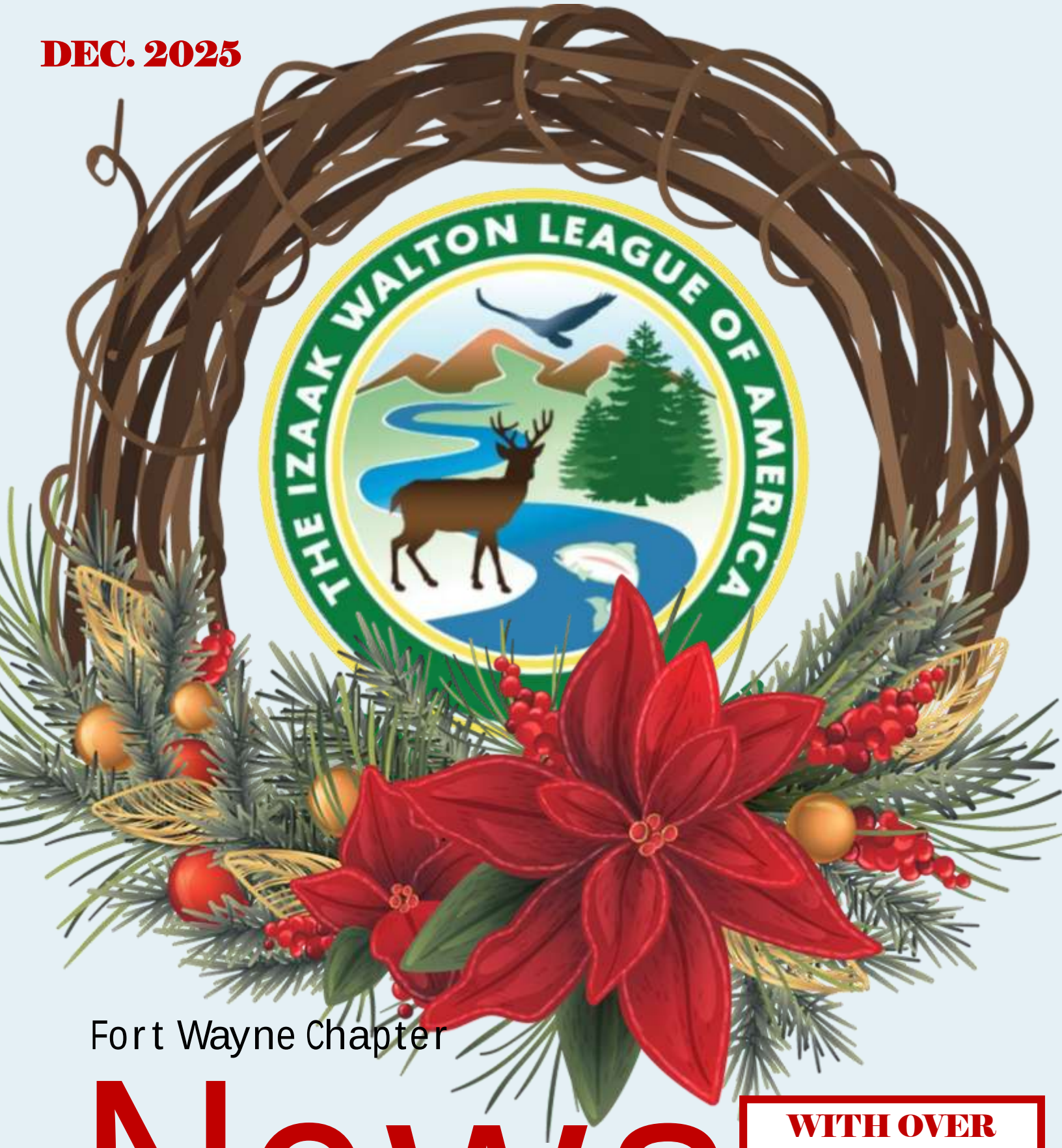
Izaak Walton League of America

DEC. 2025



Fort Wayne Chapter

News

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Fort Wayne Chapter, IWLA

Dear Member Volunteers,

As we enter this season of reflection and togetherness, I want to express my deepest appreciation for each of you. Your willingness to give your time, your energy, and your heart to our Chapter is the foundation that keeps our mission strong. Because of your dedication, our ranges stay open, trails and campsites operable, our buildings and grounds maintained, programs flourishing, and the Chapter continuing to experience the true spirit of conservation.

