

OUTDOOR AMERICA™

PUBLISHED BY THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

2023 ISSUE 3

Blockbuster Court Decisions: Good News and Bad News for Conservation



INSIDE:

Held v. Montana: Youth Win
Landmark Climate Case

Sackett v. EPA: Disaster
for Wetlands, Clean Water

Highlights from 2023
Convention, National Awards



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OUTDOOR AMERICA

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Credit: Thom Bridger

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Credit: Michael Reinemer

ABOUT THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA ►

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Challenges Present Opportunities

JODI LABS | NATIONAL PRESIDENT

I am honored to be writing my first article for *Outdoor America* as National President. First, I want to personally thank Vicki Arnold for her service and leadership as the National President these past two years.

The League could not have been better served and represented as we celebrated the League's milestone 100th anniversary. I was not only exceptionally proud to serve alongside her as the Vice President but also proud of the fact that we were blessed with the League's first female National President as we entered the Second Century of the League. I am confident that during her term as National President, Vicki inspired other women to consider taking on a leadership role within the League, whether it be at the chapter, division or national level. And I hope many step up to take on a leadership role as we need new leaders and voices as we move forward.

Second, I want to thank the Nebraska Division for hosting this year's convention in Lincoln. The Nebraska Division did a great job of welcoming Ikes from across the country and ensured that everyone had an enjoyable experience.

As we gathered this year, we acknowledged that we had a lot to celebrate over the past year, but we also talked about the need to build off the momentum. I encouraged everyone to use this historic milestone as a springboard for the future, a future that involves the League being a leader on conservation and outdoor recreation issues.

We discussed some of the challenges that are before us, whether it be clean water, loss of critical habitat, climate change or the declining number of individuals engaged in hunting and fishing. However, we also discussed how such challenges present us opportunities to engage our members and raise the visibility of the League.

We had a lot to celebrate over the past year, but we need to build off the momentum.

Among other challenges, we discussed the Supreme Court decision issued in *Sackett v. EPA*. Because of the Supreme Court's rolling back of Clean Water Act



protections, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers had to revise the January 2023 "waters of the United States" (WOTUS) rule, a rule that the League played a significant role in over the last several years. The new WOTUS rule is less protective of wetlands, tributary streams and overall water quality. While there is no question that this is a challenge that is important to all of us as Ikes, it presents an opportunity. As we continue to look to raise the visibility of the League and to grow our membership and supporter base, we need to seize the opportunity presented by the *Sackett* decision.

We can use the *Sackett* decision and the new WOTUS definition to educate the public concerning the importance of the decision and why we care (e.g., it will

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allow for the draining and filling of millions of acres of wetlands). We can use the impacts that the decision will have on our waterways and wetlands to get members more engaged and involved. After all, we will need to act and we will need to act now; it is not time to take a breather.

You might ask what we as an organization can do, or perhaps what you can do personally. We may not be able to get the federal rule and policy changed easily but we may lean on states to change legislation to protect wetlands that are no longer protected under the Clean Water Act. We can also defend wetland conservation in the Farm Bill, as well as press the USDA to enforce limits on wetland drainage. Ikes can

build grassroots pressure on Congress to amend the Clean Water Act to better define the waters to be protected, including protection of tributary streams and wetlands.

This is an opportunity for the League to take the lead on a critical conservation issue that has always been a keystone issue for the League—clean water.

While it will likely take a long time to secure any changes, as it did for much of the work our founding members undertook, we must start right now. This is an opportunity to take the lead on a critical conservation issue

that has always been a keystone issue for the League—clean water.

As you will see from articles in this issue, as well as over the coming year, there are plenty of challenges and issues that will present us with opportunities to engage our members and raise the visibility of the League. Let's not let the nature of such challenges paralyze us but rather let's seize the opportunities that are in front of us.

I look forward to working with each of you over the coming year as we continue to strengthen the League.

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Protecting Wetlands after the Unprecedented *Sackett* Decision

SCOTT KOVAROVICS | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

One hundred years ago, the early Ikes rallied together to stop what they called the “drainage crime of a century”—a proposal by the Army Corps of Engineers to drain millions of acres of wetlands throughout the upper Mississippi River region. The League stopped this destructive proposal, in part, by convincing Congress in 1924 to create the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, which today conserves 240,000 acres of wetland and other habitat along the river.

In late May, the narrowest

majority on the U.S. Supreme Court—blatantly disregarding clear congressional intent, overwhelming science and

With this decision, the Supreme Court is committing the drainage crime of this century.

nearly 50 years of regulatory practice—ruled in *Sackett v. EPA* that the Clean Water Act only protects wetlands if they



have a “continuous surface water connection” to a river, lake or other water.

With this decision, the Supreme Court is committing the drainage crime of this century.

What does this decision mean on the ground? It means millions of acres of wetlands nationwide are no longer protected by the Clean Water Act and can be drained and filled without limit under federal law. Jared Mott offers more details about the likely damage on pages 12-19.

The League's Post-Sackett Promise

As bad as this decision is, we are not resigned to simply accept it. Instead, it gives us renewed resolve to protect our nation's vital



ISTOCK

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wetland resources. Going forward, the League will pursue a multi-pronged strategy that:

- Leverages existing incentives and tools
- Reduces pollution at the source
- Builds grassroots pressure on Congress to protect wetlands for the long term

Some of the most effective tools include existing Farm Bill conservation programs. These programs have already conserved or restored nearly three million acres of wetlands. But Congress chronically underfunds them, causing as many as two out of every three conservation-minded landowners to be denied assistance to protect wetlands on their property.

As bad as this decision is, we are not resigned to simply accept it.

This fall, Congress is writing a new Farm Bill, and the League is pushing policymakers to boost funding for wetland conservation. With your help, we'll keep up the drumbeat on Capitol Hill and mobilize grassroots advocates to make the case.

Why We Protect Wetlands

Wetlands filter pollution and improve water quality in the process. Although we've relied on wetlands to do this "dirty work," the most effective way to protect clean water is reducing or eliminating pollution at the source.

The League is committed to building grassroots pressure for Congress to clearly protect wetlands under the Clean Water Act.

Volunteer science is often overlooked as a tool to help reduce pollution in the first place. The League is expanding and starting new volunteer science programs targeting two pressing problems: nitrate and chloride pollution.

Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch provide League chapters, volunteers and local groups with proven tactics not only to test for and document water pollution, but to advocate for changes in policy and practice that reduce the amount of road salt, chemical fertilizer and animal waste contaminating our drinking

water, streams and lakes.

Securing enduring protection for wetlands under the Clean Water Act rests with Congress. Only Congress can amend the Act to more specifically include wetlands among the types of waters explicitly protected under the law. Achieving this outcome is the League's long-term goal.

We know moving legislation through Congress takes time: to educate policymakers, build coalitions and mobilize public pressure for action. It took public outrage over fouled streams, dead lakes and burning rivers to move Congress to finally pass the Clean Water Act in 1972.

The League is committed to building grassroots pressure for Congress to clearly protect wetlands under the Clean Water Act. We start with a powerful foundation of members and volunteers nationwide who can make their voices heard and get the ball rolling.

The *Sackett* decision proves once again that the fight to conserve natural resources is ongoing. It's also a call to action to redouble our efforts to achieve the League's mission, act on our pledge and conserve the environment for future generations.



Montana Youth Win a Momentous Lawsuit on Climate Change

By MICHAEL REINEMER

Youth plaintiffs in the successful climate change lawsuit in Montana.

While the U.S. Supreme Court's recent *Sackett v. EPA* decision spells bad news for wetlands and water quality nationwide, a ray of hope for conservation burst out of a Montana court on August 14. The spotlight in that case centered on 16 young people and the dangers of climate change.

In *Held v. Montana*, Montana district court Judge Kathy Seely ruled in favor of the youths who had filed a complaint challenging the state's fossil fuel-focused energy policy. Specifically, the lawsuit challenged a provision in the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) that forbids consideration of the role of climate change or greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the state's review of environmental impacts (a provision called the MEPA limitation).

The lawsuit argued that policies in MEPA violate Montana's constitution, which states in part, the

"state and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations." That section was added to the state's constitution in 1972.

A number of the youth and expert witnesses for the plaintiffs testified during the case, which was heard in June. The lead plaintiff, Rikki Held, was 18 when the suit was filed. She grew up on a ranch near Broadus, Montana, and has been interviewed several times on "Our Montana," a public access TV program hosted by Held family friend and Izaak Walton League member Mike Penfold.

A Breakthrough Case

This lawsuit was not the first attempt to tackle climate change by focusing on its impact on children. The nonprofit organization called Our Children's Trust, which represented the Montana plaintiffs in court, has filed several related lawsuits.

And across the U.S., more than a dozen similar lawsuits have been dismissed.

But the judge in *Held* found that the Montana youth had standing (met the legal threshold to file the complaint) and that the state's energy policies have had a role in harming the youth.

“Plaintiffs have a fundamental constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment, which includes climate as part of the environmental life-support system.” — Judge Kathy Seely

Interviewed on NPR's "Living On Earth," Pat Parenteau, emeritus professor at Vermont Law and Graduate School, called the case a breakthrough and "an incredibly strong opinion." It was "the first time a court in the United States has ruled that there is a constitutional right to a safe climate, in effect."

Judge Seely's 103-page opinion describes harms—physical, economic or emotional—of Montana's energy policy on each of the 16 plaintiffs, along with the environmental harms such as extreme weather, wildfires and water variability.

The ruling in the case includes a number of stark points:

"Montana's GHG emissions have been proven to be fairly traceable to the MEPA Limitation."

"Montana's GHG emissions and climate change have been proven to be a substantial factor in causing climate impacts to Montana's environment and harm and injury to the Youth Plaintiffs."

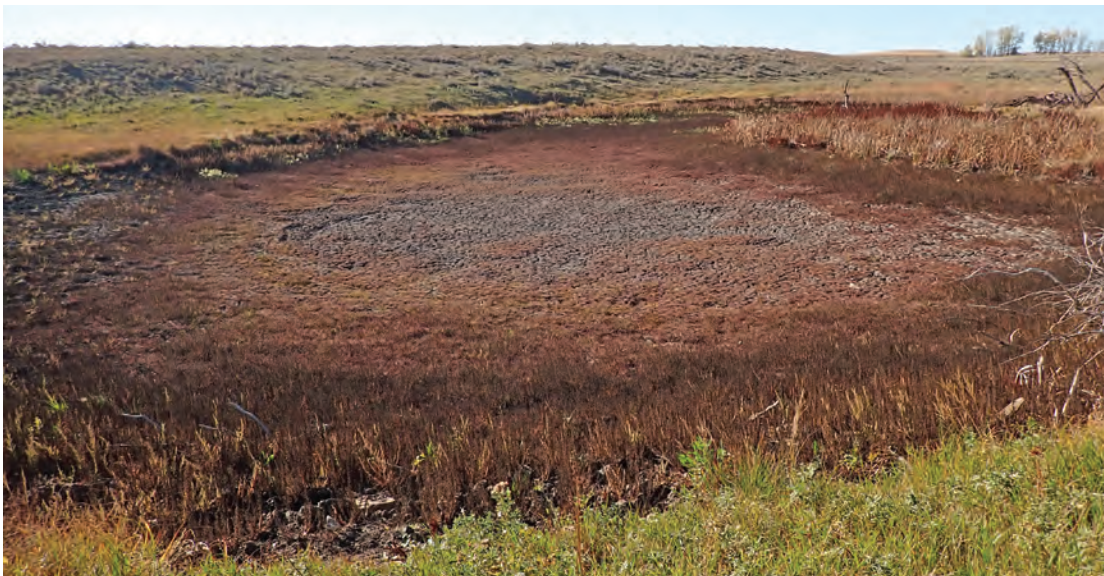
"This judgement will influence the State's conduct by invalidating statutes prohibiting analysis and remedies based on GHG emissions and climate impacts, alleviating Youth Plaintiffs' injuries and preventing further injury."

