



Izaak Walton League of America

Join the Clean Water Challenge

Today's Clean Water Crisis

Images of burning rivers and trash-choked streams may seem like pages torn from a history book. Our country has made real progress in improving water quality since the 1970s. However, our water pollution problems have not been solved – they have evolved.

Threats to water quality today are just as serious as when the Clean Water Act was passed. The greatest threat now is polluted runoff from farm fields, parking lots, industrial sites, and backyards across America. That runoff – much less visible than discharges from a factory pipe – flows unchecked and untreated into our streams and rivers. It carries animal waste, bacteria, cancer-causing chemicals, and countless other pollutants through our communities.



Yet as the threats to clean water become more dispersed, we have very limited information about water quality at the local level. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 80% of streams across America are not monitored for pollution. And that's only part of the problem. Of the fraction of streams that are monitored, EPA reports that more than half do not meet basic safety standards for fishing, swimming, or as sources of drinking water.

On one hand, the public does not know whether local streams are safe or dangerous for their families. On the other hand, when streams *are* tested for pollution, the majority still are not clean enough to meet basic standards set by the states.

Tackling the Problems: Clean Water Challenge

Water quality problems nationwide are serious – and solvable. Our solution is to empower more Americans to collect water quality information in local streams. Through the Clean Water Challenge, the Izaak Walton League will mobilize and train volunteers across the country to monitor 100,000 more stream sites by 2022.

The Izaak Walton League is a national leader in volunteer stream monitoring. In 1969, we launched Save Our Streams (SOS), a program that gives volunteers simple tools to reliably assess the health of streams in their communities. Save Our Streams is a nationally recognized model for community-based water quality monitoring, and the League has engaged thousands of volunteers in this effort.



How You Can Help

The ultimate goal of the Clean Water Challenge is to protect and improve water quality nationwide. Everyone can help achieve this goal. Here are a few steps you can take today!

STEP 1: Protect Clean Water at Home

There are simple steps we all can take at home to protect clean water. Keeping it clean at home means healthier streams for everyone.

- Dispose of unwanted medications at your local pharmacy rather than flushing them down the toilet, which can pollute streams and drinking water.
- Use the garbage disposal less frequently. Garbage disposals use a lot of water, and all that organic material running down your pipes increases the nutrient load in local waterways, which is the main cause of harmful algal blooms.
- Clean up pet waste. When it rains, pet waste gets washed into local waterways, where it can contaminate water and can make you sick!
- Minimize lawn fertilizer use or eliminate it altogether. Excess fertilizer from our yards is carried by rain water into local streams – another contributor of harmful algal blooms.

STEP 2: Snap a Stream Selfie

Show us *your* favorite stream! Simply snap a picture of a stream that's important to you, answer a few key questions, and share your picture on our Stream Selfie website.

With each photo, the League can highlight streams that are being monitored today and develop a national inventory of streams that could be monitored in the future. It is also a fun activity for kids and families who like to get outside and want to be a part of the Clean Water Challenge!

Visit iwla.org/streamselfie to get started.



STEP 3: Monitor a Local Stream

You don't need a background in science or expensive equipment to be a volunteer stream monitor. With simple tools plus targeted training from the League, you can start testing water quality in your community today! Your time commitment is small (less than 12 hours per year) but your impact is huge. Here's how to get started:

- Visit our Save Our Streams website for stream monitoring video tutorials, equipment lists, and tips for beginning stream monitors: iwla.org/sos.
- League staff can also provide in-person, hands-on workshops to teach you and your neighbors how to monitor streams for water quality. Visit our website for information on upcoming trainings: iwla.org/workshops.



For more information about the Clean Water Challenge, visit iwla.org/challenge. Questions? E-mail the League's Save Our Streams coordinator at sos@iwla.org.