Every hour you volunteer, every project you support, and every effort you make—seen or unseen—creates a lasting impact. You are the reason our Chapter not only functions, but thrives. Your generosity inspires others, strengthens our shared purpose, and preserves the natural spaces we work so hard to protect.

As the holidays bring moments of warmth and rest, I hope you feel proud of all you've helped accomplish this year. Our Chapter is better, stronger, and more vibrant because of you.

Wishing you and your families a peaceful, joyful, and restorative holiday season. Thank you for being the heartbeat of our Chapter. It is an honor to serve alongside you.

Warmest regards,

Respectfully,

President
IWLA-FW|

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS!

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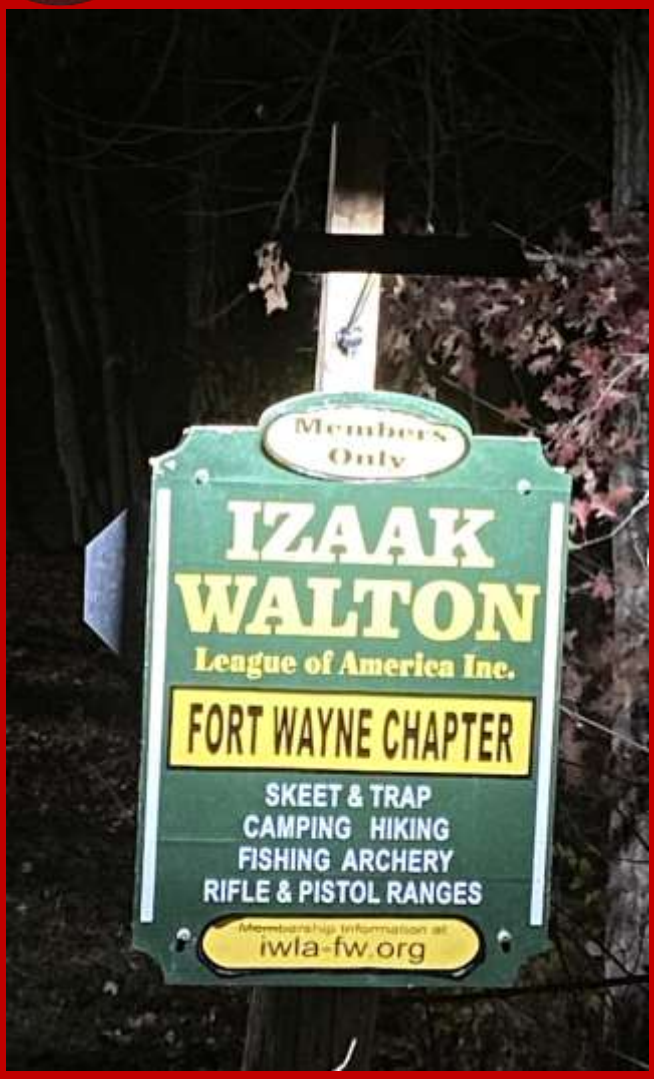
November Improvements

Steve Regnior and Son built new entry for the Chapter House.

Looks great, Guys! Thanks for your volunteerism on behalf of the chapter.

November Improvements



A solar Powered new light illuminates our Chapter signage at the entrance lane.
Many Thanks to Brian Doepke for securing and installing the light.

New rack for canoe and kayak storage.
These can be checked out for Floating Cedar Creek as it flows through our Rodenbeck Preserve.

More Changes In November.

The Trap Range has been enhanced with the installation of lighting, making it possible to continue evening shooting despite the early nightfall that winter brings. All electrical wiring has been thoughtfully placed underground to maintain the range's aesthetic and safety.