“Being part of this case and working with so many incredible people looking out for us gives me a lot of hope for the future even when there's a long way yet to go.” — Rikki Held

"Plaintiffs have a fundamental constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment, which includes climate as part of the environmental life-support system."

The defendants (Montana's governor, Department of Environmental Quality and several other state agencies) are appealing the ruling and the appeal will be heard in the Montana Supreme Court, which has previously recognized the right to a healthy environment.

Similar legal challenges related to youth and climate, led by Our Children's Trust, are pending in Oregon, Virginia and Hawaii.



Due to severe drought, this prairie pothole in eastern Montana has dried up. These ponds are vital for waterfowl and other wildlife.

LISA BALLARD



On her family's ranch near Broadus, Montana, Rikki Held is one of 16 youth plaintiffs in *Held v. Montana*

MEET RIKKI HELD

One of the 16 youth plaintiffs, whose name appears in the case, is Rikki Held. She was 18 when the case was filed in 2020. Now 22, she recently graduated from Colorado College with a degree in Environmental Science and has signed up with the Peace Corps to teach science in Kenya. Longer term, she hopes to earn a Ph.D. in science and do research.

Held grew up near the Powder River in Montana and first became interested in science as a teenager by shadowing U.S. Geological Survey researchers who were studying the hydrology of the river.

In a conversation with *Outdoor America*, Held described her experience in the Montana case as “amazing.” She praised the hard work of the legal team and said she got to know some of the other plaintiffs during the June trial. “I think the world of them. These are strong, inspirational people...so thoughtful and serious about this issue and the well-being of our state.”

She said the judgement in the case was broad and stronger than she had expected.

“Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change have to be considered before issuing new fossil fuel permits, which evidence has already shown harms Montanans, especially youth. We hope this decision and the testimony presented by us young people and our experts will encourage Montana to transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy, which is less expensive and would save other social costs such as people’s health or having to rebuild communities from flooding and wildfires.”

In *Held v. Montana*, preventing harms from climate change was elevated to a constitutional issue. But the case also underscores—in headlines around the world—this generation’s grave concerns and the disproportionate impact of climate change on our youngest, who will endure longer and more pronounced harms.

“It’s pretty terrifying, especially when we have control over human-caused climate change, and have known about it for so long,” Held says. “All we can do is keep taking steps forward. Being part of this case and working with so many incredible people looking out for us gives me a lot of hope for the future even when there’s a long way yet to go.”

Not one to seek the spotlight, what Held really wants people to concentrate on is the science.

“We already know this is harming people and we have the technology and opportunity to make different choices. As stressed in court, 350 parts per million of atmospheric CO₂ is what is needed for a stable climate system. Currently, we’re at 419 ppm. We need to focus on bringing that back down and take responsibility for our actions, even as individual states, because our basic human rights such as to a clean and healthful environment are already being violated, and every increment of global warming will only worsen the harms to people and our ecosystems.”



CLEAN WATER CORNER

Bridging Community and Science: The Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative

MATTHEW KIERCE, Chesapeake Monitoring Outreach Coordinator

In a unique collaborative effort that began in 2015, the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative (CMC) was established through a six-year agreement between the U.S. EPA Chesapeake Bay Program and several conservation organizations, including the Izaak Walton League of America.

The cooperative recognized the potential value of untapped data from local governments, volunteers and non-governmental organizations in environmental conservation. To this end, the CMC has worked to integrate these various data sources to develop a more complete understanding of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The CMC has created a structured framework, established monitoring guidelines and set quality assurance procedures, making various data sets compatible. This data is now available on a public platform called the Chesapeake Data Explorer, which serves as a valuable resource for the general public as well as policymakers at state and federal levels. In 2021, the partnership was renewed with another six-year agreement, reinforcing the CMC's position as a unique, multi-state regional initiative that enhances our understanding of the health and restoration of the bay.

Izaak Walton League is a key partner

The Izaak Walton League of America plays a significant role in this collaboration. Through its Virginia Save Our Streams program, the League provides important Tier I benthic macroinvertebrate data in the lower watershed. (Water quality data classified as Tier 1 is typically used in education programs and can document where monitoring is taking place, indicate potential pollution hot spots and prioritize sites for follow-up and restoration.)

However, the League's involvement extends beyond data collection. It hosts the Chesapeake Monitoring Outreach Coordinator, a role responsible for coordination of various projects, including data integration into the Chesapeake Data Explorer and the creation of outreach materials.

Working with the League as the monitoring coordinator for the CMC has been such a rewarding experience. This role has allowed me to engage with different volunteers, organizations and projects across the watershed. Even in the face of emerging water quality threats to the bay, I am constantly inspired by the dedication community scientists have towards being a part of the solution for future generations to come.

Future directions for CMC and the League

The environmental landscape is constantly changing, and so is the role of the Izaak Walton League within the CMC. One upcoming initiative will incorporate the League's Salt Watch program into the CMC data sets. This plan aims to add Tier I chloride data, thereby enriching water quality metrics. A distinctive feature of this initiative is its reliance on community contributions. The program invites volunteer scientists to actively participate in shaping the future for the environment.

As we look to the future, several questions arise. How can we make sure that the addition of new types of data is smooth and reliable? What obstacles might prevent community volunteers from taking part and how can we address these? Finally, how can we extend the impact of these programs with the understanding that there is still much work to do to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay?

HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

If you are interested in contributing to this cause, consider visiting the Izaak Walton League's Clean Water page on our website to see how you can get involved. By working together, we can combine community engagement with scientific rigor to benefit the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

***Sackett v. EPA* Spells Disaster for Wetlands and Clean Water**

By JARED MOTT, Conservation Director

In the largest rollback of clean water protections in 50 years, the Supreme Court ruled in May that the Clean Water Act does not protect a majority of the nation's wetlands and millions of miles of streams. The Court's decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency* drastically narrows the scope of the Clean Water Act by eliminating protections for wetlands and tributary streams except in extreme, limited circumstances.

The Court's ruling eliminates safeguards for vital links of our waterways, with no consideration of wetlands' essential role in filtering and improving water quality, dispersing floodwaters and providing critical habitat for fish and wildlife.

Proven science shows how tributary streams influence downstream waters, and one in three Americans get drinking water from public systems that rely, at least in part, on these small streams. Yet, the Court ignored the plain language of the Clean Water Act that clearly articulates congressional intent to protect these waters.

This ruling defies science, the law and common sense by simply pretending that major rivers, lakes and other waters deemed "navigable" cannot be impacted by pollution in their tributaries or adjacent wetlands.

What we must do now

Despite this momentous setback, there is no time to despair. The Izaak Walton League has never backed down from the fight for clean water and will answer the bell once again.

First, we have to conserve wetlands using every tool available. Second, we must protect waters at the source by keeping a watch on neighborhood streams and wetlands. Alarms must be raised as soon as problems begin to surface.



The League is already engaged on both of these fronts, with robust advocacy for wetlands conservation, especially the upcoming Farm Bill. And we have enlisted a growing cadre of volunteer stream monitors across the nation who gather water quality data.

But ultimately, Americans must convince Congress to amend the Clean Water Act to clarify once and for all that this fundamental law protects wetlands and tributary streams. The League is mobilizing now to build a grassroots movement that pressures lawmakers to act.



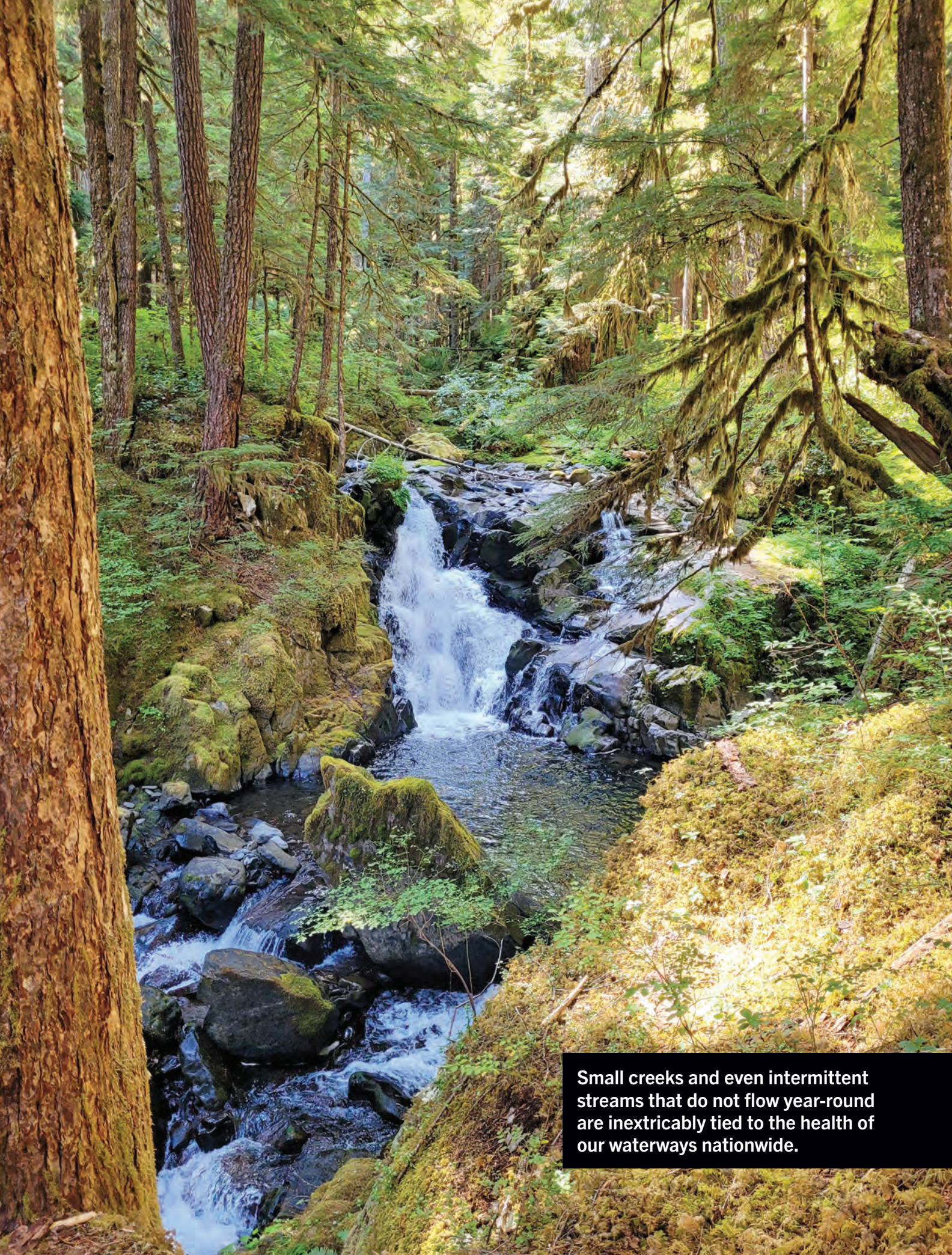
Without protections enumerated in the Clean Water Act, pollution dumped into tributary streams could flow uninhibited into rivers like the Potomac, which provides drinking water for five million people. Here the Shenandoah River joins the Potomac at Harpers Ferry, W.Va.

The Sackett case

The Sacketts, who are property owners in Idaho, filled a wetland in order to build a home, but did so without obtaining a Clean Water Act permit. Because of that, they were cited and fined. They appealed and eventually their case made its way all the way to the Supreme Court. The case raised two questions: Does the Clean Water Act protect the wetland the Sacketts filled? How far does the Act go to safeguard wetlands across the country?

