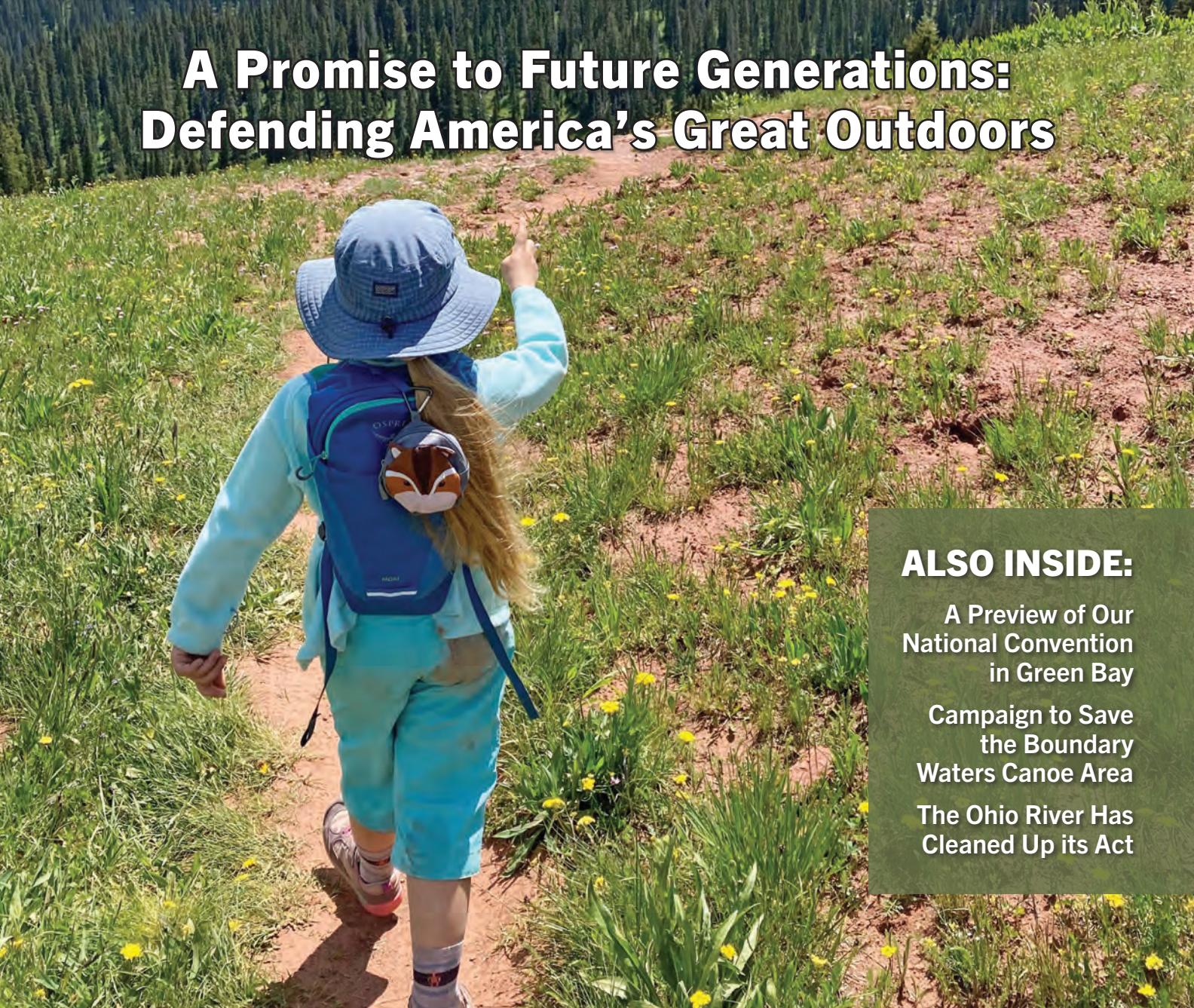


OUTDOOR AMERICA

PUBLISHED BY THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

2025 ISSUE 2

**A Promise to Future Generations:
Defending America's Great Outdoors**



ALSO INSIDE:

A Preview of Our
National Convention
in Green Bay

Campaign to Save
the Boundary
Waters Canoe Area

The Ohio River Has
Cleaned Up its Act



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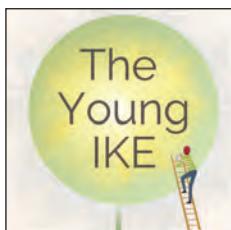
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A young hiker in Colorado.
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Green Bay
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Critical Need to Defend America's Great Outdoors

JODI LABS | National President

The theme for the 2025 national convention is "Defending America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations." More than 100 years ago, the founders of the League adopted the motto "defenders of woods, waters and wildlife," reflecting their commitment to conserving natural resources and preserving special places. These members also championed conservation because they understood that a healthy environment was essential to hunting, fishing, paddling and other outdoor recreation they—and so many other Americans—enjoyed.

Being part of a community that cherishes traditions and loves to celebrate champions, the **Brown County Chapter** wanted to build off the long-established traditions of the League as well as celebrate the natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities that we are so blessed with here in Green Bay and Northeast Wisconsin.

I also find the theme for this year's convention to be very appropriate in light of the current administration's efforts to slash both regulations and budgets for conservation. As our federal

government seeks to remove the protections and guardrails for our natural resources, the work of the Izaak Walton League and its members is even more critical. It is clear that we cannot count on the federal government to defend and protect our natural resources. Rather, we as Ikes will need to take a more active role in defending America's great outdoors.

We as Ikes will need to take a more active role in defending America's great outdoors.

It is no secret that the Trump administration announced a wave of regulatory rollbacks including reduced protections for waterways and air quality, protections that the League has been fighting for more than 100 years. One of the rollbacks is aimed specifically at a key issue that the League has devoted endless hours to in our efforts to protect our wetlands and streams—the definition of Waters of the United States (WOTUS). In mid-March,



EPA announced an abbreviated public-comment process that effectively asked for input about how to further reduce protection for wetlands and streams.

In addition to the announced rollback of regulations, the EPA Administrator announced plans to cut the agency's spending by 65 percent or more, which not only puts thousands of full-time positions on the chopping block but also puts grants to local communities on the chopping block. There is no question that such cuts will make it impossible for the agency to fulfill its mission of protecting public health and ensuring that Americans can breathe clean air and drink safe water.

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Also, the current administration has either frozen or cancelled billions of dollars of grants that are aimed at improving air and water quality, preparing communities for more extreme weather events, reducing impacts of climate change and supporting affordable clean energy.

It is apparent that groups like the Izaak Walton League will play a critical role in defending America's outdoors to not only ensure that our children and their children are able to have access to and enjoy healthy water, clean air and open spaces, but also to ensure such privileges and rights exist for the generations that come after them. After all, we owe it to the future generations the same way that the generations prior to us ensured that we had the ability to enjoy the great outdoors and everything it has to offer.

Safeguarding the outdoors has economic benefits

As we look for ways to defend our natural resources, we will need to find messages that will resonate with people. One message that resonates with everyone regardless of their political viewpoints is the mighty dollar (i.e., the economy). There are many ways we can readily connect conservation with people's wallets. If we fail to defend our natural resources, we will encounter lower quality drinking water and air, which in

turn will result in poorer human health and increased spending on health care; we will see less resilience to flooding, meaning substantial costs to rebuild communities and increased insurance costs, and we will see degraded fish and wildlife habitat that will threaten the country's outdoor recreation economy.

It is not just an environmental issue when we fail to connect people with the outdoors, it is an economic crisis for communities that depend on the attraction of natural resources to survive.

And let's not forget about the financial consequences that we are already starting to see as fewer people hunt, fish or otherwise spend time outdoors. If we continue to see fewer people purchasing hunting and fishing licenses, states will have less money to spend on conservation. In addition, if we continue to see fewer people hunting, fishing, hitting the trails and visiting national parks and other outdoor recreation sites, local businesses, tour guides and conservation groups will continue to lose income. In other words, it is not just an environmental issue when we fail to connect people with the outdoors, it is an economic crisis

for communities that depend on the attraction of natural resources to survive.

Recognizing the economic impacts conservation has on our communities, we are excited to have this year's keynote speaker, Matthew Winden, Associate Dean of Graduate Business Programs at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, speak to us about the critical nexus between conservation and the outdoor recreation economy.

We will also have speakers who will talk about the importance of protecting and restoring fisheries, addressing the impacts of climate change on agriculture and human health and nurturing our conservation land ethic.

I and the rest of the Brown County Chapter and all the Wisconsin Ikes look forward to seeing you at the annual convention in Green Bay this July.

As my term as the National President comes to an end at the convention in July, this is my last article in *Outdoor America*. I want to thank everyone for their support over the last couple of years and I look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming years as we advance the League's mission of defending America's great outdoors.

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Join Us in Green Bay to Defend Our Great Outdoors

SCOTT KOVAROVICS | Executive Director

In July, League members will gather for the national convention in Green Bay, Wisconsin. I encourage every Ike to attend at least one national convention. You'll not only have fun and connect with members who share your passion for conservation and outdoor recreation, you'll be part of the bottom-up decision-making that's been a hallmark of the League for more than 100 years.

The convention will be held at the Tundra Lodge Resort, Water Park and Conference Center. The Tundra Lodge is located in the heart of the Stadium District only four blocks from legendary Lambeau Field. The main attraction for kids of all ages is the 30,000-square-foot waterpark with everything from towering water slides to a lazy river.

Plan to spend a couple days before or after convention enjoying all Green Bay has to offer—from the Packers Hall of Fame to museums and an amazing network of local and regional parks. The Wisconsin host committee is also coordinating pre-convention activities on July 16 and 17, including tours of local wineries, breweries and sustainable farms.

We have an action-packed agenda on July 18 and 19 (see details on pages 26-31). The schedule includes speakers and panel discussions on a range of topics, national officer and Executive Board elections, votes on policy resolutions, and national and membership awards.

And we'll have some fun too with convention traditions like the Parade of States.

When League staff, chapters or members advocate for a position on a policy issue, they base their position on policies specifically approved by delegates at our national convention.

The most important decisions will be made by delegates—who are selected by their chapter to represent that chapter's members at the convention. These delegates will elect national officers and vote on resolutions establishing League policy on conservation, outdoor recreation and other issues.

When League staff, chapters or members advocate for a position on a policy issue, they base their position on policies



specifically approved by delegates at our national convention. This represents the League's bottom-up governance structure.

On a personal level, convention helps recharge my batteries for another year. The convention itself is hard work and we always have a lot to accomplish in only a few days. But it's also rejuvenating to spend time with members committed to advancing the League's mission—many of whom have also become my friends and mentors over time. I believe anyone who has attended a convention has similar feelings.

I look forward to seeing many of you soon at the national convention in Green Bay.

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

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



The EPA first publicly acknowledged the need for a renewed assessment of the health effects of nitrate 15 years ago.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Thinking Smarter about Our Drinking Water: EPA Must Evaluate the Nitrate Standard

By JODI LABS, National President, DALE BRAUN, Executive Board Chair

Many Americans take safe tap water for granted. After all, we should be able to trust that our drinking water is free from harmful contaminants. But this doesn't happen by magic. The rules that govern which contaminants must be removed by water utilities are set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

As we learn more about the effects of different contaminants on human health, the limits for those compounds must be adjusted to reflect the latest knowledge. Or at least they ought to be.

Nitrate in our drinking water is a growing problem in many parts of the U.S. and particularly in the Midwest.

Excess nitrate in drinking water comes from human activity including the overapplication of fertilizers, manure from animal feedlots and leaky septic systems. Nitrate readily dissolves in water and can easily be carried by rain, irrigation and melting snow until it reaches streams, lakes or groundwater.

In 2023, the EPA initiated an assessment conducted by the agency's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) to evaluate the effects of nitrate in water on human health. If the nitrate drinking water standard were to be adjusted, an IRIS assessment would be the first step.

Over 60 years ago, the scientific and regulatory communities agreed that it was in the public interest to limit the amount of

The EPA must approach drinking water standards with a clear-eyed, unbiased approach that considers the full breadth of research available.

nitrate in drinking water. This was based on our understanding of nitrate's connection to blue baby syndrome (also known as methemoglobinemia), a condition that can be fatal to infants. In 1962, the US Public Health Service established a 10 mg/L standard for nitrate in drinking water with the express purpose of reducing cases of blue baby syndrome. This 10 mg/L standard was later codified by the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1991.

