of whitetails until I was 33 in 1985. I could not find a mentor or an organization to help me with the basics or even a place to hunt except for the Jefferson National Forest near my home.

In some respects, deer hunting is doing much better at mentoring the next generations. Groups like the Izaak Walton League, National Deer Association and National Wild Turkey Federation all conduct outreach and promote the R3 movement. The next decade or so should prove interesting concerning how we hunters deal with recruitment and CWD.

Bruce Ingram, a League member, has written young-adult novels and books about the outdoors. Email: bruceingramoutdoors@gmail.com.

VENISON, INVOLVEMENT AND DIVERSITY

Iowa’s Rick Cerwick, a member of the League’s Des Moines Chapter, was awarded hunter education instructor of the year by the International Hunter Education Association-USA. He describes how he introduced hunting to a neighbor, who is a native of India, and his seven children.

He started with a hunter education class, Cerwick said. “After the class, I dropped off a bundle of different venison cuts, including salami and back strap. Plus, I gave instructions on how to prepare everything. Not long afterwards, the man called me and said everything was excellent but especially the back strap...which is like a universal response.”

The man found someone from his church who gave permission to hunt on his property. Cerwick provided some hunting instructions and tips. The new hunter missed a shot during his first season but succeeded in his second year. “Now I will be teaching the three younger brothers and three younger sisters in hunters ed.”

Mike Fuge, president of the Izaak Walton League’s Wisconsin Division, encourages getting the whole family involved, not just youth.

“Just doing outreach for the kids doesn’t, from our experience, work.” The whole family needs to feel welcome at multiple events in order to sustain their connection. “Kids don’t have the money, car, or initiative to come back without an adult helping them.”

Eric Morris, founder of N.onT.ytical Outdoorsman TV, has labored for the past 14 years to recruit more minorities for hunting and describes himself as “pessimistic, disappointed, and doubtful” about the lack of progress that is happening among state and federal wildlife agencies. He lists three points that have to occur for things to change.

- Have a structured, dedicated, and active program that is ongoing.
- Hire, pay, and use proven experts from the minority community who can show you how to improve. Don’t use web “influencers,” use minority hunters who have expertise in recruiting other minorities to be your role models.
- Commit to making measurable progress or get off the court.



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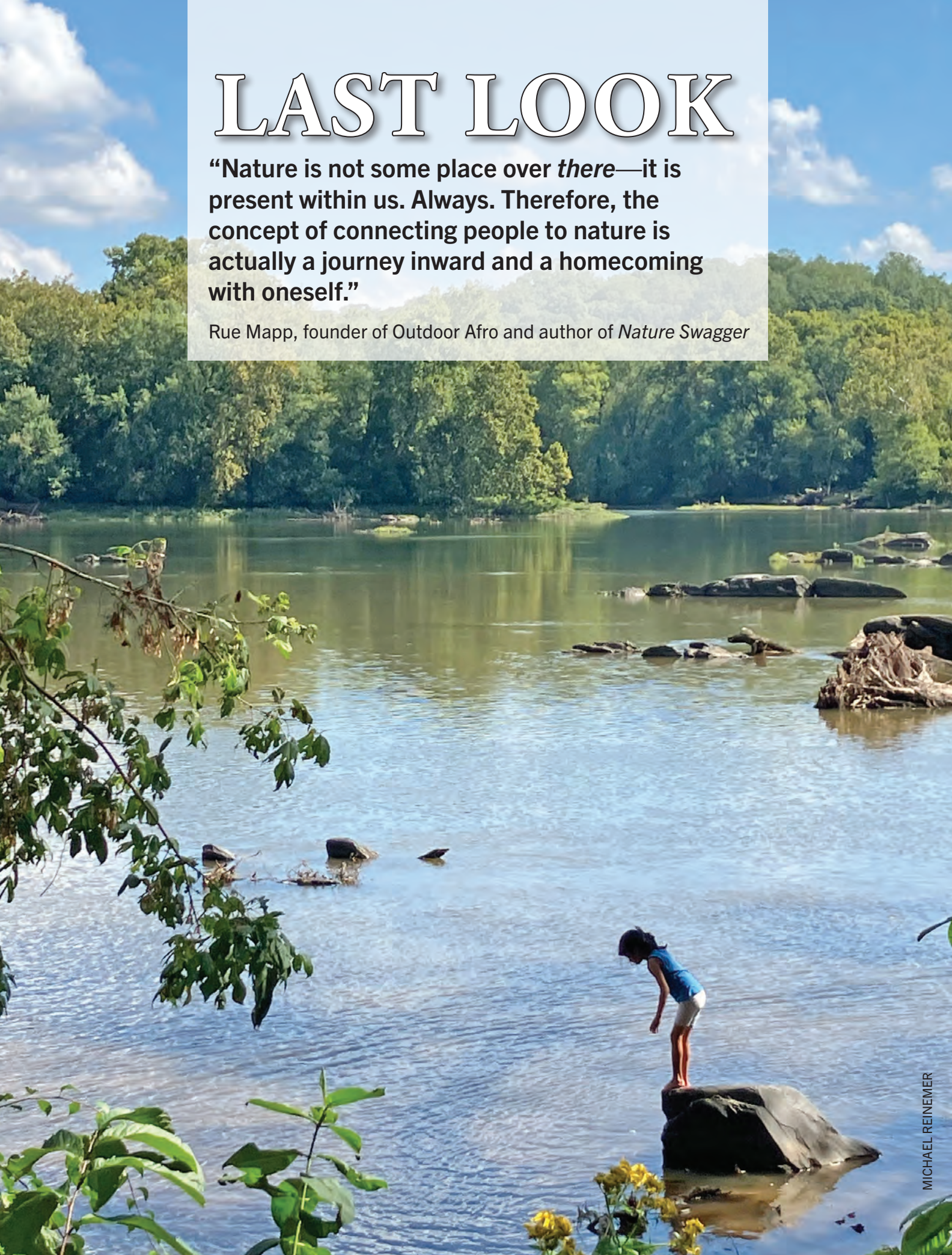
See details and ordering information on the Izaak Walton League's website at iwla.org/shop.



LAST LOOK

“Nature is not some place over *there*—it is present within us. Always. Therefore, the concept of connecting people to nature is actually a journey inward and a homecoming with oneself.”

Rue Mapp, founder of Outdoor Afro and author of *Nature Swagger*





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