The Court has ruled on this issue before in the 2006 case *Rapanos v. United States*. The Court held then that wetlands are protected by the Act if they have a “significant nexus” to navigable waters, defined as “the waters of the United States” (WOTUS) in the text of the Act. *Rapanos* affirmed the stated intent of Congress: that the Act went beyond protections for navigable waters and held that wetlands affecting the chemical, physical and biological integrity of adjacent tributaries of navigable waters were deemed WOTUS and thus covered by the law.

MICHAEL REINEMER



Small creeks and even intermittent streams that do not flow year-round are inextricably tied to the health of our waterways nationwide.

The “significant nexus” standard is based on the intent of Congress when it passed the Clean Water Act. It focuses on the interconnectivity of the hydrologic systems the Act aimed to protect. In order to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation’s waters, the reach of the law must extend far enough upstream to protect water quality downstream. In other words, the significant nexus test relies on well-understood science that wetlands and tributary streams directly and indirectly affect downstream water quality within their watershed and that without applying the Act’s protections to them, the integrity of the nation’s waters cannot be restored or maintained. One need not be a professional scientist to understand that pollution upstream affects water quality downstream.

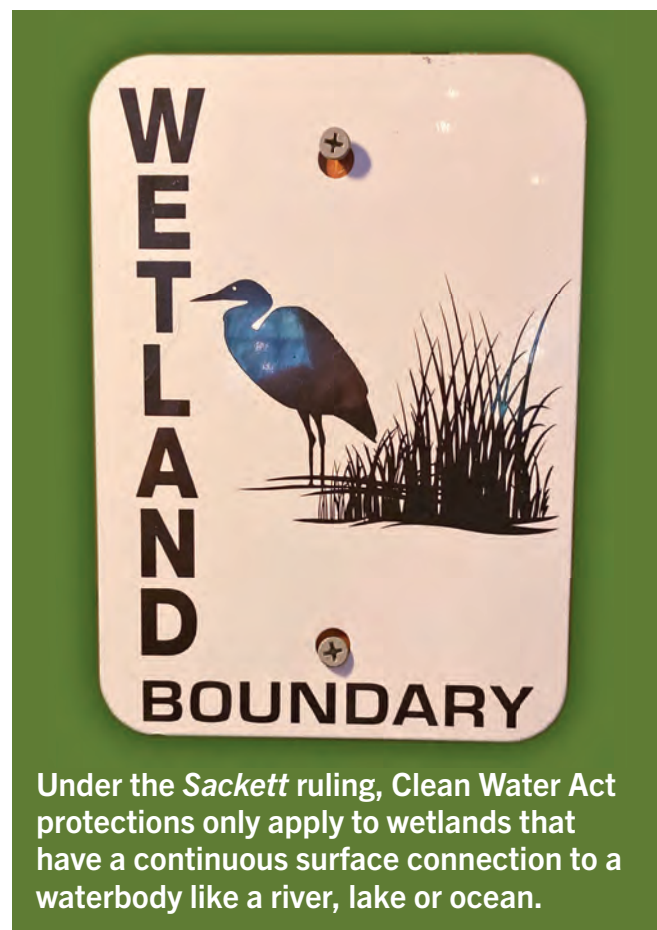
However, the Sacketts argued the Act should not be interpreted with the significant nexus test. They proposed a different yardstick: the physical proximity of surface connections between a wetland and other waters of the U.S. covered by the law. So, the legal question at the heart of *Sackett* is one that the Court has addressed many times, but was being asked to reconsider: which waters, specifically which wetlands, are defined as “waters of the United States” and thus fall under the protections of the Clean Water Act?

What the Supreme Court decided

Courts, elected officials and legal scholars all agree that the Act protects some wetlands. That’s because the language in the statute explicitly includes “navigable waters...including wetlands adjacent thereto...” when it details which waters must be protected by states setting up their own permitting systems for wetlands development.

This ruling defies science, the law and common sense.

It is important to remember that Congress defined the term “navigable waters” more broadly than waters used for commercial navigation: “The term ‘navigable waters’ means the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas.” So the Clean Water Act is clear: wetlands that are adjacent to



other “waters of the United States” are also waters of the U.S. and protected by the Act. In a baffling repudiation of not just congressional intent, but basic science, the Court disagreed that a significant nexus to navigable waters provides Clean Water Act protections, and the Court overhauled which wetlands should be considered “adjacent.”

To start, all nine justices ruled that the wetland on the Sacketts’ property did not qualify as a WOTUS and that the Sacketts had not violated the Clean Water Act by filling it without first obtaining a permit. In doing so, the Court abandoned the significant nexus test.

But the Court was split 5 to 4 on the meaning of “adjacent” and which wetlands are protected. The majority, comprising Justices Alito, Gorsuch, Thomas and Barrett, as well as Chief Justice Roberts, wrote that because adjacent wetlands are mentioned in the Act as making up the waters of the United States, they may only qualify as a WOTUS if they satisfy a two-part test. First, the adjacent waterbody must be a WOTUS itself, and second, the wetland must be indistinguishably a part of that body of water that itself constitutes a WOTUS. In fact, the

two must be so closely associated that they share a “continuous surface connection such that there is no clear demarcation between the two.”

By adopting this new definition of waters of the United States, the Court rejects the language that was passed by Congress and was executed and enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers in every administration since President Nixon.

The Court’s majority insists that despite the use of the word “adjacent” in the text of the Act, Congress was not sufficiently clear. They write that because

the Clean Water Act carries potential criminal and civil liability for violations, Congress has not sufficiently and expressly clarified which wetlands—without an obvious surface connection to another protected waterbody—should be protected. For that reason, the Court’s majority concludes that Clean Water Act protections can only be extended as far as the boundaries of wetlands with a continuous surface connection to a covered waterbody—like a river, lake or ocean.

One of the dissenting opinions, written by Justice Kavanaugh and joined by Justices Kagan, Sotomayor

NEW EPA, CORPS REGULATIONS BASED ON *SACKETT*

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers have released a final rule amending the January 2023 “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) rule to conform with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Sackett v. EPA*. The Court’s ruling in *Sackett* left the agencies with no choice but to strike key elements of the January 2023 WOTUS rule in accordance with the decision. The new rule is drastically less protective of wetlands, tributary streams and overall water quality, reflecting the Supreme Court’s unprecedented rollback of the Clean Water Act.

The new rule has three components to conform to the Court’s decision:

1. Removes the “significant nexus” standard for determining what waters are covered by the Clean Water Act. This now means that the Act will only apply to “relatively permanent” streams, wetlands and interstate waters and jurisdiction will not be extended to other waterways that significantly affect the chemical, physical or biological integrity of the Nation’s waters without meeting the “relatively permanent” standard.
2. Changes the definition of “adjacent” from “bordering, contiguous or neighboring” to “having a continuous surface connection.” In 1977, Congress amended the Clean Water Act to protect wetlands that are adjacent to navigable waters. By changing the definition of “adjacent” to only include wetlands with a continuous surface connection to a navigable waterway or another WOTUS, the Supreme Court has drastically lowered the number of wetlands protected by the Act.
3. Removes “interstate wetlands” from the list of interstate waters that are considered to be waters of the United States and that are therefore protected by the Clean Water Act. For the first time in the history of the Clean Water Act, iconic wetlands that cross state boundaries, like the Grand Kankakee marsh and the Okefenokee Swamp, are vulnerable to unregulated pollution.

This new rule for defining waters of the United States is dangerously narrow and fundamentally weakens clean water protections enshrined in the Clean Water Act, one of America’s foundational environmental statutes. Some estimates from wetlands experts calculate that up to 63 percent of wetlands in America might lose protection under this new standard, while millions of miles of ephemeral and intermittent streams that directly affect water quality will also be left vulnerable to pollution.

and Jackson, relies on the ordinary meaning of the fairly ordinary word “adjacent,” as well as 50 years of legal precedent and federal agency interpretation and implementation. They protest that the majority has substituted its own definition of “adjacent” by requiring wetlands be *adjoining* other waters of the United States in order to fall under the protections of the Act.

The minority writes that this revised definition is not needed, since Congress was sufficiently clear when it declared that wetlands adjacent to navigable waters, or adjacent to tributaries of navigable waters, were to be considered waters of the United States. They also write that the majority is replacing the intent of Congress with their own.

Justice Kavanaugh sums up the Court’s misinterpretation: “The Court’s ‘continuous surface connection’ test disregards the ordinary meaning of ‘adjacent.’ The Court’s mistake is straightforward: The Court essentially reads ‘adjacent’ to mean ‘adjoining.’ As a result, the Court excludes wetlands that the text of the Clean Water Act covers—and that the Act since 1977 has always been interpreted to cover.”

What does the *Sackett* ruling mean on the ground?

The Court’s ruling is not complicated. It means that wetlands will no longer be protected by the Clean Water Act unless they have a continuous surface connection to another waterbody that is an established WOTUS, like a river, lake or ocean. It also means that the significant nexus test used to determine jurisdiction, not just for wetlands but for streams as well, will no longer guide which tributaries of navigable waters will be protected.

1. Drastically fewer wetlands will be protected

Using the Court’s definition of WOTUS, nearly 60 million acres of wetlands in the U.S. will no longer be protected by the Clean Water Act. For the first time ever, floodplain wetlands cut off from rivers by artificial levees, and coastal wetlands separated from the sea by dunes, will not be protected by the Act. Tens of millions of acres of wetlands that have enjoyed 50 years of protection

will now be vulnerable to being drained or having pollution dumped into them.

In the absence of federal protection, most state laws do not fill the gap. Nearly half the states rely on the Clean Water Act and its definition of WOTUS as the guideline for their wetlands protections. As the Act is weakened, so are the regulations in those states. Some states have a basic framework for protecting wetlands, but these regulations often don’t go as far as the federal framework in the Clean Water Act.

Finally, some states have fairly extensive wetlands protections, but those mechanisms can’t always be counted on either because they may not cover all of the wetlands losing federal jurisdiction. For example, a state may only protect wetlands of a certain size or type.

2. Loss of protections for some tributary streams

Sackett only dealt with the jurisdictional status of wetlands. But the Court’s opinion dictates a very narrow view of the Clean Water Act’s jurisdiction over other waters as well.

By narrowing the definition of WOTUS to wetlands with a *continuous* surface connection to protected waters and tossing the significant nexus test, the Court leaves the EPA and Army Corps no discretion to enforce their definition of waters of the United States, which included non-perennial streams that significantly affect the health of downstream waters.

Intermittent and ephemeral streams that do not flow year-round are inextricably tied to the quality of downstream waters that supply drinking water for about one third of all Americans. Without the protections enumerated in the Clean Water Act, pollution dumped into these tributary streams could flow uninhibited into America’s drinking water intakes.



Where do we go from here?

In order to overcome the loss of protections for wetlands and tributary streams resulting from the ruling in *Sackett*, we cannot despair.

First, we must use every available tool to protect wetlands. Some of the best wetland conservation programs can be found in the Farm Bill, which is being developed and debated right now.

Swampbuster, a program that denies federal subsidies to landowners and farmers who drain wetlands, must be strengthened by dedicating focused resources to enforcement, which is currently left to overextended Department of Agriculture technical service providers. The Wetlands Reserve Easements program is a great tool for incentivizing landowners to conserve wetlands on their property. That program must be robustly funded to fill the gap between resources available and demand from landowners.

Second, we must protect water quality at the source. Ephemeral and intermittent streams are critical to protecting water quality, while wetlands are crucial filters for many of our water systems. But as they are lost, we must do more to make sure that pollution does not overwhelm our waterways.

