



Who We Are

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America

The National Izaak Walton League of America

A private group of citizens in the Chicago, Illinois area were concerned about the quality of water in their fishing streams and so they founded in 1922 the “Walton Club”. The Izaak Walton League grew to become one of the nation's oldest and most respected conservation organizations. With a powerful grassroots network of nearly 260 local chapters nationwide, the League takes a common-sense approach toward protecting our country's natural heritage and improving outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans.

Today the Izaak Walton League of America is a diverse group of 40,000 to 50,000 men and women dedicated to protecting our nation's soil, air, woods, waters and wildlife. Our strength lies in our grassroots, commonsense approach to solving local, regional and national conservation issues. Our interests span the spectrum of outdoor recreation and conservation activities, from angling and birding to stream monitoring, wildlife photography and hunting. But we all share one major goal: *to protect, use, and sustain America's rich resources to ensure a high quality of life for all people, now and in the future.*

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America

The Bethesda Chevy Chase Chapter (BCC) was chartered on October 23, 1935 by the Izaak Walton League of America. The initial membership of 15 has grown to over 1000, making it one of the largest and most active of the IWLA's 600 plus chapters. Some of the current members of the BCC Chapter are the third generation of their families to belong.

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Lacking funds and formal facilities, the monthly chapter meetings in the early years were held in individual homes, borrowed meeting rooms, restaurants, etc. in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Maryland area. In 1949 the chapter was able to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase a 366-acre farm in Poolesville, Maryland, near the Potomac River and about 20 miles northwest of Washington, D.C. It was at that time a badly depleted farm with limited access and little value for any other purpose.

Next to the purchase of the original farm, the most ambitious undertaking in the chapter's 64 years was the purchase in late 1997 of the 127-acre West Woods tract adjoining the original 366 acres. This property was purchased with a grant from the Maryland Environmental Trust in return for placing a Conservation Easement on the property. The Maryland Environmental Trust and the Potomac Conservancy are co-holders of that Conservation Easement. In 2000 the Chapter placed a Conservation Easement on the original 366-acre farm in return for funds paid by the Montgomery County Rural Legacy Foundation. The B-CC IWLA Legacy Foundation was created to manage these funds independent from the Chapter, and to provide "no-interest" loans to the Chapter solely for the purchase of additional lands

In 2006 an additional 30-acres dubbed West Woods II was purchased with a "no interest" loan from the B-CC IWLA Legacy Foundation. This tract is significant for many reasons. Approximately one-fourth of it is shale barrens, a unique habitat in which more than a dozen rare and endangered plant species have been identified. It provides food and cover for wild turkeys, deer and other wildlife. It is contiguous to the 1960-acre McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area, which in turn adjoins Seneca State Park, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the Potomac River, providing a corridor for wildlife movement over a large area. At the time of B-CC's purchase, this land was in the process of being platted for development. Most recently, in November 2010 B-CC members voted to purchase an additional 50-acres bordering the north-east property boundary, and another adjacent 50-acres purchased in September 2012. With the purchase of these "North East Woods" B-CC members have preserved a total of 623-acres of woodlands, agricultural fields and open space in a region with some of the most intense development pressure in the U. S.

The BCC's property is a unique complex of habitats that includes two ponds and several seasonal streams, and woodlands in which more than a dozen rare and endangered plant species have been identified. It provides food and cover for upland wildlife native to Maryland forests including black bear, white-tail deer, red fox, raccoon, rabbits, and a myriad of reptiles, amphibians, insects and birds. It is contiguous to the 2000+ acre McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area, which in turn adjoins Seneca State Park, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park and the Potomac River, providing a corridor for wildlife movement over a large area.

Conservation easements that are adjacent to one another and prevent further development include the BCC IWLA farm of 623-acres, to the southeast the Willard farm of 294-acres, to the north the Morin farm of 311-acres, to the east the 500-acre property directly across from Izaak

Walton Way, to the west a 30-acre conservation park owned by the county adjacent to West Woods II, and to the south the McKee-Besher's 2000+ acre wildlife management area. The combined sum of these easements and management areas totaling over 3,662-acres provides continuous habitat for wildlife and an ecological gem for the resident's of Montgomery County.

So, who was Izaak Walton?

Izaak Walton is known mostly as the author of "The Compleat Angler," however he was recognized in his own lifetime chiefly as a biographer. He was the son of an alehouse keeper and attended local schools in Stafford, United Kingdom. He accepted an apprenticeship in 1617 in London with his brother-in-law, Thomas Grinsell, and by 1624 had his own business as a linen draper in Fleet Street, London. During the next 20-years he held several public posts in his parish of St. Dunstan's-in-the-west and became a senior member of the Ironmongers Company. In 1653 he published "The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation", a book about the innocuous pastime of fishing and contemplating nature and the outdoors. A final edition included a supplement on fly-fishing written at Izaak's request by his very close friend Charles Cotton. The Complete Angler was revived by Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1750 and the book has been reprinted constantly ever since as the first publication of the concept of conservation of the quality of streams to wildlife.

What is our purpose?

B-CC's goal is to develop and maintain our conservation farm as the best example of living resource management and habitat conservation in Montgomery County, in the State of Maryland, in the United States, and in the World. Our all volunteer membership strives to demonstrate the application of responsible, science based conservation of the soil, water in ponds and streams, woodlands, fields and wildlife. Our farm's cash crop is not grain or vegetables - it is the healthy ecological attitude of our membership. We see our farm as a 623-acre classroom in which to plant the seeds of ecological awareness, responsibility and respect.

How do we do this?

