

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA
JAN 2026



FORT WAYNE CHAPTER NEWS

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the Fort Wayne Chapter

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Kid's enjoying the chapter winter wonderland are three of President Gabe and Ann Bowser's family.

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Fort Wayne Chapter, IWLA

CHAPTER ON THE MOVE!



Dear Members,

As we welcome the New Year, I want to extend my sincere thanks to each of you for being part of our Chapter. January is a time for reflection, renewal, and anticipation along with the perfect moment to look back on what we've accomplished together while setting our sights on the opportunities ahead.

2025 was an outstanding year for our Chapter. Through the dedication of our volunteers and the continued support of our membership, we made meaningful progress across our grounds, our programs, and our mission. We hosted many well-attended shooting sports events, expanded our archery program, and continued to maintain safe, accessible ranges for rifle, pistol, shotgun, and archery use. Our Walton Pond and hiking trails saw improvements, invasive species removal projects advanced habitat health, and our conservation efforts reinforced our commitment to responsible stewardship of the land.

Equally important were the countless hours volunteered behind the scenes helping to maintain facilities, mentor new members, staff events, support youth activities, and strengthen the sense of community that makes our Chapter unique. These accomplishments do not happen by accident; they happen because of people who care deeply about conservation, outdoor recreation, and fellowship.

As we move forward into 2026, the future is bright. The coming year will bring a full calendar of activities, including continued archery shoots, shooting sports events, conservation workdays, educational opportunities, and family-friendly gatherings. We will also be exploring new projects to enhance habitat, improve member experiences, and further our role as a "third place" where friendships are built, skills are shared, and traditions are passed on.

Our goals for 2026 include building on our momentum—expanding participation, welcoming new members, supporting youth involvement, and ensuring our grounds remain a place we are all proud of. Whether your passion is conservation, fishing, archery, shooting sports, camping, or simply enjoying time outdoors with like-minded people, there will be many opportunities to get involved.

I'd like to personally thank the individuals and families who made charitable contributions to the Chapter so we can continue to maintain our facilities and expand our programs. All donations small or large make a significant impact on all of us.

Thank you for your continued support, your volunteer spirit, and your commitment to the ideals of the Chapter. I am excited about what we will accomplish together in the year ahead and grateful to serve alongside such a dedicated membership.

The Board of Directors will be meeting later this month for our annual planning meeting. If you would like to see certain events or have ideas for the Chapter please reach out to me.

Wishing you and your families a healthy, safe, and fulfilling New Year.

Respectfully,

President
IWLA-FW

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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GIANT AMONG IWLA CONSERVATION ACTIVISTS

Remembering Tom Dustin – Member of Fort Wayne Chapter, IWLA

We have published several articles in past issues of the Fort Wayne Chapter NEWS about Tom and Jane Dustin. Considering the thousands of members names who have been on the chapter roster since our charting in 1922, they are perhaps the most active in conservation in the 100+ history of our chapter.

They were active members of our Chapter from the 1950s until Tom's passing on July 20, 2004. The significance of their accomplishments is perhaps best captured by the sentiments expressed in the obituaries published at the time of his passing. To document this, I conducted a thorough examination of newspaper archives and discovered several obituaries that chronicled Tom's extensive conservation efforts across the United States.

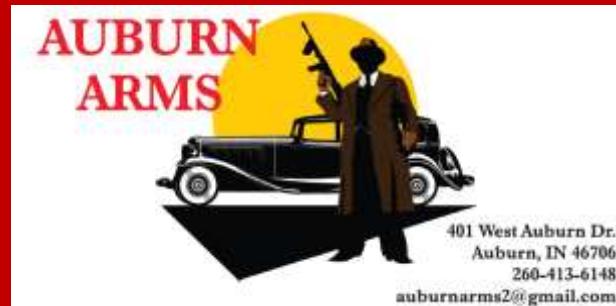
Initially, I intended to use these obituaries solely for research; however, as I found various obituaries, it became evident that they told their own story. Consequently, I reached out to the archivists at each respective newspaper, seeking and obtaining permission to publish the obituaries in their entirety. These documents reflect the high regard in which Tom was held by both advocates and critics alike, illuminating his legacy as a remarkable figure in the history of conservation. It is vital that his contributions are preserved through this documentation.