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end there. A growing body of evidence shows that nitrate in drinking water causes more health problems than just blue baby syndrome. A large body of medical research published over the past 20 years reveals that individuals who consume elevated levels of nitrate are also at increased risk of developing certain cancers and thyroid disease. Nitrate consumption is also linked to increased incidence of neural tube birth defects. In many cases, these health effects have been associated with nitrate levels that are below the current 10 mg/L drinking water standard.

In a review issued in 2010, the EPA acknowledged new health effects information about nitrate, including developmental and reproductive toxicity, and considered nominating nitrate for a new health effects assessment.

The EPA must approach drinking water standards with a clear-eyed, unbiased approach that considers

the full breadth of research available. They must also approach the nitrate standard with urgency. The EPA first publicly acknowledged the need for a renewed assessment of the health effects of nitrate 15 years ago.

Nitrate pollution is also very expensive when it must be removed from drinking water. It's obviously much cheaper to keep it out of our waterways in the first place. One way to achieve that is better funding in the Farm Bill for incentives that improve soil conservation and reduce agricultural runoff.

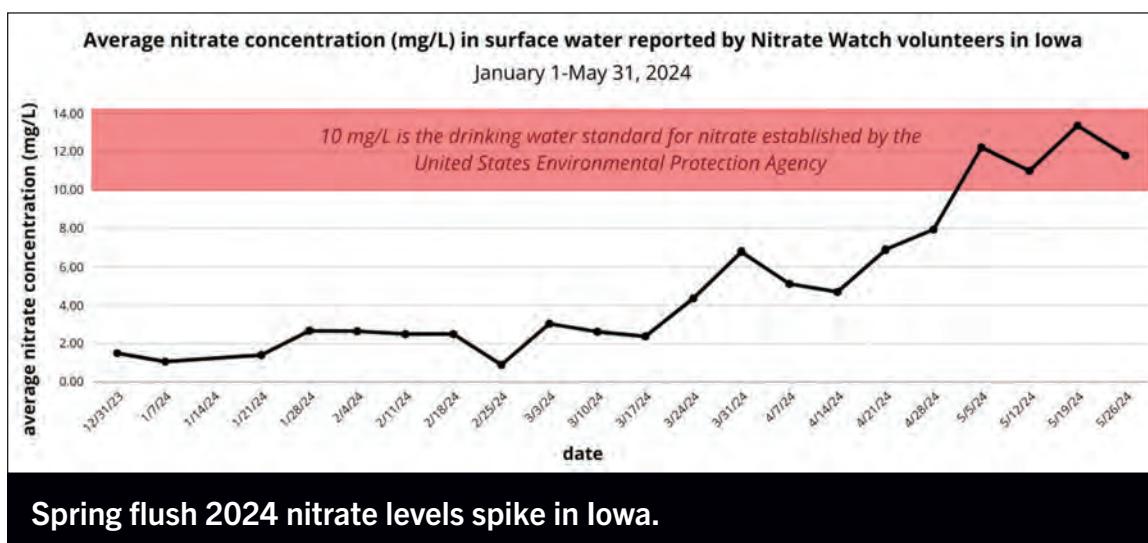
This spring, League Nitrate Watch volunteers throughout the Midwest will be monitoring surface water and well water for nitrate levels, which often spike this time of year as nutrients wash off agricultural lands.

In Washington, we must keep an eye on the status of the nitrate IRIS assessment and participate in public comment periods to support this important process. The status of the nitrate assessment is viewable on the EPA's IRIS dashboard.

Every year we delay taking action, we put the health of our friends, families and neighbors at risk.

Editor's note:

A version of this op-ed appeared the Cedar Rapids Gazette on April 12, 2025.



The Ohio River has Cleaned Up its Act

This hard-working industrial river has clearer water, better habitat and improving fisheries

By JACK WOLLITZ



A West Virginia Division of Natural Resources electrofishing crew temporarily stuns fish to measure and study the populations of species in the river.

While it's not yet retired from its role as a hard-working waterway, the Ohio River is benefiting from improved water quality and enhanced habitat, treating recreational anglers with a variety of sport fishing opportunities.

For much of the 20th century, the Ohio supported heavy industries, serving as the primary artery pumping lifeblood to the steel, petrochemical and power plants along the river's upper pools between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

Dozens of cities and villages in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky also relied on the Ohio to flush away their municipal wastewater.

The Ohio was the workhorse that helped build America's infrastructure; power its industries, offices and homes; and even quench the thirst of millions. But as with all hard-working things, the mighty river suffered from so much use and abuse.

Anglers and boaters saw oil and fuel slicks, rusty orange plumes of effluent and swirling eddies of

all manner of discarded plastics and other flotsam, evidence of the millions of people living in the Ohio River Valley.

Today, however, the Ohio River is gaining its second wind. It is considerably cleaner than it was at the turn of this century and supports thriving populations of plants and animals that form the foundation of a healthy food chain sustaining premier game fish species.

Scientists hail progress

Fisheries scientists in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia agree the Ohio River is a feel-good comeback story. The river's recovery is evidence of nature's ability to reverse its course and heal damage inflicted by people and corporations when aided by public policy and funding through the federal Clean Water Act and similar state laws, for example.

Ryan Argo oversees a variety of efforts to study and manage the quality of the river's water and environment. He is technical programs manager

for the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, known as ORSANCO.

Argo believes the Ohio River is in better condition today than it has been at any other time during the lives of most Americans. The water is cleaner. The habitat is conducive to supporting a diversity of fish, plants and forage species. Species intolerant of pollution are increasing and even displacing pollution-tolerant species, and the river is a good place for fishing and other recreation.

Rich Carter is an avid angler and retired executive administrator for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife's fish management and research. Pointing to the 1972 federal Clean

Water Act as a turning point, he noted the improvement in the fishing as obvious evidence.

"Why is it good now? It is the combination of river level stability, improved water quality and the abundance of forage," Carter said. He credits the work of Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania, as well as ORSANCO.

Smallmouth bass are popular among Ohio River anglers. People also fish hard for the burgeoning populations of walleyes,

saugers, catfish and other game species. During the past five years, angler success has been on the upswing.

"I wholeheartedly agree the Ohio River is still very much a hardworking industrial river," said Curt



West Virginia biologist Katie Zipfel displays a walleye, a species making a comeback on the Ohio River walleye.

Wagner, Ohio Division of Wildlife District Three fisheries management supervisor. “For example, the Corps of Engineers’ mission is to maintain the river for navigation.”

Since the Clean Water Act’s passage, Wagner said, “We have seen greatly improved control of industrial and municipal discharge and thus improved water quality, and conservation tillage has helped reduce sedimentation.”

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission fisheries biologist Mike Depew says enforceable regulations that restrict what can be discharged have resulted in cleaner effluent.

“Plus, we have quite a few mitigation efforts throughout western Pennsylvania that treat mine discharges coming in through major tributaries,” Depew said. “We’re not getting the acidified water.”

River supports variety of species

“Twenty years ago, the river was still recovering from historic pollution, whether it was mine drainage, sewage or overflows of discharges of different industries,” says Depew. So back in the 1970s, the rivers—including the Allegheny and Monongahela, which are the Ohio’s headwaters—were quite polluted.

“Now we support 100 different species from minnows to muskies and catfish. We have really excellent walleye and sauger populations and have done lots of study in recent years on both species’ catch rates and growth rates.”

“Small- to medium-size saugers and walleyes feed primarily on emerald shiners and redhorse suckers,” he said. “When we survey in the fall at night, the clouds of emerald shiners we see are absurd—tens of thousands of them everywhere.”

Rich Zweifel is the inland fisheries program administrator for the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

“It’s a good time to be an angler and fisheries manager in Ohio,” he said.

He has a positive outlook for the next 10 years. “I continue to be super optimistic. I see improvements in water quality continuing. We seem to have the right kinds of combinations of habitat in the river.”

Katherine Zipfel’s work in West Virginia has focused on the pools from the Pennsylvania border to the Hannibal lock and dam. Much of her work has been directed to restoring native strain walleye.

Zipfel said West Virginia is most proud of the walleyes. “People are catching and eating them,” she said, noting that advisories suggest limiting consumption to one meal per month for predator species like saugers, walleyes and bass.

She said the habitat is good for smallmouth bass. “I am impressed with the smallmouth in the New Cumberland, Pike Island and Hannibal pools.”

Sanitation Commission works for river’s benefit

The Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission was created in the 1940s with the primary goal of making the Ohio River a healthy resource for all of the states in the Ohio basin.

“We monitor a bunch of water parameters and aquatic life,” said ORSANCO’s Ryan Argo. “We do biological monitoring and water sampling on the navigable pools to ensure the river maintains healthy aquatic communities.”

The Clean Water Act has helped to curb many types of pollution, like waste pouring directly out of pipes (point source pollution). Other types of pollution, like nutrients washed off agricultural fields (nonpoint source pollution) are growing problems. (See Policy Pulse on page 35 for a discussion about efforts to protect wetlands, which help to reduce water pollution.)

Also newer forms of pollution are found in water including microplastics, salt or chloride and forever chemicals like PFAS, which increase the importance of keeping pollutants out of waterways in the first place.

Argo said studies include measuring the number of individuals of species intolerant to pollution. For example, he said, some species need clean substrates for reproduction and for feeding and other activities.

“We look at the relative makeup of components, not just what they do but what they represent,” Argo said. “We have a goal and want to see scores above that goal. If they are above the goal, we have a healthy system. If they are below the goal, then it requires additional research to discover the source.”

The return of game fish and other pollution-intolerant species is encouraging, Argo said, “but there still is work to be done, like keeping up with new invasive species and the contaminants that need to be addressed, to ensure populations stay healthy.”

An angler’s perspective: Fishing is way better now

Harry Emmerling has logged thousands of hours on the Ohio River. Now 55, the East Liverpool, Ohio, angler has fished the big river since the age of 10, with brief breaks for service in the U.S. Air Force and college studies.

He has seen it all.

Gizzard shad serve as food for larger fish in the Ohio River. The topwater lure on the left convinces some game fish to take the bait.

“Back then, we had a lot of pollution from the mills, which were going strong,” he said. “We always considered the river a carp and catfish kind of place. We did have some spotted bass, and we had largemouths in the backwaters. But there were no weeds, just the rocky environment.”

He credits cleaner water and the establishment of grass beds for the improving fisheries.

He goes to the river now with high expectations.

“The fishing is way better now than back then. The river is so much cleaner now,” he said. “Plus, by far, it is one of the most diverse places. We have gar, largemouths, smallmouths, catfish of all kinds, muskies, pike and even trout.”

With cleaner water and thriving fish populations, Emmerling loves the potential he sees with his Ohio River. “It’s really a fun place.”

Jack Wollitz is the author of The Common Angler (Tucker DS Press, published 2021), as well as magazine features and a weekly newspaper column that debuted in 1988. He has fished the Ohio River frequently for more than 30 years.



Gizzard shad serve as food for larger fish in the Ohio River. The topwater lure on the left convinces some game fish to take the bait.



The author prepares to release a smallmouth bass he caught in the Ohio River.

“The Young IKE” Podcast Turns Listeners into Participants

By GRIFFITH PUGH

Think back to March of 2020. When the COVID pandemic first hit, nearly every aspect of daily life—including Izaak Walton League activities—was put on hold.

Like many League chapters across America, our work at the **Minnesota Valley Chapter** in Bloomington, Minnesota, has always centered around bringing people together in the context of nature. Sometimes this is hands-on citizen science projects; other times, it means hosting educational events—guest speakers, informational meetings and town halls focused around conservation—drawing members of the local community into the fold to learn and engage together.

Thankfully, it quickly became clear that being in nature was one of the safest activities during the pandemic, and soon many of our outdoor-focused programming resumed. However, the educational and dialogue-driven events sadly never fully bounced back.

Last spring, four years removed from COVID, our chapter began brainstorming ways to revive these community events that had once been so central to our mission. First, we talked with other chapters across the state. We quickly realized this wasn’t an isolated issue—others were struggling with the same problem and were searching for solutions.

So we asked the question: Could we not just rebuild our educational events—but instead, create a new model for community engagement built for the 21st century?



Lost IRL (in real life): community and conversations

Many of the most pressing environmental issues of our day simply aren’t receiving the time and attention they deserve.

Culture wars distract us from examining facts, embracing nuance and forging solutions.

When conversations about our natural resources do happen, they’re often confined within the polarized corners of social media—driven by algorithms designed to generate outrage and clicks rather than meaningful dialogue. Social media makes it appear as though everyone is deeply divided about everything—including the environment (meat lovers vs. vegans, EV advocates vs. gas car enthusiasts, or even avid anglers vs. catch-and-release purists).