Through extensive monitoring of water quality, we can detect pollution problems early and approach local, state and federal authorities to correct the

problem before it becomes too severe. Volunteers will be critical to these efforts since there are simply too many important sources that must be monitored for the government to handle alone. The League's Save Our Streams program, in addition to our Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch campaigns, are great examples of ways that ordinary people can become clean water champions just by monitoring the streams in their back yards.

Ultimately, Americans must convince Congress to amend the Clean Water Act to clarify once and for all that wetlands and tributary streams are protected.

Finally, the only durable solution to protecting the wetlands and tributary streams Congress intended under the Clean Water Act is for Congress to clarify the Act itself. Congress can amend the Act to specifically define

waters of the United States to include wetlands without continuous surface connections to relatively permanent types of waters defined as waters of the United States and streams that might not flow all year long.

This will not be easy. Getting legislation passed through Congress and signed into law takes time. But we cannot afford to wait to begin building pressure on lawmakers to stand up for clean water.

Contact your members of Congress and ask them to strengthen the Clean Water Act right now. The only way to sufficiently build the movement needed to clarify protections for wetlands and tributary streams once and for all is to get started right away. Future generations of Americans that deserve clean water are counting on us.

PUTTING SACKETT DECISION IN CONTEXT

In deciding *Sackett*, the Court's majority dramatically altered the definition of "adjacent wetlands," which are protected under the language of the Clean Water Act and the federal government's longstanding interpretations of statutory language defining waters of the United States. The Court declared that the definition of "waters of the United States" only applies to "relatively permanent, standing or free flowing bodies of water."

The League could not disagree more strongly with the decision, in view of the purpose of the Clean Water Act, clear congressional intent when defining the types of waters to be protected, overwhelming science and simple common sense. This case, like others before it, focuses on the one-sentence definition of the waters Congress intended to protect under the Clean Water Act.

In his dissenting opinion in this case, Justice Brett Kavanaugh explained the flawed majority opinion in one sentence: "In my view, the Court's 'continuous surface connection' test departs from the statutory text, from 45 years of consistent agency practice, and from this Court's precedents."

It's hard to overstate how far the Court's decision strays from the purpose and intent of Congress in passing the Act. Congress clearly defined the purpose of the legislation: "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." The clear intent was to reduce water pollution, improve water quality, protect public health and provide for safe uses, like outdoor recreation, of the nation's waters.

During the floor debate on the Clean Water Act, then-Representative John Dingell of Michigan, who played an instrumental role in writing the legislation, explained that waters of the United States "means all the waters of the United States, in a geographical sense. It does not mean navigable waters of the United States in the technical sense, as we see in some laws." Limiting protection to the largest waterbodies and their largest tributaries would make it impossible to achieve the goals Congress established in the Act.

Accordingly, soon after the Act became law and for decades thereafter, the agencies tasked with enforcing it, the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, interpreted the definition of "waters of the United States" to include tributary streams and most wetlands since these waters are so vital to maintaining and restoring healthy water quality.

As a result of this interpretation, some members of Congress attempted to amend the Clean Water Act in 1977 so the statute would explicitly exclude many types of waters, including wetlands, from the definition of "waters of the United States." However, these amendments failed and Congress instead passed amendments *adding* waters to be protected, like wetlands adjacent to rivers and their tributaries. Given the opportunity to clarify that the Act's jurisdiction only extended to larger rivers, lakes and oceans, Congress expressly rejected that notion.

Against this backdrop, the Court's ruling in *Sackett* stands as a stark departure from the purpose of the Clean Water Act and the express intent of its framers.

CONSERVATION AT A CROSSROAD

Putting Solutions into Action

**Conservation at a Crossroads:
At National Convention, Members
Share Ideas about a Host of Challenges**



For the 2023 convention, the League gathered in Lincoln, Nebraska to share insights, discuss policy and elect leaders.

Focusing on putting solutions into action across a host of challenges—like nitrate pollution, loss of biodiversity and the uncertain future of outdoor traditions, among others—the Izaak Walton League of America gathered members and supporters in Lincoln, Nebraska, July 27 through 29.

President Vicki Arnold welcomed participants and called attention to the League's plan for tackling the challenges ahead. That plan was outlined last year in the League's **Vision for a Second Century of Conservation**. Arnold urged each member to adopt just one program from that vision and serve as a leader for that program in their community. (To read the vision, visit iwla.org/vision.)

The convention featured a wide variety of speakers, panel discussions, elections, discussion and adoption of policy resolutions, and an extensive youth convention.

Green Crew Rocks the Convention

Three young adults representing the Green Crew received a standing ovation after their compelling presentation to the League Friday morning. The Green Crew program provides an opportunity and a replicable model for engaging youth who want to tackle conservation challenges while also developing leadership experience.

In partnership with the League's Minnesota Valley Chapter, the Green Crew has already accomplished a number of conservation projects and has sparked interest from other League chapters and Scout leaders around the country. The Crew combines League participation and Scout Venturing Crews.

The message from the Crew was clear: **if you want youth to be involved in the future of conservation, involve them in the present.** Read more about the Green Crew in *Outdoor America*, Issue 1, 2023.

Water Experts Discuss the Challenges of Nitrate and Salt Pollution

To provide insights into the ongoing threats to the nation's drinking water supplies, two experts spoke at the convention: Ted Corrigan, CEO and General Manager of Des Moines Water Works (DMWW), and Nicole Horvath, Environmental Outreach Coordinator from the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC).

Iowa is ground zero for nitrate pollution due to enormous amounts of nitrogen applied to cropland and the millions of tons of animal waste produced in the state. These nutrients wash off the land and accumulate in rivers that Iowans depend on as the sources of drinking water. Nitrate in water can foster the growth of blue-green algae, which produce microcystin, a dangerous toxin. Corrigan said in 2019 and again in 2020, DMWW was unable to use the Des Moines River for drinking water for 110 consecutive days due to microcystin levels.

DMWW, which serves about 600,000 customers in central Iowa, can remove nitrate from water, at a high cost. But the obvious solution to this problem, Corrigan noted, is not building more water treatment facilities. It's more widespread adoption

of practices like planting cover crops and other strategies to keep nutrients out of rivers, streams and lakes in the first place.

WSSC serves about 1.9 million customers in the Washington, DC region where the Potomac and Patuxent rivers supply drinking water. Nicole Horvath said salt in their water system can cause high blood pressure as well as kidney and liver diseases. At elevated levels, salt corrodes infrastructure and water pipes, which can result in lead leaching into drinking water.



Young adult leaders from the Green Crew presented workshops about engaging youth in this innovative new program.



League staff presented an update on volunteer water monitoring programs.

Salt (chloride) in water has been steadily increasing in the Potomac and Patuxent rivers in recent decades. During February, the peak road salt month in the DC area, chloride in tap water spikes up dramatically, to 78 milligrams per liter, compared to an average of about 40 milligrams per liter in the seven months leading up to that. Horvath described WSSC's Salt Summit, regional workgroups and outreach activities designed to reduce salt use while keeping people safe during icy weather.

The Izaak Walton League, of course, leads national volunteer science programs designed expressly to measure and report salt and nitrate levels in local waterways and advocate for steps to keep them out of the water to begin with. Samantha Briggs, Heather Wilson and Abby Hileman from the League's national staff provided insights into the progress of Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch.

Wilson explained how to use the League's Clean Water Hub website, which collects data from Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch and serves as a powerful tool for water monitors and the public. Attendees learned how to navigate the Hub to view data in their communities and make the most of the maps, graphics and other resources the Hub provides. They also explored next steps to turn data in the Hub into action in their communities.

National President Vicki Arnold urged each member to adopt just one program from the League's vision for the future and serve as a leader for that program in their community.

Hileman presented a workshop on how to start a local Salt Watch campaign, including a deep dive into businesses and agencies that hire salt applicators and how to approach them. She shared case studies of individual Salt Watchers who make a difference by reducing salt pollution in their communities.



A variety of resolutions were debated, voted on and adopted at the convention.

New Policies Adopted for PFAS, Performance-Based Farm Conservation, Renewable Energy and Carbon Pipelines

As a member-led organization, the Izaak Walton League of America establishes policies that are proposed and then approved by members.

The process begins well before the convention so the League's resource committees can evaluate the resolutions, amend them as needed and then share them with members before discussion and voting at the convention. (Read more about resource committees on page 28.)

Chapter delegates to the 2023 convention discussed several proposed resolutions and approved the following four.

- **Dangerous PFAS and microplastics.** Amends the League's conservation policy so as to label PFAS (per- and poly-fluoroalkyl) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonic acid) as chemicals that contaminate water and land and threaten human health and wildlife. It further calls for informing the public about these threats.
- **Performance-based compensation for agriculture programs.** Amends the League's policy to urge a transition from practice-based to performance-based compensation to incentivize conservation steps that enhance soil health, reduce erosion and improve water quality.

- **Equitable net metering.** Urges state utility authorities to create incentives for “net metering,” where a non-utility that generates electricity from solar, wind or other renewable sources can get credit for power fed back into the electric grid.
- **Carbon dioxide pipelines and enhanced oil recovery.** Directs the League to oppose the use of eminent domain to condemn private land for construction of carbon dioxide sequestration pipelines, and also to oppose use of captured carbon dioxide for enhanced oil recovery.

These resolutions are now part of the League’s official policy and are listed in the policy handbook (iwla.org/policybook).

You Are Nature’s Best Hope

In a detailed discussion about the fragility of biodiversity, entomologist Doug Tallamy, Ph.D., described the essential role of insects and native plants in balancing nature and ecosystem health.

Only five percent of the land and water in the lower 48 states, he said, is even close to its natural condition. And that puts many species of plants and animals – including humans – at risk because life depends on a healthy and biologically diverse environment. This is an idea he explores in his recent book, *Nature’s Best Hope*.

But through better stewardship of land and water, starting with our own neighborhoods and back yards, people can reduce the damage of habitat loss and climate change.

Tallamy introduced the idea of “homegrown national parks”—a concept of building resilience and awareness in our local communities. Taking just a few key actions where we live can help transform traditional landscaping, which offers few benefits to wildlife, into a homegrown national park:

- Reduce the lawn area (there are 44 million acres of lawn in the U.S.)
- Plant more native shrubs, trees and ground cover
- Remove invasive plants
- Protect natural areas

Who Has Grit and Patience?

Women who go fishing are more likely to exhibit confidence, grit, patience, happiness and health. That’s one of the insights shared by Dave Chanda, president and CEO of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.

His organization seeks to attract more people to fishing and boating, and one of the Foundation’s demographic targets is women. Chanda described the group’s “Take Me Fishing” campaign, including the Spanish-language version, “Vamos a Pescar.”

With her gaiter on,
and her waders on,
she can tackle
anything at dawn.

There's something
in the water.

Women who fish have significantly greater grit and confidence than women who don't. Find your *best self* on the water.

 **TAKEMEFISHING.org**

Ipsos (May 2022). Identifying What Gives Female Anglers an 'Edge'. © 2023 Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation

The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation launched a campaign to attract more women to fishing.

There are firearms in nearly half of households in the U.S., noted Bill Dunn, vice president for marketing at the National Shooting Sports Foundation. That includes a lot of new gun owners, and training is a top priority for the new owners. He proposed a “plus one” program to include these new owners in visits to shooting ranges.

Chanda and Dunn spoke together on a panel and fielded questions and comments from convention participants after their presentations.

Hope for America’s Outdoor Traditions

Outdoor Life Conservation Editor Andrew McKean gave convention attendees food for thought at the conservation luncheon. He described a broad trend away from the hunting and fishing traditions that shaped the Izaak Walton League’s early popularity.