As one of the early conservationists and environmentalists, Tom explored lands across our nation, leaving a legacy that few can match. Among these was the saving of the land that would become Dinosaur National Park, and the land that now is Lakeshore National Park, as well

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as Fox Island, the Cedar Creek Corridor, what is now Eagle Marsh, preserved and the Boundary Canoe Water Wilderness in Minnesota, and many Forest Preserves and State Parks throughout Indiana.

The newspaper stories included here are printed with permission. We extend our gratitude to the following sources for granting us this reprint permission.

New-Sentinel – Fort Wayne, Indiana
Journal Gazette – Fort Wayne, Indiana
Jay County Daily Newspaper
Big Eastern Blog By Marty Lewis

Nature lobbyist Dustin Mourned Statewide - By Kevin Kilbane

The News-Sentinel, Sat., July 10, 2004

Long-time local environmentalists Tom and Jane Dustin might be better remembered for their vocal and sometimes fierce efforts to protect the environment. But the Huntertown-area couple also tried to interest new generations of people in safeguarding natural resources and to prepare those converts for the battles lying ahead.

Early Friday, Tom Dustin passed the torch -- and the challenge -- to those new generations when he died after an extended illness. Arrangements are pending; his age and place of death were unavailable late Friday. His death came seven months after the death of his wife, Jane, passed in November.

"I don't know if there is anybody who can fill those shoes," said Ron James, president of the Fort Wayne chapter of the Izaak Walton League, a national conservation group. *"Certainly there are people who are better prepared because of Tom and Jane's work."*

The Dustin's began their battle here to save the environment in the 1950s, working with others to protect what later became Indiana Dunes National Park.

"During the 1960s and early 1970s, Tom Dustin almost single-handedly served as the environmental lobby in the Indiana legislature.", said Steven Higgs of Bloomington, a former reporter who now produces a weekly online publication, Bloomington Alternative. Higgs featured the Dustin's prominently in author of his 1995

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book, "Eternal Vigilance: Nine Tales of Environmental Heroism in Indiana, with Tom chronicled as one of them." Tom Dustin also was environmental affairs adviser for the Indiana Izaak Walton League for the last few decades.

In the early 1970s, Dustin's work resulted in phosphates being banned from laundry detergent in Indiana, Higgs said. Phosphates had been found to cause algae blooms in lakes and streams, which resulted in fish kills and the gradual death of lakes. The Dustin's also opposed landfill expansions and helped protect what became Fox Island County Park southwest of Fort Wayne.

During the 1980s, Tom Dustin helped southern Indiana environmentalists protect Hoosier National Forest from clear-cut logging, Higgs said. Dustin also helped get a portion of the forest set aside as the Charles C. Deam Wilderness.

At a recent memorial gathering for Jane Dustin, longtime environmentalists stood with parents of elementary-age children, college students, neighbors local and state legislators.

"He had such a logical and impassioned way of presenting it, people listened," said Paul McAfee, president of the Little River Wetlands Project, whose group is seeking to restore wetlands that once linked the St. Mary's River west of Fort Wayne to the Wabash River system." (EDITOR: *This would become known as Eagle Marsh.*)

The Dustin's diligent research and doggedness also won admiration, even from opponents. "You couldn't ignore them", said Allen County Commissioner Ed Rousseau, who faced off against the Dustin's for 30 years on issues ranging from managing legal drains to a flood-control project that involved widening the Maumee River east of Fort Wayne. "They never wore out and went away. While they at times came across as aggressive, the Dustin's always did their homework", Rousseau said. "Their research frequently saved the county from discovering it needed to fix or change work during a construction job. A lot of times, the Dustin's objections would bring about better engineering of the project.", he said.

Although at times also on the opposite side of the table, state officials expressed gratitude for the Dustin's work. "Both Tom and Jane were advo-

cates for keeping our doors open and inviting citizens into our rule-making and permitting processes," said Lori Kaplan, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

"The Dustin's -- and Tom in particular -- helped secure passage of laws allowing the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to set aside nature preserves.", IDNR officials said. *"Tom Dustin was a true conservationist who was doggedly determined to make government better,"* said John Goss, IDNR director.