This intense division isn’t fully reflective of reality; it’s an illusion amplified by the platforms we use. In fact, recent polling from Gallup shows that close to two-thirds of Americans are worried about climate change. Social science research tells us time and time

again that when we meet IRL, face to face, common ground is easier to find.

However, a significant issue is that “third places”—community spaces where people can come together—are rapidly disappearing. The solution we need is twofold: First, we need quality educational programming that is honest, curiosity-driven and embraces the complexity of environmental issues. Second, we must create these third spaces where people can engage in real dialogue, in person and rediscover common ground.

Podcasting: a tool for chapter and community revival

Once we clearly identified the problem and decided on the need for a new approach for promoting conservation education and community dialogue, we turned to one of today’s fastest-growing media formats: podcasting. And with that, “The Young IKE” was born—with a mission to revive and deepen dialogue surrounding environmental conservation. (Hold on, we’ll get to the “in real life” part in a few paragraphs.)

Each quarter, The Young IKE focuses on a single environmental topic. At the start of the quarter, I conduct a series of interviews featuring guests who are experts on the topic—a recent example is the issue of green technology, mining and threats to natural areas like the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

We intentionally select guests with different backgrounds and perspectives because we believe solutions to complex problems come from engaging folks on all sides of an issue. Then we release these interviews onto podcast platforms.

People listen to the podcasts and

then, at the end of the quarter, come together in person (chapter members and community members alike) at our Izaak Walton League chapter house for an evening of in-person dialogue, moving the conversations beyond the podcast. Think of it as a pod-club (a book club for a podcast). Our pilot, pod-club, in early 2025 was extraordinary: people from across the community came together, inspired by the podcast and a shared search for genuine human connection.

Attendees scribbled ideas on reflection sheets, exchanged personal stories and shared their thoughts on topics and potential solutions. Conversations

started around mining and the Boundary Waters but evolved into new friendships and deeper community bonds by the evening’s end.

For the first quarter of 2025, we tackled a critical question: How do we reconcile the tension between conserving our natural lands while scaling green technology? Everything we produce begins either on a farm or in a mine. How can we balance protecting treasured natural areas while also developing essential technology for a cleaner future?

I spoke with four incredible experts: conservation and Boundary Waters advocate Becky Rom, expert academic on e-waste and green energy Roopali Phadke, CEO of the Initiative for Responsible Mining Aimee Boulanger and Reuters journalist

and National Book Award–nominated author Ernest Schyder.

Coming in the second quarter of 2025, we’ll explore our evolving relationship with water through the lens of agriculture. How do we grow food without sacrificing the health of our rivers and



lakes? From cutting-edge farm practices to local watershed efforts, next season dives into the choices communities face to protect both land and water. Whether you're in Minnesota, Iowa or anywhere our rivers run—this story flows through all of us.

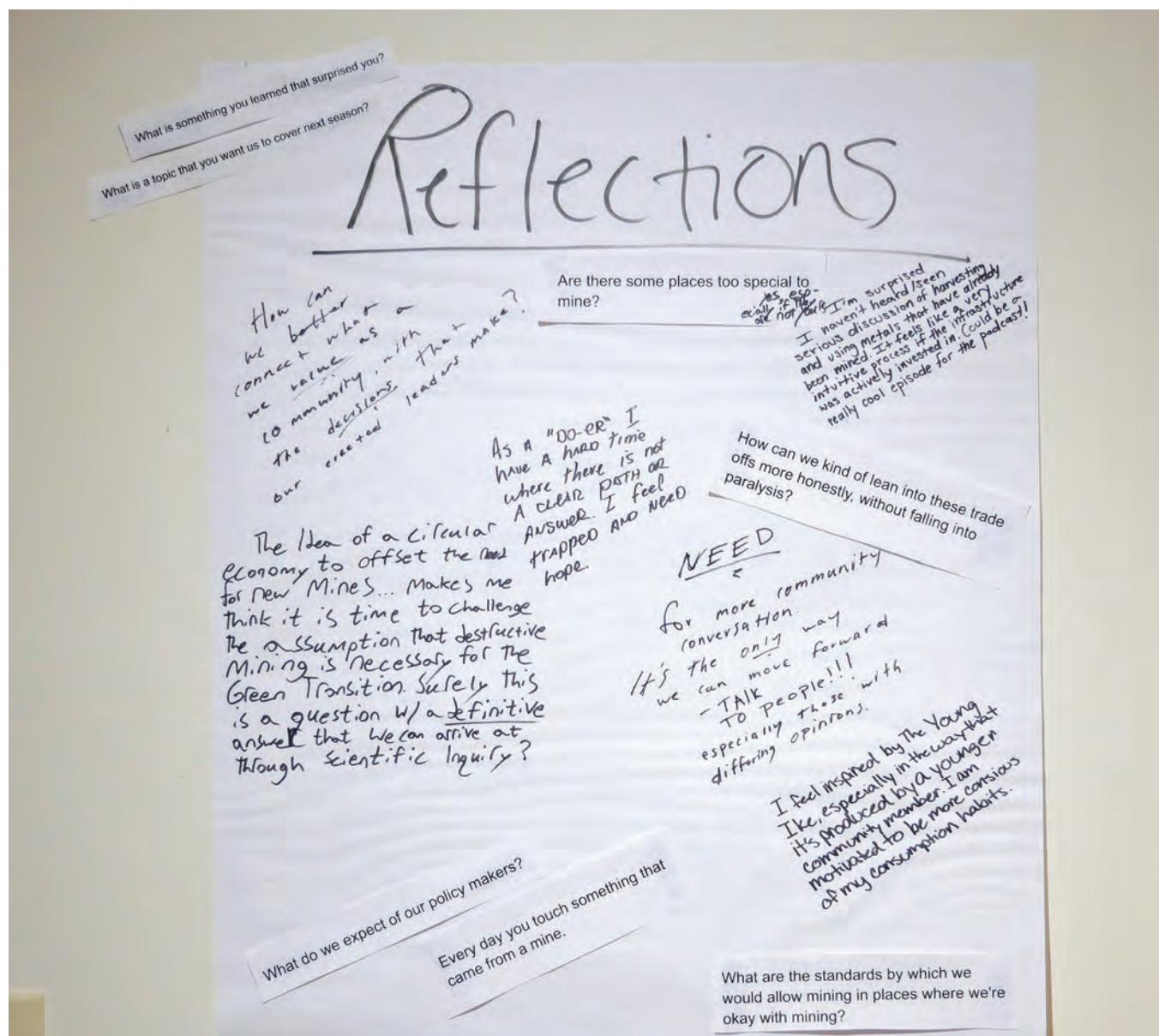
You are the hero: join the movement

The Young IKE is a nod to our fellow League members and supporters. "Young" highlights the importance of engaging the next generation of League leaders, but more broadly, it symbolizes the culture we are cultivating through our work—a

commitment to adapt and grow. In this sense, young means innovative, open-minded and dynamic.

The Young IKE podcast sparks curiosity, leans into uncomfortable tensions around important environmental issues and ultimately brings meaningful conversations **off the earbuds and into the real world.**

We can't achieve this ambitious vision without you. You now have a powerful new tool to strengthen your chapters, revive important conversations, and energize your membership.



At the end of each quarterly pod-club, participants write down their takeaways and reflections from the event.

How to subscribe and listen to The Young IKE

Listening is completely free. You don't need to pay anything to access the show. We want listening to the podcast to be as easy as possible—no tech experience required. There are two main ways to get started: using the QR code or finding the podcast manually.

Use the QR code

1. Open the **camera** app on your smartphone.
2. Point your phone's camera at the **QR code** (like you're taking a picture).
3. A **link will pop up** at the top or bottom of your screen. Tap it.
4. This will take you to our **landing page** with all of our podcast links.
5. Choose your preferred app—**Apple Podcasts** or **Spotify**—and tap the link to open the podcast directly.



Manual search for the podcast

On a smartphone:

1. Find the podcast app on your phone.
2. Open the app and tap the search icon.
3. Type "The Young IKE" in the search bar.
4. Tap on the podcast when it appears in the results.
5. On the podcast page, tap follow or subscribe, or download if you want to save episodes to listen offline

On a computer:

1. Visit [Spotify](https://www.spotify.com).com or [podcasts.apple.com](https://www.apple.com).
2. Create a free account if you don't have one already.
3. Use the search bar to find "The Young IKE."
4. Click on the podcast to follow, subscribe or download episodes.

Stay connected, bring it home

Follow us on social media @theyoungike on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn to stay up to date on new episodes and events. Consider hosting a live discussion at your chapter.

Please reach out to learn more about joining this movement by contacting me via email at griffith@theyoungike.org. We'd love to connect and support you every step of the way toward launching a pod club at your chapter. We're still in the early stages and excited to share our vision and bring you along for the journey.

Here is your opportunity to reclaim, rebuild and rejuvenate both chapter programming and engagement in your region. Energize your members and inspire meaningful action—all sparked by a simple podcast and your commitment to its vision.

Your community is waiting. If not now, then when? If not you, then who?

The Young IKE podcast sparks curiosity, leans into uncomfortable tensions around important environmental issues and ultimately brings meaningful conversations off the earbuds and into the real world.



Griffith Pugh, founder of The Young IKE, is a student at Haverford College, a founding member of the Green Crew at the League's Minnesota Valley Chapter and member of the League's Minnesota Division Board of Directors.

YOU'RE INVITED!

to go hunting with me

WHERE
in a field or forest

WHEN
*before sunrise on
opening day, this fall*

By LISA BALLARD

Introducing someone to hunting involves a lot more than an invitation and simply having them go with you.

Ideally, you would extend the invitation a few months before that first day afield. Let's say you want to invite a female friend to go deer hunting.

Your conversation might go like this:

YOU: Would you like to go deer hunting with me this fall?

FRIEND: *Maybe. I'm not sure I've got the time with work and family commitments.*

YOU: We can go for only a few hours if you like. We'll want to be in position a half-hour before sunrise. We can be home for lunch. It's fun, and it's outdoors in the fresh air. You'll really enjoy it!



The author hunts mule deer in South Dakota's Black Hills.

FRIEND: *Where would we go?*
YOU: [Name of place.] We can scout a few times so you know the landscape. We'll look for deer sign, like rubs, beds and scat.

FRIEND: *What's a rub?*
YOU: A rub is a scar on a tree trunk where a buck has rubbed its antlers. They do that to help get the velvet off and to mark their territory.

FRIEND: *What does a deer bed look like?*
YOU: A deer bed is a spot where a deer has rested or slept, which flattens the grass. Or it might be a dirt patch because that cools off a deer if the weather is hot.

FRIEND: *What's scat?*
YOU: Deer poop. I'll show you what it looks like when we scout.

FRIEND: *What if we get lost?*
YOU: I know the terrain, and I'll have a GPS, map and compass with us. We'll let others know when to expect us back, so if we don't show up, they'll look for us.

FRIEND: *I don't own a gun, and I've never shot one. What should I get?*
YOU: I can lend you one to get started, and I'll teach you how to shoot at my local practice range. You can take as much target practice as you like. If you're familiar with your gun, you can concentrate fully on the animal and be more confident



Father and son mule deer hunt.

about your shot. I will lend you ear protection, too. You can wear sunglasses for eye protection.

FRIEND: *What should I do to get ready?*

YOU: Do some research about deer, their habits and their habitat. The more you understand them, the easier it is to strategize. For example, a deer's sense of smell is a thousand times stronger than a human's. They're more likely to smell us before they see us if we're sitting still, so we'll position ourselves downwind.

FRIEND: *Do I need some sort of license?*

YOU: Yes, and we can get you signed up for a hunter education course. You'll need to pass that to get a hunting license from the state. You'll learn a lot about safety, the regulations and hunting in general in the course. But you don't need a license to practice shooting at a range.

FRIEND: *What should I wear? I don't own anything that's camo or hunter orange.*

YOU: It depends on the weather forecast. You'll probably want to dress in layers. I'm glad to take you shopping if you want to get your own stuff, or I can lend you the basics since we're about the

Deer and elk rub tree trunks to remove the velvet from their antlers and to mark their territory during the rut.



LISA BALLARD

same size. You don't really need camo as long as you wear muted tones that occur in nature. Wool or other quiet fabrics are best.

FRIEND: *Am I going to be the only girl? Hunting seems like such a guy thing.*

YOU: About 20 percent of hunters are women, so it's not just a guy thing. Like most outdoor activities, there can be a social aspect to hunting, but it will be just you and me on your first day.