But, he noted, the League’s focus on regional and local conservation is a strength, and he said its work to provide accessible “on-ramps” to outdoor recreation and conservation advocacy could help the organization to thrive in the decades ahead.

Award-Winning Chapters and Members

At the awards luncheon, the League recognized and thanked many members and chapters for a wide array of achievements in the areas of membership, communications, conservation programs and individual leadership. See the full list of awards on page 40.

National Officer Elections

The League members present at convention on Friday also elected national officers including:

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

Izaak Walton League Endowment Awards

The Izaak Walton League of America Endowment awarded 22 grants totaling \$116,610 to League chapters and the national office. The grants, selected by the Endowment board, are focused on



The Youth Convention included a busy schedule of activities and learning experiences in and around Lincoln.



The Lincoln Chapter hosted a dinner on their property, which includes a nature trail, fishing pond and wildlife habitat as well as rifle, trap and archery ranges.

conservation, education and outdoor recreation programs. Twenty-eight grant applications were submitted.

Endowment President Patty Nunn noted that they hate to turn down any application, but the Endowment has a limited amount of funds to distribute each year. See more, including the list of grants, in *Your Endowment in Action* on page 26.

How to Combine Art and Conservation: Indiana Waterways

A small initiative that allowed a group of Indiana artists to continue painting during the COVID-19 pandemic turned into a much larger project that highlighted the threats to Indiana waterways—and the work by the Izaak Walton League to improve Indiana streams and rivers.

Painter Avon Waters presented the story of this innovative program, which turned into a touring exhibit and book. Waters says League chapters could undertake similar programs. This program was described in *Outdoor America*, Issue 2, 2023.

Youth Conventioneers Explore Nebraska's Natural Wonders

Young people participating in the League's National Youth Convention completed a three-day adventure and presented a short summary at a general session on the last day of the convention.

Along with memorable social events in between field trips, the youth visited the Nebraska State Capitol, the Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and Wildlife Safari, the Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum, the Schramm Education Center and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Eugene T. Mahoney State Park.

Mark Your Calendar:

2024 National Convention:
July 14-16 in Cambridge, Md.

2025 National Convention:
July in Green Bay, Wisc.

MICHAEL REINEMER

Your Endowment in Action

Kids, Conservation, Clean Water: New Grants Support a Variety of Projects

By PATRICIA NUNN, President, Izaak Walton League of America Endowment

Every member of the League is also a member of the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment. The mission of the Endowment is to fund conservation, education and outdoor recreation across the organization, and it is with that lens the Endowment's board of directors reviews grant proposals.

For 2023, board members reviewed 28 grant requests seeking a total of \$227,837. From those requests, we awarded 22 grants valued at \$116,610. We recognize and greatly appreciate the time it takes to write a grant request, and we work diligently to read and discuss every application.

The board announced the Endowment's 2023 grants at the League's national convention in Lincoln, Neb. The awards are listed on the following page.

Each awardee is assigned to an Endowment board member to support the grantee's successful execution of the project. 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, 2024. Every grantee is required to provide a final project report no later than July 1 of the year following approval of the grant.

Each year, the Endowment also supports the James Lawton Childs Award, which recognizes

two chapters that carried out the most outstanding conservation program during the previous year. Congratulations to winners of that award this year: the League's **Porter County Chapter** in Indiana (with fewer than 500 members) and the **Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter** in Maryland (with more than 500 members).

Endowment Leaders Elected

The Endowment board held its annual membership meeting at the League's national convention during which the Endowment presented an update to membership and held elections.

This year, several board members completed their tenure. Don Klecker reached his service term limits. Since 1981, he has served in leadership positions at both the Watertown Chapter and Wisconsin Division. For the past 11 years, he has served on the Endowment board as a director, treasurer and valued member of the Financial Committee. He has maintained accurate financial records, and the board appreciates his contributions and tenure.

We also recognized Annette Hansen who served as an appointed member to the board for one year. She contributed unique subject matter expertise in the grant review process and contributed to the board activities. We appreciate her desire to stay focused on the many conservation activities as executive secretary of Indiana's Porter County Chapter.

For the 2023-2024 board, membership elected the following directors:

- Bill Iltzsche, Indiana
- Elaine Graham, Ohio
- Craig Enneking, Iowa

The board also elected officers for the 2023-2024 year: Patty Nunn, president; Steve Labs, vice president; Craig Enneking, treasurer; and Lisa McIntyre, secretary.

Submit a Grant Application

We encourage all League chapters to submit grant applications online at iwla-endowment.org. The Endowment Grant Request Form has been updated, and new guidance for developing the required final report is available.

2023 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 national office.

Project	Applicant	Amount
Bat monitoring and outreach	Spring Lake Chapter, Ind.	\$3,200
Conservation camp scholarships	Sioux Falls Chapter, S.D.	1,400
Conservation education	Illinois Division	3,000
Day camp, 2024 convention for low-income students	Maryland Division	2,700
Habitat and outdoor classroom	Dragoon Trail Chapter, Iowa	7,200
Kids and seniors fishing activities	Geneseo Chapter, Ill.	1,300
Kids' fishing day	Fremont Chapter, Neb.	1,500
Kids' fishing derby	Havana Chapter, Ill.	2,000
Missouri River outreach, education	National office	5,400
Mooring dock replacement	Berkeley County Chapter, W.Va.	6,000
National conservation scholarship	National office	5,000
National Youth Convention	National office	2,500
Playground installation	Griffith Chapter, Ind.	23,750
Salt Watch impact expansion	National office	12,688
Stream monitoring	Cincinnati Chapter, Ohio	12,000
Stream testing expansion	Mount Airy Chapter, Md.	1,242
Trail improvements	Bill Cook Chapter, Wisc.	1,500
Trap fields development	Mountaineer Chapter, W.Va.	10,000
Upper Mississippi River Film Festival	Will Dilg Chapter, Minn.	4,350
Water education	Sioux Falls Chapter, S.D.	1,000
Young Ikes	Southern Brown Conservation Chapter, Wisc.	2,380
Young Ikes Activity Book redesign	National office	6,500
	TOTAL GRANTS	\$116,610

Visit iwla-endowment.org

You Can Shape the League's Future: Serve on a National Committee

By JANETTE ROSENBAUM, Strategic Communications Manager

Clean water, healthy soil, renewable energy, public lands, recycling initiatives... the Izaak Walton League's work spans the gamut of conservation issues. What has made the League such a dynamic organization for more than 100 years?

One reason is that our programs, policies and priorities are built from the ground up, driven by the wide-ranging interests of our membership.

Every year, League members from all over the country have an opportunity to submit proposals for policy positions the organization should take. Those proposals are reviewed and refined by other members, and then they are voted on by even more members.

The time commitment is minimal, but the importance to our mission can't be overstated.

Our national policies are created through this member-driven approach, which is fitting for the nation's first mass-membership conservation organization truly built on a broad grassroots movement.

The result is an array of ideas that reflect the will and unique spirit of our members. How does the process work? At the heart of it all is the League's resource committee system.

Member-Led Governance

Every policy proposed by members is reviewed by one of eight resource committees, each with its own area of expertise. The Resolutions Committee, a

coordinating body comprising the chair of each resource committee, oversees this process.

The list of the League's resource committees follows:

- Agricultural Affairs
- Energy and Environment
- Environmental Education
- Fish and Wildlife
- Outdoor Ethics
- Public Lands
- Sustainable Resources
- Water Resources

Over the past few years, new proposals have tackled topics like wetlands protection, climate change, conservation of native non-game fish and dangerous water pollutants. Also over the past few years, the committees have shifted to online meetings, which makes participation easier.



League policies are shaped by its resource committees and depend on member participation.

In those meetings, the committee members consider the policy proposal. It's common for the committee members to hear from the member, chapter or division that submitted the resolution, which helps the committee to better understand the intent of the proposal. Committees may hold joint meetings with a different resource committee to consider proposals that, in true League style, defy categorization and span multiple conservation challenges.

Proposed resolutions approved by resource committees and the Resolutions Committee are considered and voted on by the broader membership at the annual convention.

Decline in Participation Jeopardizes the Process

Changes in recent years have made it easier for any member to participate during a resource committee meeting and serve as part of the League's governance system. Yet, over the past few years the number of Ikes serving on resource committees has seriously declined.

"In the 2023 cycle, many of our committees operated with well under half of the number of participants that they had even five or six years ago," said League conservation director Jared Mott. "That's a huge problem when it comes to developing policies that reflect the priorities of the League's broad membership and many other Americans."

Easy, Impactful Solution: Join Up

Fortunately, this problem is solvable. Every League member is eligible to join a resource committee, and stepping into that role is one of the easiest—and most impactful—things an Ike can do to advance the League's mission.

As Dale Braun, chair of the Resolutions Committee, put it, "Helping shape the League's

HOW TO GET STARTED

Joining a committee takes just a few minutes. Simply go to [iwla.org/committee](https://www.iwla.org/committee) to learn about the eight resource committees and indicate which ones interest you the most.

Each Izaak Walton League chapter also depends on volunteers who lend their time and talents to operating a great organization. There are many ways to get involved whether occasionally helping with projects or serving as a point of contact for the national organization on key issues such as shooting sports or youth engagement.

policies is one of the most rewarding paths a member can take toward securing a stronger outdoor America. By joining a resource committee, any League member can step up to help defend our soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife. It's also a great way to meet fellow Ikes and get involved with the national organization."

Being involved with a resource committee typically requires just a few hours in an entire year: attendance at one or two virtual meetings, plus time to review proposed policies before discussing them with colleagues.

Yet a resolution, once adopted, becomes League policy, and it plays a role every day in guiding the organization's work. That's a powerful legacy.

"Joining a resource committee is a simple way to get involved with the League beyond just your chapter," Mott says. "The time commitment is minimal, but the importance to our mission can't be overstated."

Treasures and Tragedy of the Upper Mississippi

By CHRIS JONES



The Upper Mississippi River at the Minnesota-Wisconsin border.

Next year, we will remember the creation of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, which the Izaak Walton League forged in 1924. The League leveraged its growing membership and influence to convince Congress, the White House and four states to set aside the rich wetlands along the river. But as noted water expert Chris Jones explains, many challenges remain. Here is his take on the Mississippi, past and present.

The Upper Mississippi's hydrology and water quality have suffered from the onslaught of civilization and modern agriculture for two centuries. While polluted water can be sourced back to various human activities, disturbed hydrology can multiply pollution's deleterious effects for sensitive species.

It's hard to see the river maintaining status quo without robust intervention by state and federal government.

Cleanup of industrial and municipal wastewater discharges began in 1938 when the Minneapolis-St. Paul wastewater treatment plant was completed, and the Clean Water Act of 1972 regulated these "point" sources at the national scale. The law, however, left most "non-point" source pollution from agricultural and urban runoff unregulated, although rules governing urban runoff have been in place for

about 20 years for cities with a population greater than 10,000.

Although it's fair to say that the river's water quality has improved in many respects since 1972, nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) pollution

from agriculture is likely as bad as it's ever been, especially that which is sourced back to nitrogen fertilizers.



The upper river can send south nearly 1.5 billion pounds of nitrogen from row crop and animal agriculture in an average year. This helps feed nuisance algae blooms in the river itself and downstream in the Gulf of Mexico, where a “dead zone” forms every year because oxygen is depleted by the dying algae. The Izaak Walton League has launched a program to monitor nitrate pollution nationwide—Nitrate Watch. This is a grassroots effort to get citizens engaged in the science of water quality.

About any water pollutant you can think of is present at some level in the Upper Mississippi—heavy metals, *E. coli* bacteria, PCBs, pesticides, and maybe most importantly, the emerging contaminants in the PFAS “forever chemical” family. That all being said, if the Upper Mississippi were an interior warm-water stream in states like Iowa, it would be the very best in terms of overall water quality, and this by a

WHAT IS THE DRIFTLESS AREA?