Dustin leaves legacy of local, national environmental crusades

By Frank Gray - The Journal Gazette - Sun, July 11, 2004

Tom Dustin, an environmentalist whose tenacity and love of the outdoors brought changes locally and nationwide, died Friday. He was 80.

He was best known in Fort Wayne for his passionate opposition to the Maumee River widening project in the 1980s, designed to prevent flooding, and for his efforts to limit construction of the General Motors plant, in which he sought more stringent controls on the emissions the plant was expected to generate.

Dustin's reputation, however, was national. His first involvement in environmental issues came in the mid-1950s, when he and wife Jane became involved in scores of conservation campaigns, including one opposing a federal plan to flood Dinosaur National Monument in Utah.

In the 1960s he was part of the drive to create the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and in the 1970s spearheaded the drive to remove phosphate from detergents in Indiana. After his victory here, other states quickly followed.

In the 1970s he was named to a presidential task force for the National Parks Service in which he helped develop steering for the national parks for the next 100 years. John Dustin, his son, said his father was an avid outdoorsman who learned his appreciation of the outdoors from his grandfather and later from his wife's family. He was a hiker and backpacker



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and Oregon, and those experiences reinforced his commitment to preservation.

His wife, Jane, was a water expert, and the two made a formidable team.

He was among the co-founders of Acres Inc., a land preservation group; had been business manager of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic; director of the Limberlost Girl Scout Council; director of the Fort Wayne Art School and Museum; national vice president of the Izaak Walton League; the first president of the Allen County Park and Recreation Board, where he helped develop Fox Island Park and Nature Preserve; and president of the Hoosier Environmental Council.

"He wasn't afraid of anybody or anything," said Connie Wick, who worked with him for more than 30 years on environmental causes. She said many people had a sort of love-hate relationship with him. *"You might disagree with him, but you couldn't help but admire him. He attended meetings of water and air pollution control boards when only high-powered executives attended. He helped us develop the nerve to go up against those heavy-metal guys."*

Dustin's involvement in the Izaak Walton League came about almost by accident when he bought land for a home overlooking Cedar Creek in northern Allen County. The league's clubhouse and nature preserve were next door to the property. He joined the organization in 1960 and was state secretary within three years. In the end he served 13 years as the group's executive director and principal lobbyist.

Even in his old age when he was largely homebound, Wick said, *"He'd fire off grenades that would cause people to sit up and take notice."* Allen County Commission Ed Rousseau, who has known Dustin for more than 30 years, said, *"The county's residents were better served because of Dustin's scrutiny. Although Rousseau and Dustin were on opposite sides of many issues, they had a heart-to-heart talk after Dustin's wife died last year. He and I have parted on extremely good terms,"* Rousseau said.

BIG Eastern Blog

By Marty Lewis - July 7, 2004

"Just a few months ago, Jane Dustin passed away. On Friday, Jane's husband Tom also passed away. Tom and Jane now pass into the legend of 'eternal vigilance' that is environmentalism in Indiana. You've got to be tough, persistent, patient and you've got to continue on even when there seems to be no hope that anything good can be accomplished. You've got to balance a sense of outrage with a sense of humor. The Dustin's, who worked together as a team, did all these things. They not only accomplished a lot, they served as an inspiration to many others. From the generation that founded environmentalism in northern Indiana, none contributed more than the Dustin's."

An incomparable advocate

- Editorial: The Journal-Gazette - July 13, 2004

To Fort Wayne residents, Dustin, who died last week at the age of 80, may be best known for being a thorn in the side of local officials. Together, the couple – The Journal Gazette's Citizens of the Year in 1993 – were a tandem to be reckoned with, and their knowledge of environmental issues was as strong as their passion for nature and environmental protection.

Dustin was an even stronger environmental steward than he was an advocate. He helped form the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, was instrumental in beginning Fox Island County Park and was a founder of ACRES, Inc., which acquires land and makes sure it remains undeveloped.

Jay County Daily Newspaper, Portland, Indiana

Commercial Review Editor's note: This column is being reprinted from July 15, 2004. Jack loved nature. He enjoyed walking nature trails, especially at Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve. It's no wonder he connected with the interview subject he writes about here.