FRIEND: *That's good because I've never shot an animal before. What is that like?*

YOU: You'll be excited, but you need to remain calm and steady while concentrating on the spot where you want to hit the animal. For me, the adrenaline surges after I pull the trigger.

FRIEND: *How will I know when to take a shot?*

YOU: You never have to take a shot. Only pull the trigger when you're comfortable, meaning you've got a clear, safe shot that's not too far away, and the deer is not moving. I'll be next to you to help you judge, but it's ultimately up to you when to shoot.

FRIEND: *What if I miss it?*

YOU: It happens all the time, even to the most experienced hunters. If you miss and the deer is still there, you can try again. If it bolts, then we'll either look for it or wait for another one.

FRIEND: *What if I only wound it?*
YOU: If it's still in front of us, you should quickly shoot it again. If it runs, then we'll try to track it.

FRIEND: *Can we eat anything while we're hunting?*
YOU: Of course! I usually bring a couple of sandwiches and a thermos of coffee. Let me know what you like, and we'll put it in my backpack.

FRIEND: *What if nature calls?*
YOU: [chuckle] Answer the call. There's always a nearby tree, bush or depression for privacy. Bring some toilet paper in case you need it, and then bury the waste.

FRIEND: *What happens after the animal is down?*
YOU: First, you'll record it on your tag, on an app, or online, depending on how your license is set up. Then we'll field-dress the animal.

FRIEND: *But I don't know how to do that.*
YOU: The first time, you can hold the animal for me, and I'll do it. But if you want to try, I can show you.

FRIEND: *How do you get the meat back to the vehicle?*
YOU: It depends on where we are. If it's not far on the flats or downhill, we can drag the carcass, or we might cut it up and pack it out. Some people load it onto an ATV. Others use horses.

FRIEND: *Who will butcher and package the meat?*
YOU: We can take it to someone who processes wild game, or I can show you how—which is cheaper.

FRIEND: *What will my friends think, especially those that are anti-hunting?*

YOU: Tell them wild venison is one of the most delicious and nutritious meats you can eat. It's all natural, without additives, and it's low fat. If you take pictures, share the scenic sunrise and the dinner afterwards. You don't need to portray yourself as a camo-wearing hunter holding up the head of a dead deer by its antlers. By the way, that's not really the soul of hunting. It's about spending time with friends and family and caring about the land and the wildlife. Hunters are among the most avid conservationists and stewards of our natural resources.

Lisa Ballard is an Ike from Red Lodge, Montana. In 2024, Lisa received the Joan Wulff Enduring Excellence Award (lifetime achievement award) from the Outdoor Writers Association of America. She is dedicated to getting people of all ages outdoors.
www.LisaBallardOutdoors.com

Five important tips for mentoring a new Hunter

Most aspects of mentoring a new hunter are the same, regardless of age and sex. Here are five important things to keep in mind to help ensure that first hunting experience goes well:

1. Extend the invitation several months in advance to allow the new hunter to pass hunter ed, get the gear, get comfortable shooting his or her firearm, learn about deer and deer habitat, and scout where you will hunt.
2. Respect recoil. Teach a new hunter how to shoot with a smaller gauge shotgun or caliber rifle fitted with a generous recoil pad, especially if they have a small frame.
3. If a new hunter is not crazy about gutting an animal on the first outing, let them hold the animal steady and watch while you demonstrate.
4. Balance the amount of information and give it in doses leading up to the hunt, so the new hunter feels in control of the situation and encouraged, rather than overwhelmed.
5. Define success by the overall experience, not whether a deer is harvested or by the presence or size of its rack.

Volunteers Navigate a Bureaucratic Maze to Stop Dangerous Pollution

By KAREN DAPONTE THORNTON, Little Falls Watershed Alliance

In late December 2024, the Montgomery County, Md., Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) proclaimed big news on Facebook:

"Huge shoutout to the DEP Water Monitoring team...for their amazing work tracing and stopping a fecal contamination, issue! The team identified the source—an illicit plumbing hook-up in a downtown Bethesda building that was sending fecal matter into a nearby creek through the storm drain system. Thank you Delegate Marc Korman, Little Falls Watershed Alliance and Citizen Scientists for their ongoing stream testing! Without their dedication and vigilance, this contamination would have gone undetected."

It takes persistence to turn a stewardship mission into reality.

This is the story of the Little Falls Watershed Alliance's (LFWA) dedication and vigilance. LFWA's mission is to speak up for parks and natural areas and bring neighbors together in Montgomery County, Maryland and adjacent Washington, DC communities to build awareness, improve habitat and enhance the enjoyment of the creeks and forests in the watershed.

The challenge began in 2009, when several local watershed groups took the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to court because of evidence of sewage leaks. Sanitary pipes that were buried under the streams were thought to be broken and leaking into the water.

A court decree required WSSC to test waterways in Montgomery County and make the data public. Then in 2014, WSSC began a massive pipe relining effort based on where their testing showed leaks. Three leaks were within the Little Falls watershed.

The key contaminant measured is *E. coli*. According to the EPA, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) represent about 97 percent of all the coliform bacteria in human feces, which makes this an excellent indicator of fecal contamination.

It takes persistence to turn a stewardship mission into reality.

In 2020, as follow up to questions about water quality, LFWA took the initiative to conduct water quality testing above and below the leak spots to confirm whether they'd been fixed. Three LFWA board members went out to five locations over two weeks to test the water quality, including for the presence of *E. coli*, and published a modest report of their results. LFWA did testing because no one else was.

Testing reveals scary numbers

During COVID, in 2021, LFWA leveraged the availability of neighbors seeking respite in nature during the pandemic and we learned how to organize citizen scientists to gather data and report results. We started testing in earnest at eight sites on two streams with a group of self-organized volunteers, including one super-volunteer, Woody Stanley, who developed a dashboard for our website to post the results. The team used the Anacostia Riverkeeper Lab to process results.

The following year, we hired our first intern, an American University graduate student, and started charting real numbers for *E. coli* contamination. Scary numbers, for purposes of public safety. LFWA tested a total of seven sites the watershed—five sites on the Little Falls Branch and two sites on the Willett Branch.



Little Falls Watershed Alliance volunteers test water for *E. coli* on the Willett Branch in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

While all of the sites had *E. coli* numbers regularly above the 410 MPN threshold for safe water play, one site on the Willett Branch had numbers exceeding 24,000 MPN. MPN refers to a measurement called the most probable number method that is a count of bacteria per 100 milliliters (ml). An unflushed toilet is typically about 300/100 ml.

LFWA funded the intern and all testing through support from private donors.

Raising awareness and alarm

To inform neighbors of the health hazards that could arise from wading and playing in the Willet

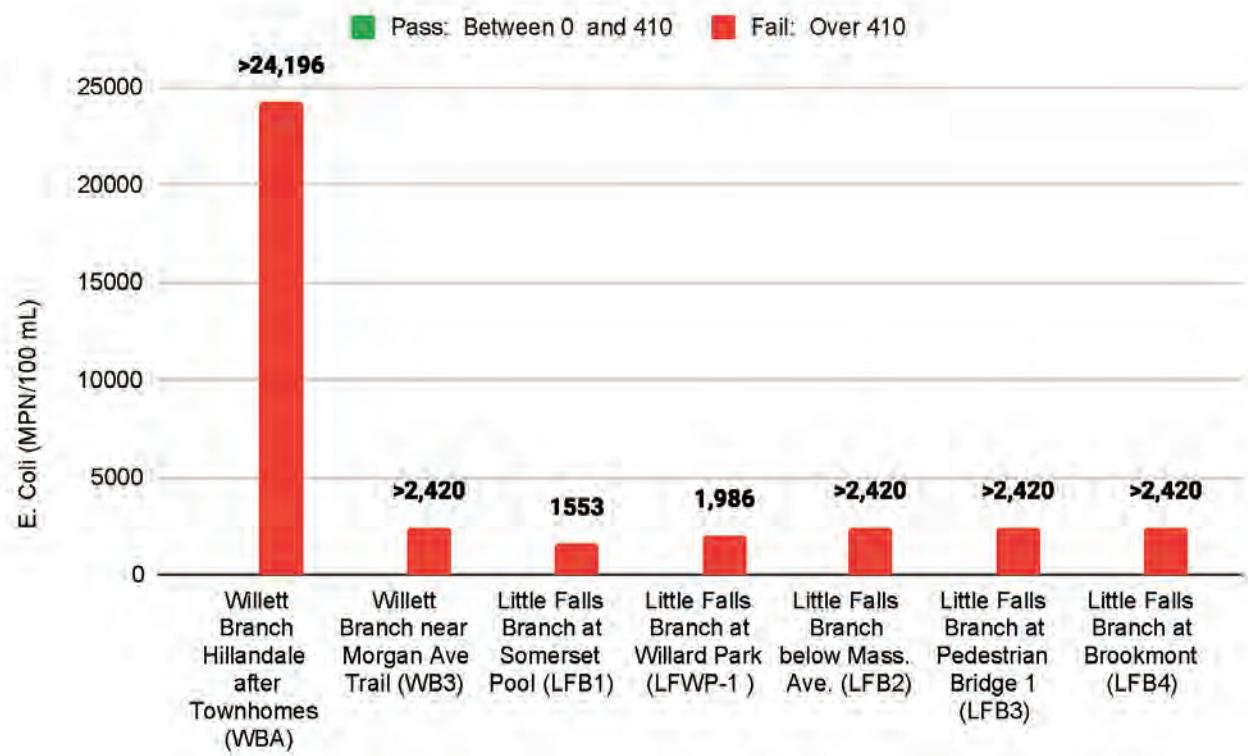
After years of persistence, hundreds of hours of volunteer water testing and a bit of luck, the mystery was solved

Branch, LFWA posted data to our website in the form of charts and graphics. But we didn't stop there. Executive Director Sarah Morse started a major public awareness campaign, sending a weekly email with test results to over a dozen community listservs as well as local elected officials and government workers, reaching more than 50,000 people each week. Every week, volunteers posted signs at key recreational areas along the creeks to let people know the fecal status before jumping in.

Neighbors took notice and asked for DNA testing, which showed the source of the *E. coli* contamination was human. Private donor support

Little Falls Watershed *E. Coli* Bacteria Count

9/13/2023



For measuring the risk from *E. coli* contamination, scientists use a measurement called the most probable number method (MPN), which refers to the count of bacteria per 100 ml. All the sites had *E. coli* numbers regularly above the 410 MPN safety threshold for wading or playing in water. One site on the Willett Branch had numbers exceeding 24,000. The World Health Organization says 0 MPN is considered safe for drinking. A count greater than 100 MPN is a high risk for drinking water.

increased, but no elected officials or government agency seemed to take notice, with the exception of State Delegate Marc Korman. Korman has described his collaboration with LFWA as 2.5 years of navigating “a lot of bureaucratic hoops.” He explained how proud he was to “work in partnership with LFWA to push and drive action across various agencies and organizations.”

Getting to the bottom of the problem

Based on the history of sewer pipe leaks, LFWA assumed the culprit was a broken sewer line, so Korman helped set up a meeting with WSSC. Turns out, this wasn’t a sewer line leak after all. It was worse. A totally preventable error.

In Montgomery County, waste water from toilets goes to the sanitary treatment facility and stormwater run-off goes to the creek. So when plumbing is installed in a building, care must be taken to ensure that the wastewater isn’t being connected into the storm drainpipes. If the pipes are improperly connected, the wastewater goes to the storm drain system where it runs directly to the creek.

On a community Zoom call hosted by the Department of Environmental Protection, Morse spoke up about the high bacteria counts and complained that her calls were not being answered. The DEP promised to follow up. They even posted official warning signs along the creek.

And true to their word, DEP spent 18 months trying to find the source. Why did it take so long?

The drainage area for the stream is huge. It’s over a mile of underground piping between the Willett Branch where we tested the creek for fecal matter and the building in downtown Bethesda where the toilets were dumping into the storm drain system so they had a lot of ground to cover before finding the illicit hook-up.



Partnership, persistence pay off

The County tests for illicit or improper sewer hook-ups by putting dye into the toilets. If they see the dye in the storm water drain system, they know there is a problem. They also pull the storm drain covers in dry weather. If there is water in the storm drain, that suggests an illicit hook-up. In this case, there were hundreds of storm drains to check and thousands of possible toilets.

By luck, DEP were able to narrow down the source by finding a pipe that was discharging waste into the storm drain. They were then able to send cameras down the pipe to see where the fecal matter was entering the system. Once they identified the building, the dye testing was done to confirm the illicit hook up.