The B-CC Chapter has numerous committees that are led by its members and include: Farm, Wildlife, Ponds & Streams, Forestry, Conservation & Education, etc. (see website at www.bcciwla.org).

We sponsor events for members, such as family Campouts, Appalachian Trail hikes, native plant identification and invasive species eradication, hunting, Bar-B-Qs, fishing clinics, re-forestation of old fields by tree planting, fly-fishing instruction, pond and stream management,

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maintaining nature trails on our property, bird identification and nesting habitat, family garden plots, seasonal pumpkin patches and Christmas tree growing, and more.

BCC develops partnerships with sister organizations like Trout Unlimited, Maryland Native Plant Society, Ruffed Grouse Society, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Appalachian Trail Foundation, etc.

BCC supports and sponsors a world class hunter education and safety program to promote responsible, safe, and ethical hunting as an effective non-government wildlife resource management tool.

We realize that hunters and fisherman spend more time, money and effort on wildlife conservation than any other group in society.

BCC operates rifle & pistol, shotgun, and archery ranges for its member's recreational shooting and to develop safety and accuracy skills required for ethical and responsible hunting.

BCC offers low membership fees by maintaining our facilities and properties ourselves and passing on the savings in the form of low membership dues for family and individual memberships to those individuals that can pledge to support the core mission and goals of the IWLA and the B-CC Chapter.

How do you become a member?

Attend three monthly dinner meetings which are held the third Wednesday of each month, obtain a member to sponsor your membership, and take the IWLA conservation pledge, and become involved in the Chapter's activities as a volunteer, by leading working groups, lead activities, and even serve on the Board of Governors.

We invite you to learn about our work and to join us in supporting important conservation initiatives in your community.

BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE CHAPTER IWLA

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

Our History: The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America (BCC-IWLA) was founded in 1935 by 15 visionary hunters and fishermen. These men were not far removed from the intrinsic bonds that tied their prosperity to the health and fertility of the land. They believed strongly in the preservation of wildlife, woodlands, and open space and the wise use of the land and its natural resources. Their vision of conservation encouraged a harmonious interaction with natural resources that provided a sustainable grass roots connection to nature as opposed to a pure environmental protectionism. They also believed in providing outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hunting and fishing, to propagate and foster a respect for the outdoors for future generations.

A 366-acre farm, stripped of its wildlife and the fertility of its soils, was purchased in 1949. Subsequent land acquisition increased these land holding to 623-acres. The mission and purpose of the BCC-IWLA membership was to oversee, direct, and model the farm as a demonstration project in sustainable wildlife and land management.

Our Philosophy: We inspire sound conservation ethics. We believe the land and the natural resources we have inherited are not simply a fiscal commodity, but a dynamic and diverse community to which we belong. We strive to understand the processes of nature that govern renewable and nonrenewable natural resources and to provide the environmental leadership, advocacy and initiative for our membership and our local community to coexist with the natural world with minimal disturbance and maximum respect. We are dedicated to expanding, encouraging and preserving access to open spaces. We value above all our ability to impart the framework of environmental stewardship. Our commitment is to create a forum that plants the seeds of ecological appreciation, reverence, and ethics for all things natural, wild, and free.

Our Membership: We expect our members to maintain the highest standards of ecological integrity. We recognize that our ability to most directly and positively impact local land and wildlife practices begins with the knowledge, imagination, dedication, instruction, and teamwork of our members and volunteers. We enlist no delineation between outdoor enthusiasts. The cooperative strength of the BCC-IWLA evolves from the diversity of our membership; naturalists, hunters, fishermen, hikers, campers, firearm enthusiasts, archers, and all others enjoying outdoor activities share collaborative and insightful roles under the name of conservation. We believe that future opportunities for outdoor enjoyment are dependent on the collective talents, time, funding, and energy of the entire outdoor community.

Our Farm: It is with our farm that we discharge our responsibility as “The Ambassadors of Conservation.” We maintain and model our conservation farm as a shining and exemplary pillar

of environmental and biotic stewardship. We recognize our farm as a living classroom and our members and guests as students of conservation and outdoor ethics. We both educate and enlist, not only our membership, but also the general community and other like-minded conservation organizations through our conservation farm. Our farm provides a substantive and tactile bridge between the academic ideals of environmental stewardship and the physical realities of soil, water, air, wildlife, and open space. We strive to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between our farm, our membership, and our local community.

Our Future: The most serious obstacles impeding the local land ethic of future generations are irresponsible development and the environmentally apathetic attitude of a populace too long removed from agriculture and other outdoor occupations. We will continually strive to find a sustainable and philosophic balance between population growth/urban development and the aesthetic and rejuvenating reward nature and outdoor recreation can bring to our community. Our goal is to educate and embolden the local community to foster, explore, and enjoy wild places and to advocate the wise use of our local ecosystems – to teach a harmonious relationship with the land and its wildlife and to realize the consequences of all manmade interaction with the natural world. We must therefore create an open, fluid, and creative forum for membership to shape local policies and legislation that protect our natural resources for future generations.

IWLA Mission Statement:

“To conserve, maintain, protect and restore the soils, forest, water, and other natural resources of the United States and other lands;

To promote means and opportunities for the education of the public with respect to such resources and their enjoyment and wholesome utilization”

IWLA Pledge:

“To strive for the purity of water, the clarity of air, and wise stewardship of the land and its resources,

To know the beauty and understanding of nature and the value of wildlife, woodlands, and open space,

To the preservation of this heritage and to man’s sharing in it,

I pledge myself as a member of the Izaak Walton League of America.”