Our diligent Trap & Skeet Manager, Dillon Ripperger, expertly oversaw this project from conception to com-

This breathtaking scene captures the enchanting beauty of nighttime shooting amidst our most recent heavy snowfall. Flakes cascade gracefully from the sky, blanketing the landscape. This stunning view not only highlights the charm of winter nights but also demonstrates the promising potential of night shooting at the Fort Wayne Chapter.

More Changes In November.

Power supply has been completed at Walton Pond through generous grants from the REMC, the Indiana Division of the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) Endowment, and the dedicated efforts of one of our members who undertook the trenching for the REMC power line.

This vital infrastructure will enable the installation of pond aeration equipment, set to take place in the spring. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these funding sources for their support and to our member for their hard work in facilitating this essential project.

The trench is closed, but we only have photos of the in-process phase.

IDEM HEARING REPORT
Google Data Center Revisions

EDITORIAL BY

I attended the IDEM hearing at Ivy Tech regarding the Google Data Center under construction in our city. Over 300 concerned Fort Wayne Hoosiers were present, 80 of whom had registered to speak. Approximately 20 of those registered did not get to speak before the IDEM closed the meeting, following a posted meeting time of 2 hours.

The IWLA advocates for the protection of air, soil, water, and wildlife, and the Google Data Center negatively impacts all of them. The collaboration between city and state leaders and Google has raised questions about transparency and public engagement. While their actions may be legally permissible, the ethical implications of avoiding public scrutiny are significant. Elected officials have a responsibility to consider the views of all their constituents, as taxpayers fund their roles.

City officials approved the Google Data Center in secret, clearly to sidestep any public scrutiny. Now that the community is becoming more informed and knows the right questions to raise, our elected representatives appear to be dodging them. The elected officials frequently conclude regular Council Meetings in a hurried manner, failing to recognize the designated agenda time for public comments. This practice reinforces public perception of their duplicity, as it suggests they have no substantial answers to concerns about Google. If this is not true, what do they fear?

The aggravation has been compounded by IDEM, which has followed its typical practice of hiding behind the law, stating in its Ivy Tech hearing notice this paragraph: ***"If an applicant***

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demonstrates that they will be able to comply with all federal and state laws, regarding air pollution, IDEM is required to issue the air permit (for the generators)." One wonders how many engineers and legal counsel Google will field to convince IDEM of their compliance.

The IDEM hearing provided a venue for constituents to express their concerns about the proposal to add diesel-fired generators at the Fort Wayne Data Center. Attendees were informed that their comments would be recorded and could influence IDEM's decision on Google's proposal to increase the total number of generators from 140 to 179.

Many of our community neighbors were clearly uncomfortable speaking publicly, but overcame their fear and spoke elegantly in its simplicity.

I was both moved and proud of our citizens overcoming their fears and for their decorum as they gave voice to their concerns. The IDEM hearing reminded me of a Norman Rockwell painting, showing an adult standing confidently in work clothes, hands resting on the back of one of the folding chairs at a town meeting, as he shared his views with attentive admirers watching closely. Despite their visible anger and trembling hands, they remained polite and well-prepared as they expressed concerns about the mismanagement of the Google Data Processing venture by those entrusted with the futures of Fort Wayne citizens.

Since the Public Hearing, misleading statements have been made , implying that all of the speakers favored using nuclear reactors instead of 179 diesel-fired generators, *"and they better watch what they wish for".* This kind of error often

occurs as friends chat at the coffee shop and state what they had not personally heard as they hadn't attended, and accept it as reliable information.

The fact is that only one of the fifty speakers mentioned a "nuclear reactor," and his comment was taken out of context.

The speaker pointed out that while Google Data Centers use modern data collection technology, their power systems still rely on outdated

19th-century technology. Google shares the responsibility through misleading press about how long and how often the facility will be powered by “emergencies only” generators.

