



The Izaak Walton League of America

Celebrating 90 Years of Defending Outdoor America

On January 14, 1922, fifty-four visionary sportsmen met in Chicago, Illinois, to discuss an issue of common concern: the deteriorating conditions of America's top fishing streams. Uncontrolled industrial discharges, raw sewage, and soil erosion threatened to destroy many of the nation's most productive waterways. At the same time, valuable wetlands were being drained, important wildlife habitat was being destroyed, and the country's forests and wilderness areas were disappearing quickly.

Aware that action – not just talk – would be necessary to solve these problems, the group decided to form an organization to combat water pollution and protect the country's woods and wildlife. As a reminder of their purpose, they named the organization after Izaak Walton, the 17th-century English angler-conservationist who wrote the literary classic, "The Compleat Angler."

The Izaak Walton League of America soon became the nation's preeminent organization of hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts dedicated to sustainable use of our country's natural resources. Today, the League's 39,000 members and more than 250 community-based chapters are building on the accomplishments of those who preceded them as defenders of the nation's soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife.

Clean Water: The League has been at the forefront of every major clean water battle in the United States, from a decades-long push for federal water pollution control in the 1940s to efforts today to restore Clean Water Act protections for critical streams and wetlands. League leaders helped conceive the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 and broke the political ground necessary for passage of the landmark 1972 Clean Water Act. League members around the country use our landmark Save Our Streams to monitor local waterways, plan restoration projects, and report water quality problems. Today our priorities include engaging youth in the outdoors, cleaning up nonpoint source pollution, and halting the spread of invasive species.

Public Lands: The League led the charge to create the Land and Water Conservation Fund and works today to ensure the Fund is used for its intended purposes: acquiring public land and creating local opportunities for outdoor recreation. The League spearheaded conservation of undeveloped lands and waters for the benefit of all Americans. Creation of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Superior National Forest, Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and the Everglades and Isle Royale National Parks were largely the result of League efforts.

Farm Policy: Our efforts to address soil erosion date back to 1937, when the League called for a national program to retire fields in mountainous areas from agricultural use. The League also pushed for state laws controlling indiscriminate application of agricultural chemicals. A decade before Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring," the League highlighted in *Outdoor America* the long-term harm of DDT on fish and wildlife. The League worked with Congress to encourage farmers to retire marginal farmland as

“conservation reserves,” leading to creation of the Soil Bank Program in 1955 and the Sodbuster and Conservation Reserve Programs in 1985. The League also supported programs to keep family farms in business. Today, the League is leading efforts to ensure taxpayer investments in farm programs are linked to common-sense conservation practices that protect our soil and water quality.

Clean and Renewable Energy: The League’s advocacy efforts helped make “acid rain” a household phrase in the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Since then, the League has worked in the upper Midwest and across the country to advance energy efficiency and promote renewable energy resources to power our homes, businesses, and vehicles. Legislation championed by the League in Minnesota – including a nation-leading renewable energy standard for utilities and a statewide energy policy that seeks to limit greenhouse gas emissions – serves as a model for other states. The League recently won a decade-long battle for strong federal regulation of the largest source of mercury emissions in the United States: coal-fired power plants.

Fish and Wildlife: Since the League’s founding, our members have worked to conserve America’s hunting and angling traditions for future generations. The League was an early backer of federal legislation to support wildlife and sport fish restoration and habitat conservation with fees paid by hunters, anglers, and recreational shooters – an investment that benefits every American. When the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act was signed into law, it culminated 25 years of work by the League to establish the system’s conservation mission while safeguarding wildlife-dependent uses such as hunting and fishing. Today the League remains a strong advocate for a robust refuge system. We are also working to restore the Missouri and Upper Mississippi River ecosystems to conserve fish and wildlife and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities.

Community-Based Conservation: Izaak Walton League chapters are rooted in communities across America, meeting local conservation challenges and working to introduce youth and families to conservation and outdoor recreation. League members, known as “Ikes,” build nature trails, restore stream banks, plant trees and rain gardens, and prevent the spread of invasive species. Many chapters are community centers for archery and shooting sports and offer hunter education classes and fishing clinics to promote responsible outdoor behavior and activities. League chapters also award more than \$125,000 in scholarships each year to college students working toward natural resource degrees. This is just a fraction of what Ikes do.

As the Izaak Walton League reaches our 90th anniversary in 2012, we encourage our members and supporters across the country to join us in celebrating the League’s tradition of grassroots conservation activism and work with us to ensure the health of the country’s natural resources for generations to come.

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