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It was 14 years ago when I interviewed Tom Dustin. But if it had been 50 years ago or last week, it wouldn't have mattered. His core principles would have been the same. I interviewed Dustin — who died this weekend — in connection with a book project that never came to fruition. (The publisher and I had different ideas about what the final product ought to look like; that sometimes happens.)

Tom and Jane greeted me at their rustic Allen County home, a spot not all that far from the center of Fort Wayne but which might as well have been in another world. They were, as far as I knew, the most prominent environmentalists in Indiana. Probably, they were on the short list of the most prominent environmental activists in the United States.

What I was trying to figure out, during an interview marked by numerous cups of black coffee on my part and an endless string of cigarettes on Tom's part, was what made them tick. What made them care so much about the natural world that they were willing to risk alienation from friends and neighbors, ridicule in the letters to the editor column, and being labeled — after so many controversies — a crank?

They told me that morning 14 years ago over too many cups of coffee.

They told me about stopping on a camping trip in 1954 at Dinosaur National Monument in the Northwest and coming home to learn that it was slated for destruction by the Bureau of Reclamation, which planned to build a dam on the Green River which would have flooded the whole thing.

They told me about how the dust had barely settled on the Dinosaur National Monument project — the environmentalists won — when they learned that the Indiana Dunes were threatened.

And they told me what their environmental activism had taught them about politics and the need for compromise.

Reading Tom's obituary the other day — Jane died about nine months ago — I found myself digging through old files, trying to find what that 1990 Tom Dustin interview produced.

This is what I found:

A great blue heron interrupts Tom Dustin, who stops in mid-sentence to watch it soar above Cedar Creek.

'That really is my religion,' he says after a moment, 'because I can look off into those woods and see life taking place in all of its aspects. Now we're looking at a season of renewal. Things are coming back. Reproduction, growth — later decline, death, and renewal again. And I relate to that. And I battle mightily to preserve examples and systems of nature like that where people would have similar opportunities.'

'He is warming to his topic. It's a sermon he has given before., "I feel that a good bit of humanity, particularly in the developed countries, is increasingly being sealed off from that in the pursuit of a utilitarian framework ... Is it useful? What can I make out of it? How much money can I make out of it? How does it contribute to the economy? I'm not saying those things are not important, but it's not fundamental.

Fundamental, to me at least, is this human relationship with my surroundings. In nature there really is no fear. You can see the whole cycle of things happening. And I know I am part of that. Not apart from it."

He was part of that cycle then. He is part of it now. And the planet is better off for having hosted him for 80 years.

Compiled By Jay Butler—Managing Editor

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[The Journal-Gazette](#) - Fort Wayne

[The News Sentinel](#) —Fort Wayne

[Big Eastern Blog](#) By Marty Lewis

[The Commercial Review](#), - Jay County



The Indiana Wildlife Federation Warns of Danger of “Data Centers.”

In previous issues of the FW Chapter NEWS (IWLA), I have discussed the dangers of the loss of our watersheds. This issue will primarily be caused by the depletion of watersheds due to high-tech industries, as seen in the Project LEAP near Lebanon, IN: unchecked water use by Data Centers, and Communities not realizing the dangers as they sign on the dotted line, as happened in the Data Center currently under construction in Fort Wayne, each consuming millions of gallons per day. Below is an email received from the Indiana Wildlife Federation.

Jay Butler—Managing Editor

Date line: 12/10/2015 from the Indiana Wildlife Federation: Titled “Indiana Water at Tipping Point”

“The health of our local wildlife habitats and the security of central-Indiana’s water supply are facing unprecedented challenges. Our mission to protect the vital resources of Indiana, particularly the iconic Eagle Creek Reservoir and its surrounding natural habitat, now requires your immediate attention and advocacy. We are confronting a trifecta of threats: a massive, water diversion project, the unchecked water demands of next-generation technology, and a persistent, insidious chemical pollution crisis.

The most immediate threat is the State of Indiana’s proposed LEAP (Lebanon Innovation and Research District) development. While pitched as an economic engine, the plan necessitates piping an enormous volume of water, as much as 100 million gallons per day.

Adding to the urgency of the LEAP project is the growing trend driving this vast water need for AI Data Centers.