So after years of persistence, hundreds of hours of volunteer water testing and a bit of luck, the mystery was solved.

This complex pollution mystery led volunteer scientists and professionals down many literal holes—as well as legal, scientific and bureaucratic ones. And the persistence paid off. Like us, you may have to blaze your own trail to solve a similar mystery. And do your community a big favor by stopping pollution at the source.

Karen DaPonte Thornton serves as president of the volunteer board for the Little Falls Watershed Alliance. She grew up playing in the Little Falls Branch and moved back to the area to start her own family and share the watershed wonders with her children.

The Little Falls Watershed Alliance participates in the Izaak Walton League’s Salt Watch water monitoring program and results of their work are recorded in the League’s public Clean Water Hub database, cleanwaterhub.org. Visit LFWA at lawa.org.



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@iyla.org or visit iyla.org 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.

2025 CONVENTION



2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Green Bay, Wisconsin, July 18-19

At the Tundra Lodge Resort, Water Park and Conference Center

Defending America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations



**Please join us at the League's 2025 convention in
Green Bay, July 18-19! Everyone is invited.**

The League has a 100-year legacy of defending the great outdoors so we hope you will help us keep that promise to future generations. Our work is never finished. Today, the threats to clean water and a healthy environment are different than the challenges we faced in the 1920s but are no less urgent.

In Wisconsin, you will meet like-minded members and supporters, enjoy our convention meetings, celebrations and opportunities to see sights around Green Bay. The early bird reception is Thursday evening, July 17. See details and updates at iwa.org/convention2025.

Travel and Lodging

Convention Site and Lodging

The Izaak Walton League 2025 National Convention will be at the:

Tundra Lodge Resort, Water Park and Conference Center

865 Lombardi Ave
Green Bay, WI 54304
Telephone: (877) 886-3725
Web: tundralodge.com

(NOTE: To receive the League's discount room rate, you must call the hotel to book a room.)

The Tundra Lodge is located in the heart of the Stadium District only four blocks from legendary Lambeau Field. It includes two restaurants and a poolside bar, and guests enjoy free Wi-Fi in every room and complimentary parking.

The main attraction for kids of all ages is the 30,000-square-foot waterpark with everything from towering water slides to a lazy river. Each hotel room comes with four to six passes to the waterpark depending on the type of room booked.

To reserve your room at the League's discounted group rate, you must call the hotel directly at (877) 886-3725. This is not a chain hotel and because there are different room options and prices vary for room type based on the day of the week, reserving a room online is not feasible. When calling the hotel, tell the reservation staff you want to make a reservation for the Izaak Walton League national convention in July, and this will notify them to provide you with the League's group rate.



Before calling the hotel to reserve your room, see **detailed information about room types and nightly rates** on the national convention website iwla.org/convention2025. The League's discounted rates are good Tuesday, July 15 through Monday, July 21, 2025, subject to availability.

The League's room block expires on June 13, 2025.

ADA compliant guest rooms and amenities are available and registered service animals are permitted. Any specific requirements regarding accessible rooms, please call (877) 886-3725.

Check-in time is 4 p.m. or later; check-out is prior to 11 a.m. Early check-in is not guaranteed. Registered guests may use the waterpark on the day of arrival (when the waterpark is open) as early as 1 p.m., even if your hotel room is not ready. Extended check-out times after 11 a.m. may be available based on occupancy at a charge of \$75 per hour. If a reservation is canceled less than 48 hours before the scheduled check-in date, a fee equal to one night's room rate and all applicable taxes will be charged.

Austin Straubel International Airport

The airport, which is about a 15 minute drive from the Tundra Lodge, is served by American, Delta, Frontier, Sun Country and United airlines. On-site rental car companies include Avis/Budget, Enterprise, Hertz, and Alamo/National.

The convention hotel does not operate a shuttle between the hotel and the airport.

Convention Contacts

Jodi Labs
(Wisconsin Host Committee)
Phone: (920) 617-5516 (day)
(920) 639-2302 (cell)
Email: jodi@lcojlaw.com

Mary Rubin (IWLA)
Phone: (301) 548-0150
ext. 213
Email: maryr@iwla.org

Events

NOTE: The Convention is a two-day event (Friday and Saturday). The Early Bird Welcome Party and Auction will be Thursday evening prior to the convention start.

Early Bird Welcome Party and Auction

Thursday, July 17. Tickets for non-registered guests: \$25

The Early Bird is one of several “unique to the League” events, held each year before the start of the annual convention. This is an opportunity to catch up with old (and new) friends and bid on exciting auction items.

Conservation Luncheon

Friday, July 18. Tickets: \$25

The Conservation Luncheon offers another opportunity to hear about and discuss pressing conservation issues. Adam Nickel with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will discuss significant fishery restoration projects in the greater Green Bay area and the factors that contributed to their success.

Parade of States

Friday, July 18

An ageless tradition, Parade of States provides a taste of the various states that will be represented at the convention. Sample regional “delicacies,” enjoy a beverage and catch up with League members from across the country.

Awards Luncheon

Saturday, July 19. Tickets: \$25

This combined membership and national awards luncheon provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the hard work and achievements of League members, supporters, chapters and divisions. Join us as we pay tribute to those award winners for their lifelong accomplishments and longtime devotion to natural resources conservation and outdoor recreation.

Banquet

Saturday, July 19. Tickets: \$50

Close out the convention with a wonderful meal and the company of fellow Ikes. Buddy Huffaker, the Executive Director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation, will share some final thoughts about conservation based on Leopold’s seminal land ethic and his classic book *A Sand County Almanac*. Aldo Leopold was one of the League’s early leaders, active in our Wisconsin Division, serving as one of our national directors and frequently contributing articles with his formative conservation insights to *Outdoor America* magazine.

Convention Highlights

The two-day schedule includes fun events, national officer and Executive Board elections, and votes on policy resolutions, as well as speakers and panel discussions on a range of critical conservation, natural resource and other topics.

Thursday, July 17

Executive Board Meeting
Endowment Board Meeting
Early Bird Welcome Party and Auction
Youth Convention Early Bird

Friday, July 18

President’s Breakfast with Division Presidents
Delegate Orientation Workshop
Convention Opening Ceremony
Conservation Luncheon
National Officer Elections
Resource Committee Reports
Parade of States

Saturday, July 19

Izaak Walton League
Endowment Annual Meeting
Izaak Walton League Board of Directors Meeting

- Executive Board Elections
- Midwinter 2026 Site Selection

League Awards Luncheon
Resolution Committee Report
Vote on Resolutions
Convention Site Selection (2027 and 2028)
Closing Banquet and Officer Inductions

Speakers — Visit the national convention website for updated list of speakers.



Adam Nickel, Peshtigo Fisheries Team Supervisor, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Nickel joined the Peshtigo Fisheries Work Unit as the Fish Team Supervisor in 2023. Previously he worked as a Senior

Fisheries Biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources where he coordinated habitat restoration and research projects, with many focusing on northern pike. Since joining the Peshtigo team, he has enjoyed working with the great fishery resources and partners the Green Bay watershed has to offer.



Buddy Huffaker, Executive Director, Aldo Leopold Foundation

Huffaker began at the Foundation as an intern in 1996 and became Executive Director in 1999. With a background in landscape architecture and plant ecology, he has been recognized as an Executive Scholar in Not-for-Profit Management by Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. He says the most thrilling part of his job is working with people throughout the US "who are working not only to fully understand Leopold's vision of a land ethic, but more importantly, implement it in their day-to-day lives."



Jayne Black, Field Consultant, Moms Clean Air Force

Moms Clean Air Force is a community of more than 1.5 million moms and dads united against air pollution—including the urgent crisis of our changing climate—to protect children's health. A former pre-k teacher, Black has a daughter with multiple sclerosis and a son with asthma. She sees the impact of climate change and poor air quality on her children daily, which inspired her to help pass Wisconsin's first indoor air quality bill for schools. She is fighting for transparency and accountability in indoor air quality monitoring and testing.



Kate Hansen, Agriculture Program Director, Izaak Walton League of America

In her role, Kate leads the League's work to influence state and federal policies to increase conservation practices,

improve water quality, and restore soil health on farms and ranches across the country. She holds a B.A. from Wellesley College in geosciences and American studies and is based in northern Indiana.



Tamara Arndt, Lead Animal Care Specialist, Kansas City Zoo & Aquarium

Tamara Arndt is a Lead Animal Care Specialist at the Kansas City Zoo & Aquarium where she cares for a variety of marine life species and oversees a passionate team of aquarists. She was the first team member brought on to open the aquarium in 2023 and was responsible for acquiring and transporting thousands of animals during the opening efforts. She earned a B.A. in Marine Biology at the College of Charleston and a Master's Degree in Marine Biology Techniques from James Cook University. Originally from Green Bay, she was a member of the League's Brown County Chapter from a young age. Her favorite hobbies take place outdoors, including snorkeling, diving, hiking and gardening.



Kayla Reed, Graduate Student, South Dakota State University

Kayla Reed is a graduate student at South Dakota State University pursuing a Master's Degree in Wildlife and Fisheries with a fisheries specialization. Her research focuses on the effects of hypoxia on sportfish in small South Dakota impoundments. Kayla earned Bachelor's Degrees in Water Resources and Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. Kayla is the recipient of Izaak Walton League national, division and chapter scholarships supporting students majoring in natural resource fields.

So Much to Do and See in the Green Bay Area

Plan to spend a couple days before or after convention enjoying all that Green Bay has to offer. Here are just a few of the fun, educational and interesting options available to you and your family.

All Things Packers

If you are a Green Bay fan—or football fan in general—Green Bay is a special place. Visit Lambeau Field and the Packers Hall of Fame. Walk, bike and drive the Packers Heritage Trail throughout Green Bay and De Pere and learn about the colorful history of the Packers and the community's devotion to their hometown team.

Museums

The area offers museums for every age and nearly every interest. Take the kids or grandkids to the **Children's Museum of Green Bay**, which includes a life-size digestive system to walk through and hands-on exhibits ranging from a fire station and auto shop to a veterinary clinic and diner. Railroad buff? Visit the **National Railroad Museum**, which features more than 70 one-of-a-kind train cars, rotating exhibits and a growing collection of railroad artifacts and images. Cars more your speed? Check out **The Automobile Gallery** and see an incredible collection of vehicles, from Model Ts and muscle cars to pick-ups and super cars.

Parks, Gardens and the Zoo

Green Bay and the surrounding area have wonderful parks, gardens and other places to enjoy the outdoors. The **Green Bay Botanical Garden** includes 47 acres filled with more than 120,000 plants from Wisconsin and around the world. The **Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary**, the largest park in the Green Bay Park system, is a beautiful 535-acre urban wildlife refuge featuring live animal exhibits, educational displays, miles of hiking trails and various wildlife viewing opportunities. The **NEW Zoo & Adventure Park** features animal exhibits in the zoo and zip line, ropes course and rock climbing wall in the adventure park.

Day Trips (or longer)

If you have an extra day or two, there are many options for extended trips. One close-by option is **Fonferek's Glen Conservancy Area**. This unique 75-acre county park showcases the region's geology, including a 30-foot waterfall, dolomite cliffs and stone archway. Spend a few days in Door County enjoying the outdoors, Wisconsin food and drink and some of the most spectacular scenery in America.

Recommended Fishing Guides in Green Bay Area

Whether a few days after or a few days before the meeting, enjoy incredible fishing in the greater Green Bay area. The Wisconsin host committee recommends the following outfits if you are interested in hiring a local guide to fish in the Bay of Green Bay and Lake Michigan. **Convention attendees are solely responsible for making all arrangements with guides, including scheduling trips, transportation and fees.** Convention hosts are not organizing group fishing trips or coordinating any transportation related to any fishing trip.

FinFanatic Charters

Captain Bob Claus
(920) 360-2904
Offers salmon and walleye trips

Cody S. Fishing

Captain Cody Solberg
(920) 418-5655
Offers salmon fishing

Walleye Patrol Guide Service

Captain Danny Woodke
(920) 598-0586
Offers walleye trips

No Butz about It Guide Service

Captain Dennis Butz
(920) 676-2954
Offers walleye trips

Exclusively Walleye Guide Service

Captain Mike Lewis
(920) 205-2118
Offers walleye trips

Sturgeon Bay Charter Fishing

Captain Kyle Wogsland
(920) 676-7829
Offers salmon and walleye trips

Eric McQuoid

(320) 630-3505
Offers walleye trips

Black Pearl Sport Fishing

Salmon and trout fishing on Lake Michigan
(715) 851-3069

Pre- and Post-Convention Activities

Pre-Convention Activities

The Wisconsin host committee has planned the following optional activities for Wednesday (July 16) and Thursday (July 17). **Each activity requires pre-registration** using the registration form in this kit or when registering online at iwla.org/convention2025. **Note: activities are subject to change.** The most current information will be posted on the convention website.