A relevant question, given the sad state of our nation's energy networks' ability to maintain reliable, long-term electrical service, would have sparked significant interest. And it would not have mattered as there was no one there to provide an answer.

It’s possible that Google may have employed a long-used business tactic: initially understating design requirements in the licensing proposal, then starting construction, followed by requesting modifications to expand the project's facilities to meet their actual needs. For instance, the original plan called for 140 generators and has now expanded to 179 diesel generators.

More likely, Google may have responded to an awareness of the very high potential of the frequency and duration of grid failures and brownouts caused by the poor condition of the U.S. energy grid. Perhaps that explains the carefully crafted statement that the bank of 179 generators, each the size of a semi-truck trailer, is for "emergency use only". The undeniable truth is that the deteriorated state of the United States' energy infrastructure is well known and documented, leading to the conclusion that our National grid will be unable to scale up to the levels of energy Google needs for all the Google Data Centers springing up across the country.

Therefore, the phrase *"only used in emergencies"* might be translated as *"since national energy grid cannot meet our daily needs, we will face daily emergencies in the energy needed to keep the data centers operational, we'd better arrange for more generators.*

There are other significant concerns mentioned, even though the hearing was for additional diesel generators. PFAS, the insidious "forever chemicals," that, once introduced to soil or water, will remain for countless years, never going inert, were mentioned. PFAS has been a partial cause of many life-threatening diseases, and the huge cooling system pipes, pumps, and 42 cooling stacks, which carry five million gallons of water through the Google Data Center daily, are coated with PFAS-containing materials. The federal regulation of PFAS allowed in drinking water is 4 parts of 1 trillion parts is the maximum. That’s a one with 12 zeros behind it.

Additionally, the effluent from 179 diesel generators poses some risk, as each generator has a 6,000-gallon storage tank, meaning that at any given time, the generator field will holding 1,074,000 gallons of fuel. No matter how you translate their “emergency use only” the total quantity of fuel needed to offset the nation’s antiquated energy grid is either an unknown, or if known, has never been published. This is also true of the frequency and duration that the generators will be used under “Emergency Condition”, which might lead to the conclusion that they will be used more as a source of energy, than as a standby for emergency use only.

As for the 5 million gallons of water used a day, the city's “water-availability testing” of available capacity would be laughable if not so egregious. Approximately 40% of the nation's water supply comes from underground aquifers that recognize no city, county, or state borders. Consequently, 38% of the nation's drinking water supply comes from aquifers that are susceptible to contamination from soil run off, air pollution, or water returned to the aquifer after use by other sources. Indiana has had no central regulatory controls on overall water use, allowing cities to count the same water as their own in the same aquifer, even as the next city down the line does. Five million gallons per day in Fort Wayne; three million in Lebanon, just 50 miles away, and before long, we could take a shocking amount of water out of the national watershed. No pun intended. Lebanon was going to pump the extra water it needed by pipeline from 40 miles away, from an aquifer under another Indiana community, and that was the plan before citizens and

community, and that was the plan before citizens and neighbors began asking probing questions similar to those you might have heard at Ivy Tech IDEM.

This validates predictions that water will become more valuable than gold. Check the Google map of Google Data Centers going up in the western United States, then multiply each to 5 million gallons of water per Day. Consider the west already suffering the pain of an insufficient water supply.

Think of the water that was flowing into California and then allowed to continue to flow into the ocean while California reservoirs remained empty! Man has a long reputation for misusing God given natural resources.

A point that might have been made, but was not: *"Who do we think will pay the cost of upgrading the national energy grid infrastructure, or absorb the increased cost of drinking water?"* The Googles of the World will pass their cost through as a service charge to those using the Data Center services. Same for drinking water and grid produced electricity.

One has to wonder whether or not any of these risks mentioned were made known to our elected officials in their pre-award secret meetings? Probably not, as they likely lacked the experience or knowledge to ask the right questions and simply looked at the Tax return. A large number of their constituents now understand the right questions, and over 300 of them were gathered at Ivy Tech's auditorium on the 13th.

