FACT SHEET

WILDERNESS & PUBLIC LANDS

Since its founding in 1922, the Izaak Walton League has been a staunch advocate of wilderness and has striven to improve the management of our forests, rangelands, national parks, and wildlife refuges. To this day, protection of our nation's public lands remains a major focal point of the League's conservation efforts.

MANAGING PUBLIC LANDS

The League believes that outstanding lands should be set aside for special management as parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas. When these lands are threatened, League members step forward to protect them. When a plan to sell off selected parcels of national forest land to private buyers was proposed recently, the League and its members jumped in to oppose the sale. Many of the parcels offered public access to some of the best outdoor recreation in the country. Congress listened and rejected the proposal. Similarly, League members stood their ground when a 754-acre development was proposed next to the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland.

With explosive growth in the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs), we are spearheading efforts to protect public lands and roadless areas from the damage caused by irresponsible use of OHVs. In addition to documenting the physical damage caused by these vehicles, we have educated the public and elected officials on the adverse impact OHVs can have on hunting and fishing opportunities.

PRESERVING WILDERNESS AREAS

Wilderness is defined by the federal Wilderness Act as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain … which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions." Consistent with this definition, we place great importance on protecting wilderness areas. For instance, we fight to ensure that the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, a unique and beautiful 1.1 million area along the Canadian border in northern Minnesota, as well as other designated wilderness areas, retain their wilderness character. We are also a strong voice for the designation of new wilderness areas across the country, such as those in South Dakota's Buffalo Gap National Grassland and Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest.

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