Detailed information about when and where tours will depart from and return to the Tundra Lodge will be posted prominently in the hotel and available on the national convention website beginning on July 14.

Wednesday, July 16

Wine and Cheese Tasting Tour. Sample great wine and cheese from the Green Bay area. This tour is expected to depart the hotel in the late morning and return by 5 p.m. \$10/person to assist with cost of bus transportation.

Tour of Lambeau Field. The convention hotel is short walk from legendary Lambeau Field. The League has scheduled a special group tour of the stadium and Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame beginning at 9:30 a.m. The tour lasts for about two and one half hours. Cost is \$31.65/person. Remember to pre-register to ensure the League can provide tour organizers with an accurate count of attendees in advance.

Youth Convention, July 17-19

The Wisconsin Ikes are arranging a Youth Convention that will introduce the participants to many of the scientific and natural wonders in eastern Wisconsin and Green Bay.

Activities include a pizza party, visits to the Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve, the NEW Zoo and Adventure Park and the Green Bay Botanical Garden. The League's **Brown County Chapter** will host the youth on Saturday, July 19, for a day of outdoor

adventures including flyfishing, kayaking, archery and campfire cooking. Their day ends back at the Tundra Lodge Resort for the Young Ikes Dinner.

Participation is limited to youth ages 8 to 18. See more details and register online at iwla.org/convention2025. Completed and signed health and liability release and participant forms are required at onsite check-in on Thursday, July 17.

Thursday, July 17

Brewery Tour. Prefer beer to wine? We've got you covered with a tour of Green Bay breweries. This tour is expected to depart the hotel in the late morning and return by 5 p.m. \$10/person to assist with cost of bus transportation.

Farm Tours. Visit area farms that have implemented various sustainable agriculture practices designed to improve water quality, soil health and wildlife habitat. This tour is expected to depart the hotel in the late morning and return by 5 p.m. \$10/person to assist with cost of bus transportation.

Post-Convention Activity

Sunday, July 20

100th Anniversary Open House at the League's Brown County Chapter. Members of the Brown County Chapter invite Ikes to join them for a special anniversary open house and barbecue at the chapter's Osprey Point property. Tour chapter conservation projects, enjoy great food and have some fun on the archery range. Details about event start time and how to get to the chapter property will be provided at convention.



If you have any questions, please text Lee DeBruin at (920) 661-7335 or email leonard2701@gmail.com.



Wetlands are under threat nationwide

By KATE HANSEN, Agriculture Program Director



A wetland in Washington County, Iowa enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

In 2023, the United States Supreme Court made the largest rollback of clean water protections in 50 years. In *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, the justices ruled that the Clean Water Act does not protect most of the nation's wetlands and millions of miles of streams, drastically narrowing protections for our waterways except in extreme, limited circumstances.

The decision was made despite wetlands' essential role in filtering and improving water quality, dispersing floodwaters and providing critical habitat for wildlife. Further, 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. In one way or another, weakening protections for wetlands and streams impacts us all.

The dangerous ruling ignored the plain language of the Clean Water Act that clearly articulates Congressional intent to protect these waters. But its impact did not stop there. Now—against the backdrop of losing more than half of our wetlands in the lower 48, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—we are starting to see ripple effects across the country, including more legal attacks.

Conservation Compliance

With the Clean Water Act weakened, one of the last remaining protections for wetlands is Conservation

Compliance, provisions that apply to agricultural land, established in the 1985 Farm Bill.

There are a wide variety of farm programs available to farmers, ranchers and landowners: from commodity payment programs, to subsidized crop insurance, to conservation incentive programs. Each one is funded by American taxpayers. Conservation Compliance requires that, to be eligible for these programs, farmers must not drain or fill wetlands to grow a crop. They must also not farm wetland areas that have been converted for such purposes. This is what we call "Swampbuster."

Swampbuster is one of three parts of Conservation Compliance. The other two exist to protect highly erodible land

and native sod. They are known as “Sodbuster” and “Sodsaver,” respectively.

These provisions do not regulate land use. In fact, they do not legally prohibit draining wetlands as otherwise allowed by law. They simply say that if a farmer drains wetlands, they are not eligible for taxpayer-funded payments and subsidies. As such, Conservation Compliance represents an important pact between the American taxpayer and those that receive the benefits they fund.

The Iowa Swampbuster lawsuit

In Iowa, a new lawsuit threatens to strip some of the last remaining, albeit limited, protection for wetlands across the country.

In the case, *CTM Holdings v. U.S. Department of Agriculture*, the plaintiff is challenging the very existence of Swampbuster. CTM Holdings is owned by a single investor from the Chicagoland area who owns farmland in Delaware County, Iowa.

Nine acres of the property were designated a wetland by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) well before the land was purchased by CTM Holdings. Now, CTM Holdings wants to cut down trees and alter the land to farm it. The plaintiff argues that Swampbuster is unconstitutional and that it takes land without compensation to landowners.

While USDA is the defendant in the case, multiple organizations have stepped up as interveners

on behalf of clean water, the environment and family farmers. On April 8, the League hosted a webinar with two individuals involved to learn more about the case—Katie Garvey, an attorney with the Environmental Law and Policy Center, and Aaron Lehman, president of the Iowa Farmers Union and Polk County, Iowa farmer. They shared comments including:

“Even though this is a lawsuit that was filed in Iowa, if the plaintiff wins, Swampbuster will be eliminated across the country. That will no longer be a pillar of Conservation Compliance. Also, Sodbuster and Swampbuster operate identically from a legal perspective. Even though the plaintiff’s explicit target in this lawsuit is to get rid of Swampbuster, [...] if a court says Swampbuster is unconstitutional, then Sodbuster will also be found unconstitutional. So, we would be losing these environmental protections.”

Katie Garvey

“The Iowa Farmers Union has an interest in this lawsuit—to defend Swampbuster and Sodbuster programs—because it’s one of our core tenets that farmers receiving federal support should be good stewards of the environment. Our members believe that if they’re trying to be good environmental stewards,



Aaron Lehman and Katie Garvey.

other farmers should not be rewarded for not being good environmental stewards.

That means we have to align program eligibility with the practices we want to promote, and that is what Conservation Compliance is all about. Our farmers want clean water. We rely on clean water for our own living on our farms, for our livestock. Our watersheds are already impaired by all sorts of pollutants from all sorts of sources, including agriculture. Getting rid of Swampbuster and Sodbuster would only make our water quality situation worse.”

Aaron Lehman

What is ahead

A federal judge heard oral arguments on the case at the end of March. As we write this, we are awaiting the judge’s ruling. It, and any subsequent appeals or action, will quite literally determine the fate of wetlands, highly erodible land, and Conservation Compliance on agricultural land across the country.

No matter the result, we know that the legal attacks will not cease. In fact, it is a coordinated effort. The same legal group

that spurred the *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency* case is representing the plaintiff in Iowa. They have also filed a lawsuit in South Dakota with similar aims. Separate lawsuits filed in North Dakota and Washington, DC, threaten wetlands easements that protect wildlife habitat. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the easements are funded by waterfowl hunters and birders who purchase Duck Stamps.

The easements conserve habitat in exchange for landowner agreements to not drain the wetlands. These interests have always existed, and *Sackett* has given them an energizing win.

At the end of the day, these legal fights will affect natural resources most important to the League—clean water, wetlands, wildlife habitat and healthy landscapes. We will remain engaged on these lawsuits and continue to update you about opportunities

to get involved. The fate of our landscapes as we know them might depend on it.

To view the League's full Clean Water Webinar about this lawsuit, visit our YouTube channel at youtube.com/izaakwaltonleague.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Wetlands provide vital habitat for many species of wildlife such as the great blue heron, seen here in a Minnesota.



New Threats to Clean Water and Public Lands; Progress to Protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area

By JARED MOTT, Conservation Director



While new threats to clean water abound in Washington, one positive sign is a new bill that would protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northern Minnesota.

EPA moves to further weaken Clean Water Act protections for wetlands and streams

Over the past 18 months, the Izaak Walton League has repeatedly expressed growing alarm about the harmful consequences of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 decision in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*.

In that case, a narrow five-justice majority issued a sweeping and unprecedented ruling that went far beyond the matter in that case—Involving a single wetland on a property in Idaho. The *Sackett* decision

eliminated Clean Water Act protections for an estimated 60 million acres of wetlands and millions of miles of tributary streams that feed drinking water sources relied upon by one in three Americans.

Following the ruling, the League warned that this was only the beginning of broader efforts to dismantle water protections. Unfortunately, our concerns were validated in mid-March this year, when EPA announced a rushed public review process aimed at exploring further reductions in protections for wetlands and streams. This rushed EPA review—with a very short 30-day window for the public to comment—is

Clarifying and strengthening the Clean Water Act has become even more critical for the future of clean water in America.

unlikely to safeguard our waters. This process is constrained by the *Sackett* decision's misguided legal interpretation of the Clean Water Act and its narrow, flawed definition of "waters of the United States," which literally ignores basic science.

Any meaningful implementation of the Clean Water Act must be grounded in science and honor the law's original intent, which is unequivocal: "The objective of this Act is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters."

Congress explicitly passed the Clean Water Act to improve water quality, protect wetlands and safeguard public health, using the plain words "fishable, drinkable and swimmable" to describe the goals of the legislation. It does not take a professional scientist to understand that wetlands filter pollutants, absorb floodwaters and provide critical habitat—whether or not they have a "continuous surface connection" to a river. A lay person can easily explain that streams that do not flow all year and wetlands can still transport pollution to rivers, lakes and oceans.

The comment period for this misguided approach to halting water pollution has now closed. But the League organized efforts to galvanize hundreds of comments from members and volunteer water monitors urging EPA to protect as many waters as possible. League divisions and chapters signed a joint comment letter with similar messages, and the national office submitted its own detailed comments as well.

Since the outcome of *Sackett* was announced two years ago, the League has continued to call on Congress to amend the Clean Water Act to clarify that wetlands and tributary streams are "waters of the United States" and therefore are protected by the Act.

Clarifying and strengthening the Act has become even more critical for the future of clean water in America.

The immense popularity of the Boundary Waters fuels a robust local economy that depends on public access to this vast landscape.

League applauds legislation protecting the Boundary Waters

Legislation to protect America's most visited wilderness has been introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Izaak Walton League strongly supports these bills.

Sulfide ore copper mining has never been permitted in Minnesota. But Twin Metals, owned by Chilean mining company Antofagasta, is seeking to develop the first sulfide copper mine in the state by operating in Superior National Forest, just outside of the Boundary Waters Wilderness and within its watershed. That would be a disaster for the wilderness area: byproducts of sulfide copper mining include hazardous pollutants like sulfuric acid and heavy metals, which could contaminate the pristine waters feeding this region for decades.

Rep. Betty McCollum's Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Control Act (H.R. 588) was introduced in January, while a companion bill was introduced by Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn). This bicameral legislation would ensure permanent protection of the Boundary Waters from any future copper-nickel mineral leasing in its watershed, and completes a mineral withdrawal originally proposed by the U.S. Forest Service in 2016. A withdrawal of mineral leases in the proposed area is the best way to ensure the Boundary Waters remains permanently protected for future generations, as Congress originally intended with the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act of 1978.

The Boundary Waters is one of the first places where the League provided a leading role protecting a vulnerable wild region. For a century now, Ikes have fought to safeguard this pristine ecosystem that was carved by glaciers and features thousands of lakes and streams. The area offers a plethora of hunting, fishing, camping and paddling opportunities. The immense popularity of the

Boundary Waters fuels a robust local economy that depends on public access to this vast landscape, which has been protected and kept healthy for the benefit of generation after generation of Americans.

Senate balks at protecting public lands

A proposed budget amendment aimed at blocking the sale of public lands for the sole purpose of reducing the federal budget deficit narrowly failed in the Senate, dealing a setback to conservationists and outdoor recreation advocates. The amendment, seen as a key measure to protect environmental resources and public access to these lands, was introduced as part of the ongoing budget resolution process—an early step in developing a budget reconciliation bill.