The high-tech sector, including microchip manufacturing and, increasingly, AI computational facilities, requires incredible amounts of water for cooling and processing. As AI models become more complex and data centers expand their footprint, their cooling demands exponentially increase their water consumption by millions of gallons of drinking water resources per day.

The proposed LEAP district is being explicitly tailored to attract these massive, high-demand users. State policy is effectively granting these new industrial users preferential access to a shared, finite resource, putting the cooling needs of servers above the security of our natural ecosystems and the water supply for residential and agricultural users.

The threats to Indiana’s water, driven by massive new industrial demands, and the pervasive reality of increasing chemical pollution are interconnected.





Hyperscale Data Centers, Boon or Boondoggle?

by Gary Brown—President, Porter County Chapter

There is plenty of press highlighting the AI battlefield of Data Centers as the need for the USA to race to the technological forefront ahead of China. Stopping the potential devastating effects of water, air, noise, high & low wavelength pollution from a local public Data Center is an entirely different matter. An existential threat to the local population is bipartisan and a perfect storm for neighborhoods to mobilize for action. "Not In My BackYard" is alive & well in Porter County Indiana.

No one expected the complete surprise to fall so quickly. No one was surprised by profit seekers.

Common legal elements:

- Billion-dollar corporations offered Non-Disclosure Agreements to small towns desperate for operational infrastructure funds.
- Disclosures about negotiations that were set aside for 3, 6, 12 months or more incited the population to revolution.
- Multi-million dollar offers for cheap land, water, & electric grid access excited the landowners, developers, & investors.
- Choosing land development directly across from subdivisions, schools, & later parks and medical centers were an unbelievable negative choice.
- Porter County Izaak Walton was the only environmental group who offered to support the courageous whistleblowers at the first town. We already had the history of our founders, Charlotte and Herb Read, who advocated for public land to be guarded from development to Save The Dunes for over 50 years. They lived long enough to see it become the Dunes National Park of their dreams.
- Today's advocacy takes a slightly different form:
- Social Media, on the internet, researched data center history, spread communications accurately, & debunked rumors. Management and enforcement became necessary to set truth standards and kick out partisan bomb throwers.
- Door-to-Door volunteers did surveys with petitions,

made flyers, and placed signs to saturate exposure on higher traffic roads. They looked for local experts who could provide private knowledge or inside information.

- Leaders enlisted school Parent Teacher Organizations, business groups, churches, & Home Owner Associations in the closest pollution target areas.
- Communicators encouraged truth-tellers for public hearings, to deliver powerful reasons for opposition.

Eventually, the conspiracy revelations and reams of documented untold dangers, overwhelmed the town to rescind the rezoning permit applications. The successful template of advocacy had worked. Who, what, and where was the next city? Every small town became a potential prospect. A newly targeted city had different officials, strategies, deadlines, & revelations to uncover. Volunteers had to unite many egos, opinions, or agendas. Every victory encouraged the next community.

We're not against all Data Centers:

- Properly built away from humans & wildlife.
- Pollution controls at all levels.
- Sustainable energy sources, non-polluting.
- Infrastructure costs paid by developers, not residents
- Life span allows for afterlife cleanup costs.
- Regulated by state & federal statutes for stopping internet trafficking criminals.

Run your race, but don't run over us. Don't experiment with our lives for profit.

Make your millions somewhere else if you don't like our conditions.

They'll be back. It's not over. We've won 4 times so be forewarned.

Think twice before coming back to Porter County, Indiana.



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Improvements Completed in December



Our new wheelchair accessible Unisex bathroom has now been completed with ample space for wheelchairs, rollators, and other aids for our disadvantaged or senior guests and members.

In addition, the new flooring shown in the photo has been laid in the entrance corridor, kitchen and both bathrooms.

Next month will see the new kitchen area.



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Immediate Past President—J. Butler (jaybutler1940@gmail.com)

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Buildings & Grounds—Gabe Bowser (gbows09@yahoo.com)
Chapter Digital Media—M. Doepeke (melissadoepke@gmail.com)
Chief Range Safety Officer—Pat White (ftwayne@hotmail.com)
Editor FW Chapter NEWS—Jay Butler (jaybutler1940@gmail.com)

EVERYONE NEEDS A THIRD PLACE!