The Driftless is arguably the most scenic part of the U.S. Midwest, and it’s fair to say the bluffland beauty that encloses the Upper Miss compares favorably with anything America has to offer. It’s an oasis in a corn desert for Midwesterners thirsting for natural scenery, and one of the few places of such beauty that remains undiscovered by the crowds that sometimes plague places like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon.

In geology, “drift” refers to all the debris transported and deposited by glaciers and their meltwater, and this glacial garbage can be as much as 500 feet thick in the states of the Upper Mississippi River basin: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri.

Glaciers spread drift across the landscape like peanut butter on an English muffin, masking surface roughness and leaving much of the landscape approximately level and ideal for crop farming. Little of the region was left untouched by glacial ice, save a roughly oval piece of plain muffin we call “The Driftless” that straddles the Mississippi River from Red Wing, Minnesota, down to Clinton, Iowa.

In truth, driftless is a misnomer for the Iowa and Minnesota portions, as only the Wisconsin and some of the Illinois side is completely without drift. But the effects of glaciation were small enough and long enough ago west of the river that erosion has made the Iowa and Minnesota portions look much like the rest, giving it all a common natural and cultural identity. Thankfully, the geologists have not insisted that those west of the river become incongruent with the purebred Driftlessians.

long shot. By that I mean to say the interior rivers and streams in Iowa are in really bad shape.

Can the river's disturbed but somewhat acceptable condition endure future stressors? Climate-change-driven flow extremes, more navigation infrastructure, intensification of agriculture and invasive species like Asian carp will degrade the river—for the aquatic life, recreation and municipal water supply. It's hard to see the river maintaining status quo without robust intervention by state and federal government.

Still an Oasis

Today, the Upper Mississippi refuge is still an oasis for fish and wildlife and worthy of celebration during its 100th

anniversary in 2024. And it sits in the middle of the Driftless Area, which has its own unique ecosystems, geography and history.

The League's first national president, Will Dilg, loved the Upper Miss and claimed to fish there at least 60 days every year. He regarded efforts to drain and farm what's known as the Winneshiek bottomlands as the "Drainage Crime of the Century."



To represent the human equivalent of the animal waste produced in Iowa, you would have to add up all of these cities, states, and countries and put them in Iowa.

Your right to enjoy nature, and especially clean water, should not be debased by the fact that you're surrounded by farmable land.

He said this of the river: "The Upper Mississippi bottoms are America's most prolific spawning grounds for black bass and for all warm-water game and food fishes.... Nowhere on this earth are there such natural feeding grounds for ducks, brant and geese. Here also are found every species of our four-footed little animals, such as mink, muskrat, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, swamp rabbit, etc.

"And last but not least, every kind of songbird by the countless thousands. Veritably, these river lands offer you and your boy and posterity the greatest sport to be found on this planet."

In this region, the Mississippi River sloughs around Lansing, Iowa, and DeSoto, Wisconsin, a place known as the Winneshiek Bottoms.

That area is now part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge that was saved (barely) from agriculture's insatiable appetite for land by the two-year-old Izaak

Walton League in 1924, the second big conservation win for the nascent organization. (The first was preventing road construction into the Superior National Forest of Minnesota.)

Although Dilg and the League helped save the Winneshiek Bottoms from drainage, the area wasn't spared from flooding. Much of the bottomland was inundated when the river was made suitable for navigation by the modern lock and dam system. Nonetheless, the League's efforts left a great legacy: only three percent of the floodplain above Rock Island, Illinois, is farmed. Below Rock Island: 50 percent.

Indigenous History Echoes through the Region

Names like Winneshiek and Blackhawk are familiar to Iowans mainly because they were attached to two of our counties. Numerous places, schools, sports teams, military weapons and even a community college and a country club bear the Blackhawk name. The iconic Blackhawk Bridge, made famous by the movie *The Straight Story*, is one of a series of four bridges that span the Mississippi.

But the Mississippi's Iowa-Wisconsin river

corridor is also where Sauk Chief Blackhawk was defeated in 1832, opening Iowa to white settlement. Blackhawk's people had crossed the river into what is now Wisconsin, violating a treaty they misunderstood, to access their traditional summering ground. U.S. troops drove women and children of Blackhawk's tribe into the Mississippi, where they drowned near what is now the tiny village of Victory, Wisconsin, so named to commemorate the U.S. conquest.

Winnebago Chief Winneshiek (Coming Thunder) was an advisor and confidante of Blackhawk whose people occupied areas of northeast Iowa and southwest Wisconsin, and they were known to have encampments along the Upper Iowa River. Winneshiek was asked to side with U.S. troops in the Blackhawk War; he refused.

The river town of DeSoto, Wisconsin, is thought to have been built upon the burial ground of Winneshiek's tribe, and Winneshiek himself is rumored to have been buried on the bluff that overlooks the DeSoto, aptly named Mount Winneshiek.

Non-Farmers in a "Farm State"

I think a lot these days how these events are relevant to my own life. My ancestors were among those that poured into an Iowa made "open" by Blackhawk's defeat. They farmed in the counties of Des Moines, Davis and Wapello (another Native American chief) in southeast Iowa, and Warren County in south central Iowa. My uncle had a museum-quality collection of Native American artifacts unearthed by his uncle's plow in Davis County.

I sometimes wonder if fate might have had me farming now, had my ancestors been better at it. I now reside in an old Amish cabin on the edge of DeSoto, Wisconsin, although I'm still pretty much anchored in Iowa City.

Farmers proudly boast that they are the 5th or 6th or Nth generation of their family to earn a living off their patch of Iowa. "Never sell the home section" is a deathbed command made by many to their heirs across the generations, a concept foreign to the peoples of Blackhawk and Winneshiek.

I too am a 5th or 6th generation Iowan, and I see my rights as a non-farming citizen as being

no different from those that farm. And whether your genes have been in Iowa for two hours or two centuries, I think your right to enjoy nature, and especially clean water, should not be debased by the fact that you're surrounded by farmable land.

It's not uncommon to hear some variation of "we're a farm state, get used to it." I reject that. And I think if the state is to have a prosperous future, this outlook needs to be rejected by the masses.

I can sit in my humble little cabin and see the Iowa bluffs and the Blackhawk Bridge from seven miles away, the latter especially at night when it is decoratively lit. I wish I could put into words the irony I feel in being able to look up from typing this and see my home state from afar. If you've never seen the Blackhawk Bridge, I suggest you plan a trip to Lansing because it will soon be gone and replaced with something better.

The beauty of this Driftless Area and especially the Upper Mississippi have endured, thanks in no small part to the Izaak Walton League. Hopefully, we and our leaders will continue to have the good sense to recognize the value it brings to the Midwest and America.



Chris Jones is author of The Swine Republic: Struggles with the Truth about Agriculture and Water, published by Ice Cube Press. Until recently Jones was a Research Engineer with IIHR-Hydroscience & Engineering at the University of Iowa. He holds a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from Montana State and a B.A. in chemistry and biology from Simpson College. Previous career stops include the Des Moines Water Works and the Iowa Soybean Association.

NATIONAL HUNTING & FISHING DAY

HUNT • SHOOT • FISH

TAKE THE PLEDGE

to introduce someone to
hunting, fishing, or shooting.

The Izaak Walton League is a proud 2023 sponsor.
Many League chapters hosted events to introduce
the public to hunting, fishing and conservation.



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NSSF
The Firearm Industry
Trade Association



Cabela's

Jimmy Herring
WONDERS OF WILDLIFE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM & AQUARIUM



2022 Izaak Walton League of America

Combined balance sheet and statement of activities and changes in net assets for the year ending December 31, 2022.

PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions and Grants	648,892.00
Grants from Federal and State Governments	66,225.00
Member Dues	1,489,365.00
Investment Income, Net	58,109.00
Charitable Remainder Unitrust	(353,948.00)
Rental Income	485,492.00
In-Kind Services	391,823.00
Other	79,153.00
Total Public Support and Revenue	2,865,111.00

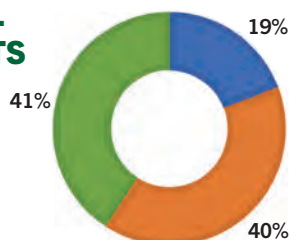
EXPENSES: CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION

Conservation	678,356.00
Membership	407,549.00
"Outdoor America"	207,783.00
Annual National Convention	190,221.00
Chapter Relations	153,262.00
Communications and Media	306,313.00
Water	564,870.00
Agriculture	289,302.00
Missouri River Initiative	111,284.00
100th Anniversary	141,663.00
Total Program Services	2,908,940.00
Supporting and Planning Services	
Management and General	371,294.00
Fundraising	256,563.00
Total Supporting and Planning Services	769,520.00
Total Expenses	3,678,460.00
Changes in Net Assets from Operations	(813,349.00)
Unrealized (Loss) Gain on Investments	(454,619.00)
Changes in Net Assets	(1,267,968.00)
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	11,029,828.00
Net Assets, End of Year	9,761,860.00

BALANCE SHEET

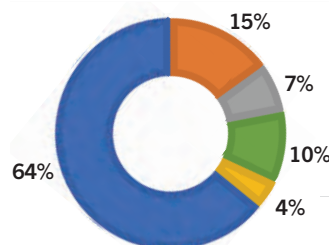
Assets	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,934,562.00
Grants Receivables	22,021.00
Contributions and Other Receivables	3,302.00
Rent Receivable	20,156.00
Prepaid Expenses	76,030.00
Property and Equipment, Net	964,754.00
Investments	3,909,475.00
Rent Receivable, Net Current Portion	91,437.00
Charitable Remainder Unitrust	2,983,276.00
Total Assets	10,005,013.00
Liabilities and Net Assets	
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable and Other	111,769.00
Accrued Expenses	103,407.00
Refundable Advances	-
Security Deposits	27,975.00
Total Liabilities	243,153.00
Net Assets	
Without Donor Restriction	4,743,562.00
With Donor Restriction	5,018,298.00
Total Net Assets	9,761,860.00
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	10,005,013.00

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



REVENUE

■ Contributions and Grants
■ Member Dues
■ Rent and Other Income



USE OF FUNDS

■ Conservation and Education
■ Membership and Chapter Relations
■ Fundraising
■ Support and Planning
■ 100th Anniversary Activities

Purple Martin Story Inspires Award-Winning Student Project

By MARK MOSELEY

Over the past few years, some of my students at Herndon Elementary School in Virginia have built and maintained purple martin nesting towers at our school grounds and also at a nearby park. This team of students was inspired by Mike Bishop's *Outdoor America* article, "Purple Martins: A Species that Depends on People," (2021, issue 4).

Through that idea, our students discovered an authentic environmental problem they wanted to solve.

Students discovered an authentic environmental problem they wanted to solve.

This student team developed and entered a purple martin proposal into the Caring for Our Watershed competition for the Chesapeake Bay region—and took a first place. On top of that, the proposal was adopted as the international idea for the 2022–

23 school year and received full funding from sponsors Earth Force and Nutrien. Purple martin towers will be installed in Caring for Our Watershed regions internationally.

To help these birds thrive in other



The Herndon Elementary student team won an award for their purple martin project.

communities, we are now expanding the idea to assist others in building nesting towers. We are excited to continue to work with other schools along the birds' migratory path to manage the towers. Mike Bishop, an Izaak Walton League member in Virginia, continues to support our students with this project.

As a teacher, I'm extremely proud of the way my students owned this project from the beginning. Some of their own observations follow.

Students Reflect on the Project

Emma F.

