



# Hogback Echo

Hogback Mountain ~ the highest point in Warren County!



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Mike Longmire

Dear Fellow Ikes,  
I am pleased to report that our Chapter continues to perform very well, both financially and in the overall condition of our facilities and grounds.

I hope everyone came through the winter season with minimal difficulty, as we fortunately did. As we move into spring, several projects are scheduled to begin soon, with the goal of completing them before the start of mowing season. Notices will be sent with additional details, and we may seek volunteers to assist with these efforts.

I am confident that our Board is working collaboratively in the best interest of the Chapter, and I hope you share that confidence. Progress continues across many areas. The recent timber harvest has proven highly beneficial, supporting the revitalization of forest growth while enhancing wildlife habitat and improving the overall experience for our members. In addition, trails have been widened and replanted.

With the arrival of warmer weather, I encourage all members to visit the Park and enjoy its natural beauty and tranquility.

Please also note that elections for next year's Board will be held soon. If you are interested in becoming more involved, whether by serving on the Board or contributing in another capacity, we welcome your participation. I encourage you to reach out to me or any member of the Board with questions or to discuss opportunities for involvement.

I look forward to seeing you at the Park.

Sincerely,  
Mike

## IWLA Mission

**To conserve, restore, and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including soil, air, woods, water and wildlife.**

### Izaak Walton League Member Pledge

**To strive for the purity of water, the clarity of air, and the 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 mankind's sharing in it.**

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



**Visit our website**

# Spring Turns My Heart to Love... for Fishing

by Herschel Finch



*I have laid aside business, and gone a'fishing.*

~Izaak Walton

I don't know about anyone else but I'm ready for some Spring! That 'SnowCrete' made life difficult at Chateau Finch for a week and half at least. I had a pile of it under one of the roof valleys that buried my fuel oil fill pipe for a time. Thankfully moderating temperatures and some most welcome spring rains seemed to be taking care of the issue.

And when temps turn warmer and the spring rains fall, a young man's heart may turn to love...but this senior heart turns to fishing

Given the weather patterns this winter I have high hopes for good water levels for the upcoming spawn season. That will kick off about the time the water temps hit 50-55 degrees in mid April. So lets get ourselves 'tuned up' for that event shall we?


## Flycast and Archery Saturdays

I'll be conducting our monthly Flycast and Archery Saturdays again this year. I'm hoping by **April 18th**, we'll have cooperative temperatures so we can start up the festivities.

Like last year, we'll start about 10am and practice our flycasting at the pond till about noon, then break for lunch and reconvene at the Archery range at 1:00 and go until 2 or 3 if our shoulders hold out that long.

I'll be scheduling month to month like last year so as not to interfere with bigger and more important activities at the chapter.

And speaking of flyfishing, the Shenandoah River State Park manager is planning on holding what they hope will be the first annual FlyFishing tournament to benefit the Riverkeeper. You can get all the information you need by contacting the State Park or use the web address below for all the details: South Fork Fly Fishing Tournament

Also in April is an event near and dear to my heart: Lone Pine Day. On the 26th of April. As always we'll have the popular tree giveaway (get in line early, they go fast) and over 40 participants and either 4 or 5 food trucks. In any event, it's always a good time. Come join us 





## Waltonians Welcome New Members

by Charlene Finch, Membership

Spring has come to Izaak Walton. The redbud trees are blooming beautifully in time for the upcoming festival, and that monster rhododendron along the drive into the Park will be beautiful in May. It's well worth a trip out Browntown Road.

We welcomed eight new members in March. It was a busy evening with great attendance as we greeted our newest Waltonians!

Matt Bennett is a leather worker, and it cheers you up just to talk with him.

Michael Fristoe and Leslie Williams have joined together and will be married at the Park this fall—how exciting (and romantic)!

Mark Manno, a local plumber, has already helped make improvements in the Chapter House. I highly recommend him—he came through for us during an expensive mess!

Ken Mitchell is an avid sportsman who lives close to the Park and will be able to take full advantage of all Izaak Walton has to offer.

Jon and Laura Hammersley have two beautiful daughters and are Civil War reenactors. I look forward to learning more when I see them again.

Clay Hughes is a local Scout Master who is already well acquainted with the Park—his scouts hike and camp here.

We are working with new applicants all the time, so be sure to come to meetings and help us make them feel welcome! 🌿



## Anti-Litter

by Bill Lacy, "The Trash Man"

OK, so nobody joins the Izaak Walton league just so they can pick up trash along Browntown Road and Happy Creek. However, conservation is the name of our game and all the trash we pick up is trash that will not end up in our waterways and the ocean. It's a simple thing but it means a lot.

Your anti-litter coordinator provides a little more incentive in pizza and chocolate chip cookies, but let's join in because it's a commitment made by our chapter and it's the right thing to do. I hope to see you at an upcoming event!