Advocates for the amendment, which was championed by Senators John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.) and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), warned that selling public lands would sacrifice irreplaceable landscapes and ecosystems for short-term fiscal gain, undermining both environmental protection and outdoor recreation. The Izaak Walton League supports efforts to prevent the loss of the nation's public lands and preserve public access to them.

The amendment ultimately fell short by a narrow vote with 51 Senators voting to not adopt the amendment. The close outcome highlighted a notable level of bipartisan support for protecting public lands. Two Republican senators from Montana—Tim Sheehy and Steve Daines—joined Democrats in voting for the amendment, signaling cross-party recognition of the importance of conservation.

Supporters emphasized that public lands are vital to local economies, wildlife habitat, and the outdoor recreation industry, which generates billions annually. The amendment aimed to safeguard public access and preserve these lands for future generations.

The Senate vote raises concerns about the growing pressure to monetize public lands as a budget solution. Conservation groups, including the League, are urging the public to remain engaged

by contacting lawmakers and advocating for long-term stewardship.

**The Izaak Walton League
supports efforts to
prevent the loss of the
nation's public lands
and preserve public
access to them.**



Wading through Uncertainty: Reflections from the National Water Monitoring Conference

By MATTHEW KIERCE, Chesapeake Monitoring Outreach Coordinator



Staff presented an update on the League's volunteer programs at the National Water Monitoring Conference earlier this year.

In March, the Izaak Walton League's Clean Water team traveled to Green Bay, Wisconsin, for the National Water Monitoring Conference, one of the largest water-focused gatherings in the country. Hosted every other year by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the conference draws hundreds of participants from across the U.S., representing local, state and federal agencies as well as nonprofits working on water quality monitoring.

This year's trip brought us to the land of cheese curds and Spotted Cow (some of us are already eyeing a return visit for the July Convention!).

We were eager to reconnect and network with peers across the water-quality world, from EPA staffers and U.S. Geological Survey scientists to state environmental agency representatives and, of course, the volunteer monitoring community we know so well.

At a time when environmental and public health concerns are mounting, the erosion of federal protections and resources is deeply concerning. That's why volunteer monitoring is more essential than ever.

made up more than half the conference participants. Their absence was deeply felt, resulting in last-



Marsh grasses along the shoreline at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on the Chesapeake Bay south of Cambridge, Maryland.

minute program changes, missed networking opportunities and a palpable shift in energy.

The notable absence of federal partners this year is part of a broader trend that's troubling for the future of clean water protection. Recent executive orders and policy changes such as continued rollbacks to the Clean Water Act's definition of "waters of the United States" have left many in the field wading through uncertainty.

Compounding the issue, federal funding freezes are putting vital monitoring programs on hold, even as water quality across the country continues to decline.

At a time when environmental and public health concerns are mounting, the erosion of federal protections and resources is deeply concerning. That's why volunteer monitoring is more essential than ever. When federal agencies can't carry out their mission, it's up to trained volunteers to help fill the gaps detecting pollution, raising red flags and helping communities take action to protect their waters.

Our future depends on clean water and it will take all of us, working together, to defend it.

To get involved with various Izaak Walton League water quality monitoring programs, visit www.iwla.org/sos. Many monitoring programs are free to get started and take just a few minutes.

The Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative

The Izaak Walton League's Clean Water Program is no stranger to working with federal agencies. As a core partner in the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative, we collaborate with the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program to ensure that volunteer monitoring data meets high standards and is accessible to both state and federal agencies working to restore the Bay. Curious to learn more?

Visit www.chesapeakemonitoringcoop.org.



Set Your Sights: August Is National Shooting Sports Month

A great opportunity for chapters to introduce others to fun, safe outdoor activities.

August is National Shooting Sports Month and the Izaak Walton League is proud to work with the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to promote target shooting throughout the month. This is a great opportunity for chapters to introduce others to fun, safe outdoor activities.

Sustaining and growing participation in shooting sports is a high priority for the League and especially for the 120 local chapters with shooting ranges and expertise for use of firearms and archery.

The number of first-time gun owners has grown dramatically during the previous five years. According to the NSSF, well over 26 million Americans purchased their first firearm since 2020.

These new gun owners represent a chance for chapters to sponsor training and recruit members and volunteers. In recent years, many chapters nationwide have opened their grounds to the public and hosted National Shooting Sports Month events, setting their sights on reaching this new audience.

An important objective of this nationwide effort is to encourage participation by people who are not already recreational shooting sports enthusiasts. Chapters that have held successful events include an introduction to safe and responsible gun ownership. Some chapters provided basic hands-on marksmanship skills training using a variety of firearms and archery equipment—starting people off with air rifles or a .22 rimfire and offering lessons on trap and skeet and field archery.

Generations of Americans have taken their first shot at Izaak Walton League chapters. National Shooting Sports Month is a great opportunity to raise public visibility and introduce more people to shooting sports.

Chapters can reap many benefits by hosting a National Shooting Sports Month event.

For details, visit shootingsportsmonth.org.

SHOOTINGSPORTSMONTH.ORG

SAVE THE DATE

On the fourth Saturday of every September, **NHF Day** recognizes generations of sportsmen and women for their contributions to the conservation of our nation's rich sporting heritage and natural resources.



SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

LEARN MORE ABOUT NHF DAY AND UPCOMING EVENTS AT
NHFDAY.ORG



SCAN THE CODE TO TAKE THE PLEDGE



The League played a key role in pushing through a 1930 law to protect forest and prohibit flooding in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.



A Boundary Waters History: Vigilance, Passion and Persistence

By CRAIG STERLE

Concern about preserving the amazing network of wild lands and lakes in northern Minnesota motivated the Izaak Walton League to take action in the 1920s. Today that place remains pristine, protected and wildly popular, drawing visitors from every corner of the U.S. and around the world. It's called the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. While this "canoe country" is still intact, it's remarkable that now, a century later, the place is still under threat and could be ruined by pollution.

A proposed mining operation right on the doorstep of this wilderness area would inflict incalculable harm on the land, waters and biological health of this legendary canoe area, which is downstream from the area that would be mined.

The good news: members of the U.S. House and Senate have joined in the fight to protect the Boundary Waters. The Izaak Walton League supports legislation introduced by U.S. Representative Betty McCollum and U.S. Senator Tina Smith, both from Minnesota. The bills deserve your support. See the Take Action box on page 45.

First, consider a few details from the historic struggle to protect these priceless lands and waters. It's instructive to understand the decades of work the Izaak Walton League has devoted to protecting this place and why we can never abandon hard-fought achievements like the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Starting with Teddy Roosevelt...

In 1909 President Theodore Roosevelt created the Superior National Forest. A decade later, a 29-year-old U.S. Forest Service “recreational engineer” from Denver paddled and portaged a 100-mile loop through the undeveloped landscape in the forest, taking notes along the way. And for the next century, his report about this region would shape the management of the area called “canoe country.”

Arthur Carhart, amazed by what he saw, recognized the unique character of this landscape—an intricate blend of Canadian Shield bedrock, wetlands, streams and lakes, braided together in a seamless wilderness.

Carhart’s report called for the area to be set aside and protected in perpetuity as wilderness, stating this area “would have few, if any, competitors.” Carhart’s report would be the blueprint for future wilderness protections.

The Canadian government was the first to react by protecting their portion of this area. After first establishing the Quetico Provincial Forest and Game Reserve 10 years before Carhart issued his report, Canada then expanded the area’s protections in 1913 by designating it as Quetico Provincial Park.

Protecting canoe country

A few years after Carhart’s canoe trip and report, Paul Riis with the American Institute of Park Executives and Will Dilg, the first national president of the newly created Izaak Walton League,



The pen used by President Hoover to sign the 1930 bill is on view at League headquarters in Maryland.

traveled to Duluth, Minnesota to speak at a Forest Service meeting. The agenda for that meeting: consider merits of building a road across this canoe country, to accommodate logging, tourism and the automobile.

Both Riis and Dilg, for different reasons, spoke against the road plan, and they would eventually prevail, but not before four years of fighting to

preserve the lands and waters.

Finally in 1926, Secretary of Agriculture William Jardine took action to protect 640,000 acres, one-third of the Forest, by proclaiming it a “primitive area.” He initially called it the “Superior Wilderness” which was later called the Superior Roadless Area.

As decades passed new challenges arose, including proposals to build dams and flood parts of the canoe country, to advance timber baron E. W. Backus’ plan to cut timber and produce hydropower. Enter the League’s dedicated wilderness defender, Ernest Oberholtzer, who organized opposition and developed a plan to thwart Backus’ plan.

The solution came in 1930 with passage of the federal Shipstead-Newton-Nolan Act. This law protects all federal timber within 400 feet of shorelines and prohibits the manipulation of the water levels in the Rainy River basin. This law was later joined by Minnesota's Little Shipstead-Newton-Nolan Act, protecting state-owned timber and shorelines. Oberholtzer knew it would take more than the Ikes to pass the bill. Recruiting dozens of organizations to broaden support proved decisive in securing the bill's passage.

Another challenge was resort development at private inholdings and air tourism. Izaak Walton League members raised funds between 1930 and 1941 to purchase key inholdings. Parcels were sold to the U.S. Forest Service at a loss to the League, but the fund became the foundation for what is now the Izaak Walton League of America Endowment. In all, the fund purchased nine resorts and over 7,000 acres.

The pace at which the League acquired the inholdings was deemed too slow. So, the League supported the Thye-Blatnik Roadless Area Consolidation Bill. The Bill would allow Congress to fund acquisition at an accelerated rate. In 1948 Congress passed the bill and appropriated \$500,000 to purchase inholdings. Over the years, acquisition continued, to the point that most private inholdings have been purchased on behalf of the Forest Service.

The final step was to have an "Airspace Reservation" or no-fly zone that kept aircraft out of the designated protected interior. This occurred in 1949. Without air service, many of the resorts that resisted being bought out agreed to sell to the Forest Service.

Though designated as a "roadless area," the canoe country was still open to logging, outboard motors and snowmobiles. Motorized access resulted in a substantial growth in use, leading to degraded natural resources. To address this naming discrepancy, the Forest Service in 1958 renamed the area the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Minnesota Ikes Adolph Anderson, Sigurd Olson, Bill Magie and Miron (Bud) Heinselman, among and others, formed the Wilderness Committee.

They worked tirelessly to end logging and pushed for a true roadless designation that would end all

motorized use. But it was left to Congress to pass a more protective measure, the 1964 "Wilderness Act". The Boundary Waters were included in the original 9.1 million acres designated in the National Wilderness Preservation System, as "Wilderness," leading to the creation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness as it is known today. But its inclusion came with caveats at odds with conservation that would fester and resurface a decade later.

By 1976, the Ikes supported the legislation proposed by U.S. Representative Don Fraser that would eliminate logging, motorized use and mining within the Wilderness. Heated debate continued until a compromise was reached in Congress and the bill signed into law by President Carter. The 1978 Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act eliminated logging and mining within the Wilderness and reduced the impact of outboard motors on those seeking solitude.

Today's challenge

While the 1978 Act solved most of the issues of the day within the Boundary Waters, it was Sigurd Olson, a University of Wisconsin geology graduate, who reportedly said "the next big threat will be copper-nickel mining." This growing external threat from copper-nickel (sulfide-ore) mining in the headwaters of the Boundary Waters was brewing. While logging and motorized use can harm the wilderness experience, their long-term impacts pale in comparison with mining.

On the western 80 percent of the Wilderness, the lands and waters are part of the international Rainy River watershed. This watershed also flows into and through the Quetico Provincial Park, which borders the Boundary Waters to the north. From there the watershed flows downstream through Voyageurs National Park (largely a motorboat-based park), west to Lake of the Woods, and eventually north to Hudson Bay.

Today, mining is on the doorstep of the wilderness and that would inflict harm on the lands, waters and biological health downstream into the Wilderness. For the last two decades, Twin Metals Minnesota has conducted exploratory drilling and made plans to develop sulfide-ore mines alongside Birch Lake and the South Kawishiwi River, and beneath Birch Lake.

Twin Metals is owned by Antofagasta PLC, a Chilean mining conglomerate. Birch Lake is the headwaters of the Kawishiwi River, which flows directly into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Over the past five years, volunteer water quality sampling in and around Birch Lake by Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness (NMW) has documented elevated levels of sulfate from the Dunka Pit, a retired open pit iron-ore mine. Sulfate converts into sulfides, which become sulfuric acid, AKA acid-mine drainage.