After we started the Purple Martin Project, I have been more attentive to types of birds and endangered species. Before this project, I never saw or recognized purple martins, European starlings and house sparrows. Now I can recognize the sound and look of purple martins flying above their tower. They bring me joy to see at our school.

Every time I see them I think: "We made a difference." Purple martins now fly high above our school, thanks to us.

When I was little, I thought only older people could make a difference. Thanks to the Caring for Our Watershed contest and this project, my view has shifted. Kids can make a difference too.

Mia T.

With my experience, I learned things like respecting [the birds'] homes and how to take care



of everything they need. I got inspired by Mike Bishop's article, "Purple martins: A species that depends on people." He talks about how purple martins' homes are getting invaded by house sparrows and European starlings. We have seen at least four purple martins at our tower! I have learned so much working with the purple martin group!

Meaghan

From this year and the one before, my experience from the purple martins has been great. I have learned more about wildlife than just the purple martins. I have also met new people and worked along the way with them over the two years I have worked with the Eco Bees [the school's environmental club]. The group is a great opportunity to learn about wildlife and the journey of the purple martins.

When I was little, I thought only older people could make a difference.

Emmett D.

With my experience, I have learned to respect wildlife and their habitats even more than I did before. I find it fascinating that the purple martins have found ways to survive even with the continuous loss of habitat. If society wants the purple martins to come back stronger than ever before, we must play a vital role in the process. It is my hope that more people get involved in the purple martin initiative.



Inspired by an article by a League member in *Outdoor America*, students established and maintained a purple martin nesting tower.

Mark Moseley is a teacher at Herndon Elementary School in Northern Virginia.

HOW TO GET STARTED

If you are interested in becoming a martin landlord, the Purple Martin Conservation Association (www.purplemartin.org) has a wonderful website with useful information on martins and establishing a colony. The website includes a list of local or regional mentors who are glad to answer questions. Purple martin colonies require maintenance to

ensure they remain clean for every nesting season. The gourds are plastic and have a cleaning port. The steel or aluminum poles have racks that hold multiple individual gourds. The racks are affixed to a cable and pulley so they can raise and lower the gourds with a winch, which makes it easy to clean and maintain them. The gourds have an entry

hole designed to allow martins but prevent starlings from nesting—usually a crescent-shaped hole rather than a round hole typically found on bird houses. Setting up and maintaining a purple martin colony offers a rewarding conservation project for Izaak Walton League chapters, schools, Scouts or master naturalist programs.



The Future of Conservation.....

Conservation from the bottom up: How we can all support a richer world

By ELIZABETH D. HILBORN

We've lived on our family farm in central North Carolina for decades. When we first arrived, we cleared the invasive vines and brush that had grown up unnoticed at the edges of the forest, and along surveyor and fence lines.

Then, in addition to our orchard and vegetable gardens, we planted native fruit- and nut-bearing plants across the land. We didn't know then how our efforts would pay off. But over the years, we watched as plants grew and wildlife populations increased. Today, those plants have become valuable habitat and provide food for wildlife of all sizes.

I described one experience in my book, *Restoring Eden*:

One night, in our early years at the farm, I learned to appreciate the multitude of small life from a lesson delivered by a peach tree in full bloom on a fine spring night.

As I approached the tree, I found it altered—the deep pink blossoms appeared pearly white under a full moon. Peach flowers shimmered with the fluttering of hundreds of moths—so many shapes and sizes. Backlit wings glowed in moonlight. The moths fed silently upon the peach blossom nectar and pollinated the tree in the process.

During those first years, I didn't understand or appreciate the breadth of the work that insects do to provide us food, but now I know.

Those of us with memories spanning decades may remember how insects once covered cars after nighttime drives. Today, many of us may notice how we now have fewer fireflies and butterflies in summer. Fewer insects mean less insect food to nourish animals and fewer plants that are able to reproduce.

I've seen how my own gardens and orchard struggled, how birds, bats and other animals left our community when insect populations dwindled.



A silver spotted skipper visits an apple blossom.

Support helpful insects with simple actions

Plant native trees, shrubs and flowers where possible. Filling pots with pesticide-free plants can add habitat.

Leave wild and dense areas of native plants where possible to do so. Even small areas can provide life-saving refuge for helpful insects to feed and nest.

- Mow natural meadows once a year after flowering plants have set seed for the season. Flowering plants support wildlife of all sizes.
- Leave brush piles and dead trees standing (where it is safe to do so) to provide housing for insects and birds.
- Avoid using pesticides as they do not only kill pests, but many helpful insects too.
- Retain forest and trees where possible and let natural leaf cover persist to enrich soil as mulch and to serve as butterfly and firefly nurseries.

Small changes we make at home add up to make a big difference.

Small changes we make at home add up to make a big difference. The more we can help insects survive during these changing times, the more we help ourselves, as well as the plants and animals with which we share the planet. Preserving our helpful insects will provide a resilient base to support us all during the challenges of the 21st century.

Elizabeth D. Hilborn, DVM, is a honeybee veterinarian, a fruit grower, environmental scientist and author of Restoring Eden: Unearthing the Agribusiness Secret That Poisoned My Farming Community. elizabethhilborn.com.



Helpful in the garden, assassin bugs eat flies, mosquitos, roaches, aphids and other insects.

DID YOU KNOW:

- Insects are the most abundant animals on earth with an estimated five million species.
- Most insects help humans, animals, and the environment; only about one percent of all insect species are considered pests.
- Pollinating insects support about 75 percent of flowering plants on earth; these include beetles, bees, butterflies, flies and wasps.
- Insects support the web of life and feed many animals including important game animals such as birds and fish.
- Insects recycle waste and help create fertile soil.
- Helpful insects such as wasps, assassin bugs and lady beetles control pest insects.
- We've lost many of our flying and other insects at an unprecedented rate in recent decades.

AWARD-WINNING IKES

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 individuals and organizations who made a difference in 2022.

NATIONAL AWARDS

54 Founders Award

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



Wes Sheets (Nebraska): Wes has been engaged with wildlife and fisheries conservation issues and has shared his expertise with other members while holding various leadership positions at the chapter, division and national levels. He has served on various resource committees, as well as with the

Executive Board and the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment. This longtime Ike from the Lincoln Chapter spent a three-decade career in state government, retiring as assistant director of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Wes has spent a lifetime promoting the mission of the League, conservation of our natural resources and youth engagement in the outdoors.

Stanford M. Adams Memorial Award for League Leadership

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



James D. Storer (Ohio): A Family Life Benefactor member from Willoughby, Ohio, Jim served as a national director beginning in 2010 and was elected national secretary in 2013. Having served in this leadership position for over a decade, he kept timely and accurate records for the Executive Board

and provided valuable research of chapter records to help formulate reasonable solutions to many issues facing national League leadership.

Hall of Fame Award

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



Robert Blosser (West Virginia):

A League member of 35 years, Bob has held multiple local, state and now national leadership positions. This West Virginia national director has led the Monongalia County Chapter's local stream monitoring, youth conservation education, roadside litter clean-up and

community food drive efforts.



Robert J. Pavlick, Sr. (Maryland):

As a national director, Bob served as parliamentarian at many national conventions and midwinter board meetings. He's a past chapter president of Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter who helped form the Izaak Walton Cottage Chapter in England.



Jim Piatieski (Maryland): Jim's leadership contributions have gone well beyond his service at his chapter, as a division president and as a national director. He is currently chair of the Executive Board. During his years with the League, he has worked on many significant, long-term reforestation projects

within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



Richard C. Staffon (Minnesota):

A former W. J. McCabe Chapter president and newsletter editor, Richard currently serves on his chapter's and the Minnesota Division's board of directors. His major continuing contributions focus on research in support of proposed conservation policy

resolutions and crafting and presenting public testimony at local government hearings.



Ted Suss (Minnesota): A former state legislator, Ted is well known statewide for his conservation activism. His many League accomplishments include serving as division president and reviving the Minnesota Valley Chapter. He has helped to create the innovative Green Crew youth group and has championed the preservation and sustainable use of the Minnesota River basin.

Conservation Award

Recognizes member contributions to conservation in the name of the League.



David Besterman (Indiana): David's contribution to conservation taps his engineering skills to support and improve the Porter County Chapter's use of technology when monitoring bat and moth activities.



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



Kurt Feldmann (Maryland): For many years, Kurt helped lead the conservation efforts of three different Maryland chapters. He later spearheaded and currently manages the Izaak Walton League-branded vehicle license plates program.



Rod Frost (Nebraska): As an active member of the Fremont Chapter for over 50 years, Rod has been involved as a leader over the years in organizing many conservation projects and outdoor educational activities—ranging from tree plantings to youth fishing days.



Carol Henderson (Minnesota): A retired wildlife biologist from the Walter J. Breckenridge Chapter, Carol is a determined leader with a successful history of fighting for the protection of Minnesota's non-game wildlife.



Phillip Mariscal (Maryland): Phil trains and leads monitoring efforts in a stream adjacent to the Rockville Chapter and represents this chapter at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources bass management hearings.



Luann Noll (Illinois): Most recently from the Chicago No. 1 Chapter, Luann served multiple roles within the Illinois Division. Notable work includes support for the Giant Goose Education Workshop and the Black Partridge Forest Preservation and establishing her chapter's successful conservation education project, "Kids in the Woods."



Bill and Margarete Schmoldt (Illinois): This long-overdue posthumous recognition of Bill and Margarete is for their valued support of and participation in the conservation advocacy work of the Elgin Chapter.



Joe Walther (Maryland): As a key participant in the modernization of the Rockville Chapter's Wood Duck Nesting Box Project, Joe helps to maintain 75 nesting boxes and monitors nesting success in the Potomac River watershed.

AWARD-WINNING IKES



John Wheeler (South Dakota): As the Sioux Falls Chapter's bug expert, John is a great asset to the chapter by promoting biological macroinvertebrate testing and supporting regional clean water conservation practices.



Tyler Winter (Minnesota): From the Walter J. Breckenridge Chapter, Tyler has provided expertise in support of Minnesota's efforts to conserve and manage bigmouth buffalo fish. His work has had a major impact on native non-game fisheries regionally and nationally.

Save Our Streams Award

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



Grace Kann (Iowa): A member of the Linn County Chapter, Grace is a dedicated stream monitor and water quality advocate. A recent graduate from Cornell College with a degree in environmental science and sustainability, she has conducted clean water outreach presentations to teachers, assisted in SOS training and helped develop the League's Nitrate Watch program.



Colleen Miltenberger (Indiana): As the Michigan City Chapter #7 conservation issues chair, Colleen leads their Save Our Streams program, acquiring water monitoring and testing equipment and supplies and engaging the local community to organize and conduct monthly stream clean-ups.



Edgar "Butch" Morris (Virginia): A retired biology teacher, Butch has been the driving force behind the Fredericksburg-Rappahannock Chapter's Save Our Streams and Creek Freaks efforts. He has volunteered untold hours monitoring stream health in various watersheds and submitting data to

the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, as well as organizing tabling events that promote clean water and educating youth.

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" future League leader.



Joseph Barisonzi (Minnesota): Joe is recognized for his many volunteer hours with the Minnesota Valley Chapter engaging youth in conservation projects, educational efforts and community service through their Green Crew and for his commitment to leadership development at the chapter and the Minnesota Division.

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.



Camille Morton (Minnesota): Under Camille's leadership as a high school student, her chapter achieved success with many community-based conservation projects as part of the Minnesota Valley Chapter's inspiring new youth project—the Green Crew.

Honor Roll Award

Recognizes outstanding accomplishments in conservation, public education and/or publicity in keeping with the League's goals by a non-member individual or organization.



Jim Louderman (Illinois): As the collections assistant for insects at the Field Museum of Chicago, Jim has informed and educated countless youth groups, schools and environmental groups over three decades, including Izaak Walton League chapters.