## CONSERVATION UPDATE

By Sue Cullers



As we begin a new season, we'll continue to keep an eye on the conservation issues that shape life here in Warren County and across the Shenandoah Valley from water and air quality to wildlife habitat to land use and energy infrastructure.

In this issue, we are taking a closer look at data center development, especially following the recent interest by a developer with plans to use Warren County land for a data center.

Digital infrastructure is part of modern life, but it also raises important questions about electricity demand, transmission lines, water use, and long-term impacts on our landscape.

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Virginia claims the unfortunate moniker of "data center capital of the world". Data center development continues to expand beyond Northern Virginia, reaching communities in the Shenandoah Valley and surrounding rural counties.

These facilities require significant electricity, new substations and transmission lines, and large volumes of water for cooling. In our region, this can mean impacts to forested land, farmland, scenic viewsheds, wildlife habitat, and local watersheds. Even when a facility is not located directly in Warren County, associated transmission infrastructure may cross neighboring landscapes.

We will be keeping our eyes on conservation issues and keeping you informed about opportunities to support legislative protections as well as opportunities to push back on harmful legislation. We can and need to be engaged stewards of the natural resources we all value. 

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Mike Longmire — [lmikelongmire2526@gmail.com](mailto:lmikelongmire2526@gmail.com)

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Steve Merz — [wciwla.firstvp@gmail.com](mailto:wciwla.firstvp@gmail.com)

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President, Herschel Finch — [doahriverrat@gmail.com](mailto:doahriverrat@gmail.com)

Treasurer, Jim Sylvester — [jamesesylvester@gmail.com](mailto:jamesesylvester@gmail.com)

Membership Secretary, Charlene Finch — [warren.co.iwla.membership@gmail.com](mailto:warren.co.iwla.membership@gmail.com)

Recording Secretary, Damon Sutton — [dsutton99999@gmail.com](mailto:dsutton99999@gmail.com)

### STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Buildings & Grounds, TBD

Save Our Streams, Anthony Adamovich — [anthonyadamovich@gmail.com](mailto:anthonyadamovich@gmail.com)

Anti-Litter, Bill Lacy — [blacy358@gmail.com](mailto:blacy358@gmail.com)

Conservation & Community Affairs, Sue Cullers — [suesancullers@gmail.com](mailto:suesancullers@gmail.com)

Budget & Finance, Harry Reed — [wciwla.events@gmail.com](mailto:wciwla.events@gmail.com)

### PROGRAM COMMITTEES CHAIRS

Events Coordinator, Sharon Longmire — [wciwla.events@gmail.com](mailto:wciwla.events@gmail.com)

Range/Safety, Don Broadway — [dpbroa@gmail.com](mailto:dpbroa@gmail.com)



## **2026: A Year of Activity and Community Engagement Ahead**

by Sharon Longmire, Events Coordinator

I'm pleased to share that the Warren County Chapter has a full and engaging schedule planned for the coming year. Our recurring programs—Walton Wednesdays, Kid Saturdays, Youth Day, membership meetings, and the annual Family Picnic—will continue to offer meaningful opportunities for education, outreach, and fellowship.

In addition, the Chapter will participate in several community events throughout the year. These vendor events allow us to engage with the public, promote our mission, and increase awareness of the Izaak Walton League and our local efforts. A complete listing of these events can be found in this newsletter.

Chapter grounds will also see significant use in 2026. Scheduled activities include Scout programs, military drills conducted by Randolph–Macon Academy cadets, as well as private events such as weddings, reunions, and family gatherings. This high level of activity reflects the strength and visibility of our organization within the community.

To support these activities, we will continue ongoing maintenance and property improvement projects. Members who are available to assist are encouraged to join our regular Friday morning work sessions. Breakfast is served promptly at 7:30 am every Friday morning before work starts. Those unable to attend on Fridays interested in helping are invited to contact us to arrange alternative opportunities.

Volunteer support is essential to the success of our programs. Opportunities are available in a variety of areas, including assisting with youth events, representing the Chapter at public outreach events, and helping with maintenance projects. We welcome participation at any level and appreciate every contribution.

On another note, the Chapter has recently acquired a large inventory of quilting materials. We are exploring the possibility of hosting a quilting–focused gathering later this summer or early fall—an opportunity to exchange materials, share knowledge, and enjoy coffee and sweets. Members who are interested are encouraged to reach out.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Chapter and its mission. If you have any questions, suggestions, or would like to volunteer, please contact me at 540-671-5127 or [wciwla.events@gmail.com](mailto:wciwla.events@gmail.com).