Acid mine drainage results in those familiar, orange-colored streams found in mining communities worldwide and leads to heavily degraded, nearly lifeless waters that will persist in this degraded state for millennia. The sulfate also reacts with mercury, an emission primarily produced by mining and coal burning at power plants, to form methylmercury. This form of mercury bioaccumulates up the food chain, causing health concerns in humans that consume contaminated fish.

The Dunka mine cut through rock that is part of the Duluth Formation, the same rock formation containing low-grade sulfide-bearing ore with copper-nickel. Why is this water sampling important? The waste-rock overburden from the Dunka pit contained sulfide-bearing ore, which was stockpiled east of the mine pit. The toxic sulfate, heavy metals and other pollutants in the pile's leachate can now be traced from Birch Lake, out into the Wilderness.

Note that the Dunka mine wasn't even a sulfide (copper-nickel) mining operation, it was a ferrous (iron) mine. With no natural ability to neutralize the impacts of sulfates, and with sulfate levels many times higher in the Duluth Formation where copper-nickel mining is planned, it poses a tremendous long-term threat to the waters of the Rainy River watershed, including within the Wilderness. To understand the potential duration of the damage, copper mines (sulfide-ore) from the Roman Empire, which are 2,000 years old, still discharge toxic mine drainage.

Speak out and act with conviction to see that these protections are made permanent!

The solution to sulfide-ore mining

For the past decade, Minnesota Representative Betty McCollum has introduced a bill in Congress that would provide permanent protection from

sulfide-ore mining. In January, she introduced the "Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act" prohibiting sulfide-ore mining on federal lands within the Rainy River watershed. While making the case that this is a one-of-a-kind national treasure that must have more protections, it has largely been a solo effort. Until last month.

TAKE ACTION

It's time again for the League to provide the leadership and voice for the "canoe country." We have for the past century been the dominant voice, the visionaries, for creation and management of this landscape.

As the most visited wilderness in America, it's now time for every Ile to contact their federally elected officials and urge them to support bills introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum and Sen. Tina Smith that ensure the Boundary Waters is permanently protected for visitors today and for all future generations.

- **S. 1366, Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection Act**
- **H.R. 588, Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act**

President Theodore Roosevelt said, "The movement for the conservation of wildlife and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose, and method."

Today's League members owe it to future generations, as our League founders did for us, to speak out and act with conviction to see that these protections are made permanent! Arthur Carhart called for those protections more than a century ago. It's time to heed his words, and Get It Done!

Minnesota U.S. Senator Tina Smith introduced the first Boundary Water protection bill in the Senate since 1978. Her bill largely mirrors McCollum's. For the first time, there are companion bills to stop sulfide-ore mining on federal lands in the Rainy River watershed. The Izaak Walton League of America strongly supports these bills. (See Policy Pulse on page 36 for more information about this legislation.)

Standing in the way of these two bills are efforts by the Trump Administration, having vowed to open the Boundary Waters watershed up for critical minerals mining, and Minnesota Congressman Pete Stauber's bill the "Superior National Forest Restoration Act" to eliminate the 20-year mineral withdrawal initiated under President Joe Biden.

Stauber's bill would restore mining permits to Twin Metals Minnesota LLC that were cancelled as unlawfully issued during President Trump's first term. It compels rapid approval of the mine plan (18 months), and it prevents judicial review, which means that federal courts could not consider any challenge to mining or for enforcement of laws

to protect water quality, for example. Passage of Stauber's bill would reauthorize mining, which could lead to not just acid mine drainage entering the Wilderness waters but would result in higher levels of methylmercury in fish, potentially making them unhealthy for Wilderness visitors to consume.

It's important to note that the proposed mine would produce an insignificant amount of critical minerals, like nickel and cobalt, needed for our clean

energy transition. Copper is widely available from both existing domestic sources and friendly partners. It would be a tragedy to destroy the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in order to provide a Chilean company with a questionable environmental and human rights record an opportunity to extract and sell these minerals. Research has shown that preserving the Wilderness intact will provide a

more sustained economic benefit to the region than this proposed mine.

Craig Sterle is Conservation Issues Chair for the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League.

LEAGUE LEADERSHIP

Izaak Walton League members led the charge to establish the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. They included the League national conservation director Joe Penfold, Bud Heinselman, Sig Olson and Dave Zentner.

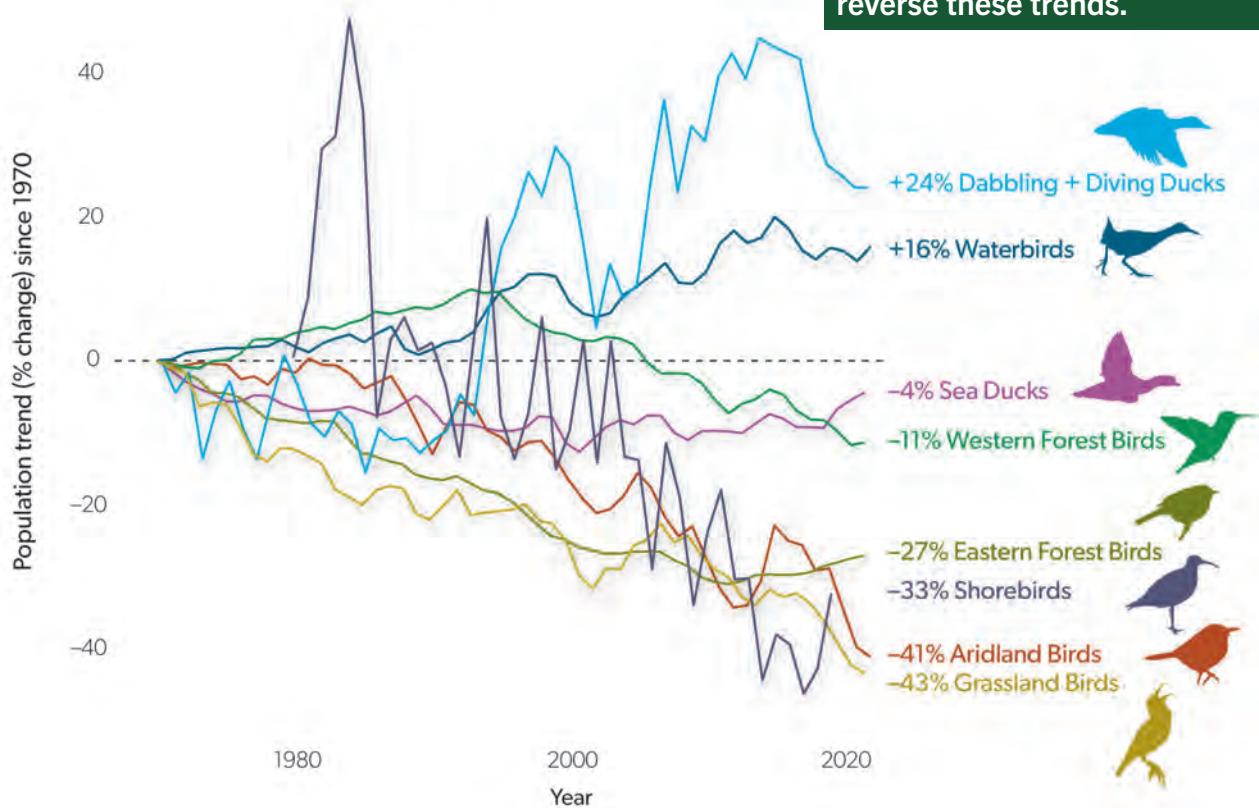
Penfold was the driving force behind the influential Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Committee created by Congress in 1958, which provided the scaffolding to support the creation of the 1964 Wilderness Act, along with many other important laws and policies adopted during the 1960s.

Loss of Birds Continues, Outdoor Recreation Generates \$1.2 Trillion

By MICHAEL REINEMER | Editor

Long-term Population Trends for America's Birds

Bird populations are declining but habitat conservation can reverse these trends.



2025 "State of the Birds" Report Shows Continuing Loss in U.S.

The 2025 State of the Birds report for the U.S. shows that trend of continuing loss of birds across the nation. Ducks, formerly a bright spot in past reports, have suffered a downward trend in recent years.

The report reveals widespread declines in bird populations for

all mainland and marine habitats, with 229 species that require urgent conservation action.

"For each species that we're in danger of losing, it's like pulling an individual thread out of the complex tapestry of life." - Peter Marra, Georgetown University biologist

Marshall Johnson, chief conservation officer at the National Audubon Society, said, "Birds tell us that we have a full-on emergency across all habitats."

A few highlights from the 2025 report follow.

- Loss of wetlands is accelerating for waterfowl and protections for wetlands have been weakened. Protecting America's waterfowl and waterbird conservation legacy means

living up to the pledge of no-net-loss of wetlands and delivering solutions that benefit wetland birds, farmers and human health.

- Among bird species that depend on grasslands for breeding habitat, more than half the species are in steep decline.
- Shorebirds have the most species suffering from perilously low populations and steep declines at migratory sites along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Actions to restore their critical coastal habitats would also protect people and property from storms, flooding and sea level rise.
- More than 50 percent of western forest birds are declining due to habitat degradation from fire suppression, development and industrial timber management, which have reduced the historic habitat mosaic of old growth forest and regularly burned area birds depend on.
- Voluntary conservation programs in the Farm Bill, such as the Conservation Reserve Program, have supported duck populations, but since 2007, the acres enrolled in that program have declined by half across the vital prairie pothole region.
- Wetland management strategies can help keep at-risk species such as the king rail off endangered species lists, avoiding expensive regulations and litigation. The eastern



Bicycling is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy.

black rail was recently listed due to habitat loss.

In light of the report, Georgetown University biologist Peter Marra commented, “For each species that we’re in danger of losing, it’s like pulling an individual thread out of the complex tapestry of life.”

“There is no doubt that the 2025 State of the Birds report is cause for alarm,” said Jeff Walters, conservation committee co-chair for the American Ornithological Society. “But it is also cause for hope. Public interest in birds and the economic benefits from birding are at unprecedented levels, as is the information available about the status of each and every one of our bird species.”

The 2025 U.S. State of the Birds report was produced by a consortium of scientific and conservation organizations and entities led by North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Read the full report here: stateofthebirds.org/2025.

[Source, State of the Birds 2025 Report and Associated Press, March 13, 2025]

Outdoor Recreation Is a \$1.2 Trillion Economic Engine in the U.S.

Outdoor recreation in the U.S. generated \$1.2 trillion in economic output—or 2.3 percent of the nation’s GDP—and supported five million jobs in 2023. That’s the latest data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The economic output represents a 36 percent increase since 2012. The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, a trade group representing the industry, said the figures show that outdoor recreation represents a larger economic sector than farming, mining or utilities.

Among the fastest-growing outdoor activities for 2022-2023, by percentage:

- Bicycling, +26.6
- Snow activities + 25.2
- Hunting/shooting/trapping +19.3
- Climbing/hiking/tent camping + 13.9
- Motorcycling/ATVing +7.6

The Roundtable commented that, “As the outdoor recreation economy grows, so does the need for continued investment in public lands and infrastructure. Without updates and improvements, many recreation areas risk falling behind demand.”

Read more at recreationroundtable.org.

[Sources: Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis]



LAST LOOK

“Bird-watching is the ideal hobby—diverse, accessible, intellectual, physical, unpredictable, and above all, an outdoor pursuit.”

— David Sibley
The Sibley Field Guide to Birds



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2025 National Convention

Green Bay, Wisconsin, July 18-19



Defending America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations

In July, Ikes from across the country will gather in Green Bay, Wisconsin for the 2025 national convention. The convention follows a two-day format, July 18-19. The Early Bird Welcome Reception will be on Thursday evening, July 17.

This schedule includes the traditional convention business: national officer and Executive Board elections, votes on policy resolutions, national and membership awards and speakers.

Make hotel reservations early.

The convention will be held at the **Tundra Lodge Resort, Water Park and Conference Center** in the heart of the Stadium District only four blocks from legendary Lambeau Field. It includes two restaurants and a poolside bar, and guests enjoy free Wi-Fi in every room and complimentary parking. The main attraction for kids of all ages is the 30,000-square-foot

waterpark with everything from towering water slides to a lazy river.

To reserve your room at the League's discounted group rate, you must call the hotel directly at 877-886-3725. When calling the hotel, tell the staff you want to make a reservation for the Izaak Walton League national convention in July, and this will prompt them to provide you with the League's group rate.

Before calling to reserve your room, see detailed information about room types and rates at iwla.org/convention2025. Our discounted rates are good Tuesday, July 15 through Monday, July 21, 2025, subject to availability.

Reserve your hotel room and
see more convention details at
iwla.org/convention2025.