A little honesty would go a long way to restoring faith in our systems, but often one or more parties cannot afford the truth. Google surely can't afford it as they don't want the spread of knowledge to get ahead of their National Data Processing building program.

JAY L. BUTLER
Editor – FW Chapter NEWS

POND RIPPLES

On Saturday, November 15, Brian Doepke, Gabe Bowser, and Zach Walter spent some time at the pond. They removed several boats for the Winter, trimmed some trees, eliminated the larva feeders, and made plans for other improvements. Among the 2026 plans is a Board approved addition to the Dock that will more than double its size at the end.

Additionally, they relocated the trail sign to make it easier for a small camper to park at the north end of the pond.

The Huge Reset!

Managing Our Chapter Woodlands

Recently, there have been several inquiries regarding our clearing areas along the driveway, near the R&P range and west of the Skeet Range. While some may have heard that we are simply removing honeysuckle and other invasive species, something more complex is occurring. We are at a critical juncture where decisive action is needed to preserve our chapter woodland. The goal of this initiative is to rejuvenate our rapidly aging forests, ensuring their health and sustainability for 8 future generations of Ft Wayne Ikes. This proactive approach aims to enhance the long-term vitality of our natural environment.

Our chapter is fortunate to have two members who are generously donating their time and heavy machinery to assist us. As this article is being published, they have successfully cleared acres of invasive species and woody underbrush over the past year. Along with our site manager, Zach, they have invested over 400 hours into this important work.

Restoring Balance: The Benefits of Removing Invasive Species and Clearing Undergrowth in Our Aging Deciduous Forests

Deciduous forests are defined as living ecosystems that experiences continuous cycles of growth, decline, disturbance, and renewal. These cycles - once driven by natural forces such as fire, flooding, storms, and wildlife activity - allowed woodlands to regenerate, diversify, and maintain long-term ecological health. However, modern landscapes have changed dramatically. Fire suppression, home construction, business encroachment, and the introduction of invasive plant species have altered how forests function, especially in areas such as ours, where mature woodlands have not experienced this cycle for decades.

As a result, many aging deciduous forests are now crowded with aggressive non-native plants such as honeysuckle, autumn olive, wild grapevine, and Japanese stiltgrass, along with dense layers of shade-tolerant undergrowth that prevent sunlight from reaching the woodland floor. Without intervention, the forest life cycle slows, regeneration stalls, and the next generation of native trees fails to emerge. Active restoration - through targeted invasive removal and strategic clearing of woody undergrowth has become essential for preserving ecological integrity.
The remainder of this article will explore the key benefits of these restoration practices and why they are critical to restarting the natural woodland life cycle.

Encouraging Native Tree Regeneration

Native tree species on our property including oak, hickory, maple, beech, and walnut—all require adequate sunlight and space for seedlings of these species to flourish with new growth. Unmanaged forests are overwhelmed by invasive shrubs and thick undergrowth, and the sun light levels at the forest floor

drop so low that native seedlings cannot survive past their first few years.

Removing invasives like honeysuckle and autumn olive dramatically increases available sunlight, allowing desirable species to sprout, grow, and compete. As sunlight reaches the ground again, the forest floor awakens: acorns germinate, hickory seedlings emerge, and long-suppressed saplings finally begin upward growth.
This restoration jumpstarts the next generation of canopy trees, ensuring that aging forests can continue their natural succession and do not transition into ecologically degraded shrublands.

Reducing the Competition for Water and Nutrients

Invasive plants often possess biological advantages -

Managing Our Chapter Woodlands (Continued)

For rapid growth, shallow root systems, and extended photosynthetic seasons - allowing them to monopolize soil moisture and nutrients. Japanese stiltgrass, for example, spreads aggressively across woodland floors, creating dense mats that outcompete every native plant in its path. Japanese honeysuckle, with its early leaf-out and late leaf-drop, robs the forest of even more sunlight and water than nearly any native shrub.

By removing these species, the nutrient cycle resets. Water becomes more available to native saplings, and soil nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and micronutrients) are released by natural circulation rather than being locked up in invasive biomass. This results in a healthier, more balanced soil ecosystem that supports long-term forest resilience.