Sociologists tell us every well-balanced adult needs a “Third Place”—that magical zone between home (where the dog won’t stop shedding) and work (where your boss swears the meeting will only take five minutes). For some people, this Third Place is a coffee shop or a bar. **But in Fort Wayne? It's the Izaak Walton League.** Because nothing builds community like environmental stewardship, outdoor fun, and the bonding experience of collectively missing clay pigeons .



Plastic Pollution in Lake Erie Has Soared Over the Past Decade

Submitted by Rick Graham—President Ohio Div. IWLA

Dateline: November 29, 2024—Cleveland

By: Peter Krouse

CLEVELAND, Ohio – In 2014, Sherri Mason ventured out onto Lake Erie aboard the U.S. EPA's Lake Guardian research vessel and came back with remarkable evidence of plastic floating in the water. She made a return trip in July 2024 – hitting several of the same spots she did in 2014 – and found the number of tiny plastic bits on the surface had increased dramatically.

That surprised Mason, who now directs a freshwater research program at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, because she figured the results would be mixed – higher volumes in some areas and lower in others – given how lake conditions can affect the results.

But that wasn't the case. All five sites showed increases, she said, suggesting to her that the volume of plastic in the lake had indeed gone up, despite her hopes that society was heeding warnings about plastic and limiting its use. Three sites were in the Central Basin, extending north from Cleveland toward Canada. In all three instances, the volume of plastic per square kilometer increased.

The area nearest to Cleveland roughly doubled to 98,000 particles per square kilometer. Further out, the numbers tallied at 92,000, up from 38,000. At the site nearest to Canada, the volume totaled 188,000 particles, up from 16,000. Closer to Buffalo, the increases were even more dramatic. Mason retrieved more than 700,000 particles per square kilometer off the Pennsylvania coast, compared with 19,000 in 2014. And in waters off Long Point, Canada, the numbers exceeded 500,000, up from 9,500.

It makes sense that the numbers were higher in the eastern portion of the lake as the current flows in that direction, she said.

Mostly microplastics: Most of the plastics were tiny, about the size of a grain of rice or smaller. Called microplastics, most were once pieces of larger items — grocery bags, bottles, straws or food packaging, for example — that broke down



Plastics were tiny, about the size of a grain of rice or smaller.

after exposure to the elements. And the region's cold winters make the plastic more brittle, Mason said.

It makes sense to Jill Bartolotta that the volume of plastics in Lake Erie has gone up. For nine years - ending last June - she was the emerging contaminants specialist at Ohio State University's Sea Grant program that promotes stewardship of Lake Erie. The buildup of plastic on the beaches is always greater after heavy rain, she said, and now that storms are becoming more intense, even larger plastic items are getting dragged into the water before lapping onto the beach.

Another likely contributor to the plastics in the lake is "atmospheric deposition," Bartolotta said, which is when plastics floating in the air are pulled down, much like the way sulfuric acid in the atmosphere contributes to acid rain. "There's plastics in clouds," she said. "There's plastics in raindrops."

More on the lake bottom: Mason used a trawling net to skim the surface of the lake to collect her samples, but there's even more plastic down below which could be higher in the sediment at the bottom of the lake because slime and organisms build up on plastics over time, increasing their density and causing them to sink.

Mason is among the many scientists, medical experts and environmental activists warning about the harmful effects of plastics on humans, especially when inhaled and ingested.



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Important

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS!

If you haven't renewed your IWLA Fort Wayne Chapter membership yet, now is the perfect time. You can renew online, or mail a check directly to the Chapter:

Izaak Walton League – Fort Wayne Chapter
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We appreciate your continued support and look forward to another great year together!

Below are the current renewal rates

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\$122/year or \$172/year with **R&P range pass**

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There is an important Webinar coming up on the growth in *Data Center's such as the one under construction in Fort Wayne.*

Data Centers Impact Stress Our Energy Grid, Deplete Our Water, and our Communities,

The Webinar is scheduled for [January 21st at 11:30 a.m.](#)

CO-HOSTED BY:



REGISTER

This icon will take you to the Hoosier Environmental Council website, where you can register.

The Fort Wayne Chapter of Izaak Walton, IWLA strongly recommends your participating.

Google Maps has notified us that we have exceeded 40,000 hits with people contacting Google Maps for information and directions to our Fort Wayne Chapter.