## 2026 EVENTS & PROGRAMS

### Community Outreach Events

*The Chapter will be represented at the following events:*

- April 4 Bluebell Festival, Shenandoah River State Park (10:00 AM – 4:00 PM)
- April 11 Skyline High School FFA Steak Dinner, Skyline High School (4:00 PM – TBD)
- April 18 Redbud Festival, Browntown Community Center (9:00 AM – 3:00 PM)
- April 26 Lone Pine Day, Downtown Front Royal Gazebo (10:00 AM – 3:00 PM)
- June 19 Juneteenth Celebration, Downtown Front Royal Gazebo (12:00 PM – 7:00 PM)
- October 10 Festival of Leaves, Downtown Front Royal (10:00 AM – 6:00 PM)

*Members are encouraged to participate in these events as representatives of the Chapter.*



### Youth and Family Programs

**Kid Saturdays (10:00 AM – 1:30 PM)**

April 11 | July 18 | September 19 | November 14

**Youth Day**

**May 16 (10:00 AM – 4:00 PM)**

Includes a fishing tournament, educational activities, and family-oriented programming. Food will be provided at no cost.

**Walton Wednesdays (10:00 AM – 1:30 PM)**

June 3, 10, 17, and 24

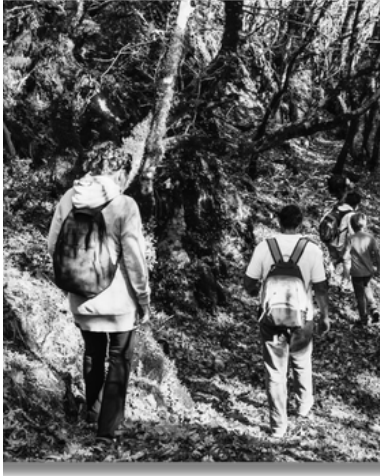
**Location:  
3364 Gooney Manor Loop  
Bentonville, VA 22610**

All youth programs are open to the public. A parent or guardian must remain on-site during participation. Attendees are asked to bring a bag lunch; all other materials and supplies will be provided. Each program includes a conservation-focused lesson followed by a related hands-on activity. With lunch and free play in the Park following.

**For additional information, please contact:  
wciwla.events@gmail.com | 540-671-5127**

## Trail Day 2026: Building Trails & Community Together

by Damon Sutton



On Sunday, April 19 from 8AM to 2PM, the Warren County IWLA Chapter will host a special Trail Day at Izaak Walton Park, kicking off the first phase of trail rehabilitation following last year's logging efforts.

This year's event is more than just trail work. We're excited to partner with cadets from Randolph-Macon Academy for a day of shared "sweat equity," mentorship, and connection.

Together, members and cadets will roll up their sleeves to clear debris, reduce visible log piles, and improve trail markings for better navigation.

We'll also begin identifying and flagging future campsites and tent platform locations.

Throughout the day, Chapter members will have the opportunity to mentor cadets, sharing knowledge about tool use, land stewardship, and conservation ethics.

It's a chance to restore our trails while also investing in the next generation of conservation leaders. 🌿

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## Bluebird Monitors Needed



Want a peek inside a bluebird nesting box—eggs or tiny chicks included? Volunteer as a Bluebird Monitor at Shenandoah River State Park or Izaak Walton Park!

Monitors check boxes, record simple observations (nests, eggs, chicks, species), and help protect nesting birds.

Monitoring runs from April 1 through August and takes about 1–1.5 hours per visit. Volunteers commit to at least once a month, with options for weekly help.

Children are welcome, and park admission is free while monitoring.

Multiple trails are available at Shenandoah River State Park, and a shorter 12-box trail is located at Izaak Walton Park—perfect for a relaxed walk.

Training will be held on a Saturday. Interested? Contact Volunteer Coordinator Lee Bowen at 540-671-1906 (call or text) or [lbowen@ramseytruevalue.com](mailto:lbowen@ramseytruevalue.com). 🐦



## Projects and Plans for the Chapter Property

The Chapter is pleased to share several upcoming repairs and improvement projects aimed at enhancing both the functionality and enjoyment of our park.

In recent weeks, important upgrades have been completed in the Chapter House. Carpeting has been removed and outdated furniture—much of which was no longer suitable for use—has been cleared. Interior steps to the meeting porch have been modified to improve safety and accessibility.

In addition, the aging water system has been replaced with a more efficient, cost-effective filtration system.

Looking ahead, several projects will begin soon. New exterior steps will be constructed on the Spring House side of the meeting porch to provide safer access.

We are also excited to support an upcoming Eagle Scout project in the newly cleared area off Pond Road, where a larger rustic campsite—featuring tent platforms and a fire ring—will be developed. Updates will be shared as work progresses.

Preliminary plans are also underway for a fishing dock designed for safe access by children and individuals using wheelchairs, as well as a partially ADA-accessible playground.

Grant funding is being pursued to help offset costs. While these projects will take time, steady progress is underway.

Routine mowing and general property maintenance will continue throughout the year to ensure the park remains a place we can all enjoy and take pride in.

### TECH UPDATE

We want to update our website, social media platforms, email protocols, and cloud storage. If this is your specialty, we would appreciate your stepping up to support your Chapter with your tech skills!

**Contact:**

**Steve Merz, 1<sup>st</sup> VP**

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