



## What Makes A Successful Chapter

Five features are essential to chapter success:

- Good officers
- Definite goals and accomplishments
- Regular and interesting meetings
- Worthwhile projects
- Active participation in the whole organization.

**Good Officers** – Officers should be leaders in the community, known for energy, alertness, and good judgment. They should have well-conducted, attention-holding meetings on worthwhile subjects, see that all committee work and progress is properly reported, and assure that members are kept up-to-date on resource conservation matters at national, regional, state, and local levels.

They also should be interested in mentoring new volunteers and drawing out their qualities of leadership. When a once-prosperous and active chapter begins to decline, the reason is often that former officers didn't develop future leaders to take over the top jobs when their terms ended. The best volunteer leaders constantly recruit and train new and/or younger members to participate.

The key is to just ask! Put them to work and follow up to see how they did. Then, at meetings, publicly give them credit and recognition for deeds accomplished. A word of praise, singling a member out by name as you say something good about their leadership skills, interest, and activity, goes a long way toward stimulating more interest and worthwhile results.

**Definite Goals and Accomplishments** – There are many conservation issues a chapter can tackle successfully. This Manual contains suggestions to help chapter officers and committees determine worthwhile projects. When your chapter decides on a local project or activity, be sure to go after it with success in mind. Seek short-term results that your members and the public can see and can point to with real pride.

**Regular and Interesting Meetings** – Meetings should be held regularly, at dates and times fixed in advance. To help ensure good turnouts, meetings should be well advertised on your Web site, in chapter newsletters, and in local newspapers.

To have truly successful meetings, officers should find innovative ways to ignite interest or desire for members and potential members to attend. The way you run your meetings will have a profound effect on attracting new members and encouraging them to roll up their sleeves and participate.

In some chapters, the officers' and directors' meetings are held an hour or so ahead of the chapter meeting. This allows committee chairs to make reports, handle routine chapter business, and decide in advance what matters of business are important enough to warrant general discussion and action. For some suggestions on how to run a good meeting and a model agenda, please refer to Appendix B found in the *IWLA Chapter Manual*.

**Worthwhile Projects** – One key to building and maintaining a successful chapter and advancing the conservation mission of the organization is to identify and carry out worthwhile projects. These can include projects to conserve local natural resources, to promote outdoor recreation, to educate the public about the work of the League and the need to protect our environment, and to recruit and retain new members. To lead efforts in each of these areas, many chapters appoint standing committees and committee chairs for membership, conservation, public relations, and education.

**Active Participation in the Whole Organization** – Successful chapters should be knowledgeable about the League's overall mission, goals, and programs. Share the news with your members so they feel connected to the larger organization and can take pride in all of the organization's successes. You will also want members to be able to tell the League's story to their friends and, in the process, to recruit new members to the cause.