Steve Moyer (Virginia): Throughout his career with Trout Unlimited, Steve has worked with the League as a dedicated advocate for clean water, healthy ecosystems and strong fisheries. As TU's vice president for government affairs, his support has had a positive effect in furthering the League's mission.



Poolesville High School Global Ecology Program (Maryland): This popular educational program provides students at this magnet school with knowledge and understanding of the scientific, cultural, political, economic and technological conditions that affect the quality of life on our planet. As a partner, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter has supported and worked in conjunction with these efforts to provide environmental education.

Shooting Sports Award

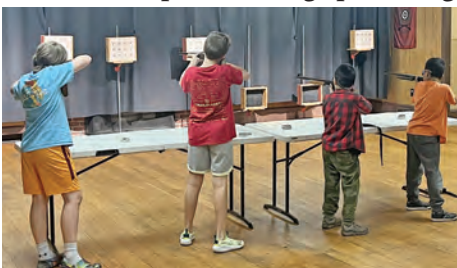
Presented to individuals, groups or organizations judged to have done outstanding work to promote shooting sports.



Harrisburg Tiger Trap Shooting Club (South Dakota): This non-profit group supports training and skills development and youth trap shooting competition for students from two high schools in the Sioux Falls area. With 155

young shotgunners, it has grown to become the largest youth shooting club in the United States. The club partners with the Sioux Falls Chapter to help maintain facilities, with many youth and adult coaches eventually becoming members.

Rockville Chapter Shooting Sports Program (Maryland):



The chapter provides a record-setting number and variety of firearms training classes and shooting opportunities

for the public as well as members. Annually, they host eight types of NRA training classes, Maryland Department of Natural Resources hunter safety-education courses and a

National Shooting Sports Month event each August. They sponsor junior air rifle and pistol, BB-gun and archery training programs, and also offer muzzleloader, rifle and pistol competition leagues.



Norb Ruhland (South Dakota): From the McCook Lake Chapter, Norb was instrumental in the creation and ongoing expansion of a new archery range located in the nearby Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve. As a key instructor, he organizes family night, ladies' night and senior night archery

programs at this state park near North Sioux City. Over the last five years, these programs have reached more than 400 people of all ages—providing them with a new skill and hobby that all can enjoy.

Arthur R. Thompson Memorial Award

Recognizes division accomplishments in conservation.



Minnesota Division: In collaboration with the 16 chapters, the Minnesota Division contributes to conservation efforts across the state with clean water work on several major tributaries and as a key stakeholder in the Upper Mississippi River Initiative. Through their newsletter, the division supports and promotes their chapters' local natural resources conservation and educational activities. They assist their chapters in the use of the Defenders Chapter Achievement Award criteria as a guide for success. In recent years, Minnesota has had more chapter recipients than any other state.

James Lawton Childs Award

Recognizes chapter accomplishments in conservation.

Small Chapter (less than 500 members)

Porter County Chapter (Indiana): For years, this chapter's top priority has been protecting the Indiana Dunes National Park and protecting the waters of Lake Michigan. However, more recently their conservation education efforts have included family nature night events, bat monitoring and habitat projects and promoting awareness about the pollution hazards of storm water runoff.

AWARD-WINNING IKES

Large Chapter (more than 500 members)

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter (Maryland): The chapter lives up to the motto displayed on their entrance sign: “Conservation Is Our Mission.” Their conservation activities have included invasive species removal, an American chestnut tree farm, waterways monitoring, pollinator gardens, bird counts and habitat improvement. The chapter also works on adopt-a-highway roadside clean-ups, pond fish and wildlife management, farmland soil conservation, interpretive nature trails and wildlife studies. The chapter engages area youth and the general public as well as chapter families in wildlife observation, fishing, hunting and conservation projects related to agriculture and forests.

Robert C. O’Hair Award

Recognizes outstanding chapter youth programs.

Small Chapter (less than 500 members)

Minnesota Valley Chapter (Minnesota): In early 2022, this chapter located in Bloomington formed a specialized, co-ed Scouting Venturing Crew Unit. Better known as the Green Crew, they are focused on youth leadership development and conservation action. Many of their efforts, such as invasive species removal, water quality testing, trail restoration and reforestation, included local residents. In the short period of time, their many efforts have involved over 2,000 youth and community members.

Large Chapter (more than 500 members)

Rockville Chapter (Maryland): The chapter continued its popular Youth Conservation Group in 2022 with more than 100 children—ages 4 and up—who participated, and their Save Our Streams activities reached 30 children and their parents. Their Annual Autumn Nature Hike reached dozens more. The chapter presented six \$2,000 Thomas Warren Fisher Memorial Scholarships to local students for college study and sponsored more than a dozen \$25 cash awards for competing 4-Hers at the county fair. They helped local high school students with conservation-related projects to meet student service learning hour requirements. They hosted a youth-oriented approach to National Hunting and Fishing Day, and sponsored Boy Scout and Girl Scout units.

Best Division Newsletter

Based on appearance, originality, timeliness, and local chapters’ news coverage, including national news and conservation issues.

Maryland Waltonian: The Maryland Division is recognized for its continued quality communication efforts. Information about recent and upcoming local chapter, state division and national events appears often. The newsletter is mailed to all members in Maryland to further inform them about state and national conservation issues.

Best Chapter Newsletter

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

Small Chapter (less than 500 members)

Izaak Walton News and Views: Published by the Sioux Falls Chapter (South Dakota), this newsletter is very informative and includes articles on local and regional natural resources conservation issues. Contributions, including photographs, are welcomed by the editor. It is published and emailed on a regular basis and is funded, in part, through paid advertising.

Large Chapter (more than 500 members)

B-CC IWLA Monthly Newsletter: This informative monthly publication is distributed via email and posted online by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter (Maryland). Articles on conservation topics written by various chapter members and chapter events are often the main feature. The chapter calendar provides details of upcoming events and project workdays are just a few of the published highlights.

Best Chapter Website

Based on appearance, originality, timeliness, and news coverage.

Sioux Falls Chapter (South Dakota): Much like its award-winning newsletter, this local chapter website (www.sfikes.org) is informative, colorful and easy to navigate. Information about the chapter and the League is readily accessible. Chapter activities are often profiled, membership requirements are spelled out, and there is an eye-catching, up-to-date calendar of events. It is a thoughtfully organized and user-friendly website.

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.

John C. Gregory Award

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

Virginia Division: With a net increase of 121 new members in 2022.

Membership Achievement Awards

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

Greatest Net Gain

Lynchburg Chapter (Virginia) with a net gain of 169 members.

Greatest Percent Increase

Chicago No. 1 Chapter (Illinois) with an 80 percent increase.

Membership Merit Awards

Recognizes membership growth based on chapter size.

50 and Under Members Net Gain:

Bon Homme County Chapter (South Dakota)

Percent Increase (Tied):

Bon Homme County Chapter (South Dakota)

Cypress Chapter (Florida)

51 to 250 Members Net Gain:

Minnesota Valley Chapter (Minnesota)

Percent Increase:

Chicago No. 1 Chapter (Illinois)

251 to 500 Members Net Gain and

Percent Increase:

Arlington-Fairfax Juniors Chapter (Virginia)

501 and Over Members Net Gain and

Percent Increase:

Lynchburg Chapter (Virginia)

110-Percent Awards

These chapters grew by 10 percent or more in 2022.

California

Fullerton

Florida

Cypress

Georgia

Greater Atlanta

Idaho

Caldwell

Illinois

Chicago No. 1

Des Plaines

Havana

Indiana

Diana

Grant County

Miami

Iowa

Wapsi Valley

Minnesota

Cass County

Minnesota Valley

Nebraska

Columbus

Crete

Thayer County

Ohio

Buckeye State Youth

Cincinnati

Fremont

Headwaters

Lorain County - Ely

Seven Mile

Tallawanda

South Dakota

Beadle County

Bon Homme County

Rosebud

Yankton Area

Virginia

Arlington-Fairfax Juniors

Lynchburg

Prince William

West Virginia

Monongalia County

Wisconsin

Manitowoc

Southern Brown County

Southwestern Wisconsin

Defenders Chapter Achievement Awards

The following chapters received this annual recognition for their 2022 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)

Austin (Minnesota)

Berkeley County

(West Virginia)

Bethesda-Chevy Chase

(Maryland)

Bill Cook (Wisconsin)

Brown County (Wisconsin)

Bush Lake (Minnesota)

Cass County (Minnesota)

Central New York

(New York)

Des Moines (Iowa)

Dwight Lydell (Michigan)

Elgin (Illinois)

Frederick #1 (Maryland)

Fredericksburg-

Rappahannock (Virginia)

Grand Island (Nebraska) *

Hamilton (Ohio)

Kampeska (South Dakota)

Lincoln (Nebraska)

Linn County (Iowa)

Lois Green-Sligo

(Maryland)

Loudoun County (Virginia)

McCook Lake

(South Dakota) *

Mid-Shore (Maryland)

Minnesota Valley

(Minnesota)

Mountaineer

(West Virginia)

New London (Minnesota)

New Ulm #79 (Minnesota)

Owatonna (Minnesota)

Prairie Woods (Minnesota)

Rochester (Minnesota)

Rockville (Maryland)

Sioux Falls (South Dakota)

Sportsman's (Maryland)

Sunshine (South Dakota) *

Tiffin-Seneca County

(Ohio)

W.J. McCabe (Minnesota)

Walter J. Breckenridge

(Minnesota)

Warren County (Iowa)

Warren County (Virginia) *

Wayne County (Ohio)

Wes Libby-Northern Lakes

(Minnesota)

Wildlife Achievement

(Maryland) *

Will Dilg (Minnesota)

York #67 (Pennsylvania)

*** 20th consecutive year!**



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.

Become a volunteer scientist with Creek Critters

There's a whole world of critters in our streams! Find and identify the critters below to discover what they can tell us about the health of our water. The Creek Critters app is a great way to try out biological monitoring (for both kids and adults), generate a stream health score, and, best of all, your results can help educate your community about the health of the stream.

- 1 Download the free Creek Critters app, developed in partnership with Nature Forward, to your Apple or Android device by visiting: www.iwla.org/creekcritters.
- 2 Click "Collect" or "Identify Critters."
- 3 Follow simple step-by-step instructions to collect and identify critters in your stream. The app creates a Stream Health Score based on your findings.
- 4 Automatically share your score on the Clean Water Hub, the Izaak Walton League's national water quality monitoring website!



To learn more and get started, visit www.iwla.org/creekcritters.





LAST LOOK

**“You don’t have to save biodiversity for a living,
but you can save it where you live!”**

*— Doug Tallamy, presentation at the Izaak Walton League
national convention, Lincoln, Neb. 2023*

**Photo: Meadow at Izaak Walton League headquarters
in Gaithersburg, Md.**



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NITRATE:

A THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND WATER QUALITY

When excess nitrate from sources like fertilizer and animal waste ends up in waterways, human health and the environment are put at risk. High levels of nitrate in streams and lakes causes algae blooms, fish kills, and the formation of dead zones. In drinking water, nitrate contamination is linked to health conditions like blue baby syndrome, thyroid disease, colon cancer, and birth defects.

Nitrate Watch volunteers are documenting nitrate pollution and advocating for solutions nationwide.
YOU can join them!

HOW TO GET STARTED:

- 1** Request a **free** kit at www.NitrateWatch.org
 - 2** Collect nitrate readings at the lake, stream, or drinking water source of your choosing
 - 3** Upload your results to our national database, the Clean Water Hub
 - 4** Share your findings with your community!
-  Pay it forward! Visit iwla.org/NitrateSponsor to sponsor a kit and help us reach even more clean water advocates!