Restoring Wildlife Habitat and Food Sources

Many invasive species provide little or no meaningful food to native wildlife. Honeysuckle berries, for example, are carbohydrate-heavy but nutrient-poor, functioning like “junk food” for bird life. Invasives also alter woodland structure, reducing the diversity of habitat niches used by mammals, birds, insects, amphibians, and reptiles.

Clearing invasive thickets and opening the underlayment creates:

- Better sunlight for wildflowers, which support pollinators.
- Improved nesting habitat for ground-nesting and shrub-nesting birds.
- Healthier forage for deer, rabbits, and turkey.
- Increased insect abundance, which supports bats and songbirds that in turn, supports coniferous birds.
- More diverse food sources, including nuts, berries, leaves, and seeds.

A restored forest is a richer, more complex environment that supports wildlife at every level.

Enhancing Forest Health and Reducing Disease

Invasive shrubs and grasses disrupt the airflow, retain excessive humidity, and increase plant stress, all factors that raise the likelihood of fungal diseases and pest outbreaks. Dense undergrowth creates stagnant air pockets fostering mold and mildew growth affecting native tree seedlings and even mature trees.

Removing invasive species enhances air circulation and reduces the risk of pathogens. Native plants, which are adapted to local conditions, generally cope better with environmental stress compared to their invasive counterparts. Their resurgence signals the return of a healthier, more disease-resistant forest.

Improving Safety and Accessibility for Management and Recreation

When invasive shrubs dominate a woodland, they often create impenetrable “green walls” reducing visibility and restrict movement.

Clearing undergrowth improves:

- Trail access and maintenance.
- Firebreak establishment.
- Safety for campers, hikers, and land management.
- Expansion of Chapter amenities.
- Additional opportunities for educational and conservation programming.

A well-managed forest invites recreation and makes it easier for conservation groups to continue monitoring and caring for the land.

Reopening the Canopy-to-Forest Floor Nutrient Cycle

The natural forest life cycle depends on sunlight, followed by decomposition. When invasive species prevent sunlight from reaching the forest floor, leaf litter decomposes more slowly, soil organisms decline, and nutrient cycling stalls.

Removing invasive blocks and clearing excess undergrowth:

Managing Our Chapter Woodlands (Continued)

- Restores the leaf litter-soil microorganism-root cycle.
- Encourages growth of ferns, wildflowers, and native groundcovers.
- Increases soil microbial diversity, benefiting tree health.
- Boosts carbon sequestration in both vegetation and soil.

This process effectively "restarts the forest clock," allowing natural succession to resume.

Supporting Long Term Conservation and Climate Resilience

Healthy native forests are more resilient to climate stressors such as drought, heavy rains, heat waves. Native species evolve with local conditions, meanwhile invasives often collapse under extreme environmental shifts.

A restored forest provides:

- Stable soils to resist erosion.
- Better water absorption during rainfall.
- Improved carbon storage in the soil.
- Greater biodiversity, acting as an ecological buffer.
- Stronger adaptability to variation in climate conditions.

Invasive removal is not a short-term fix - it is a generational investment in the long-term ecological stability of our Chapter woodland.

Conclusion: Today Intervention is Necessary for Forest Renewal

Decades of lack of forest management have left many deciduous forests, including ours, unable to regenerate without human assistance. Removing invasive species such as Japanese honeysuckle, autumn olive, grapevine, and Japanese stiltgrass, and clearing excessive undergrowth, reopens the forest canopy, revitalizes the soil, restores wildlife habitat, and sets the stage for new generations of native trees.

These management practices mimic "natural disturbances" that once shaped our forests, allowing life cycles to resume and biodiversity to flourish. In doing so, our Chapter, as stewards of soil water, air and wildlife, helps ensure our aging forests remain vibrant, resilient, and ecologically functional for future generations of "Ikes" that follow us.

Contact Us!

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WALTON POND—Brian Doepke (briandoepke@gmail.com)
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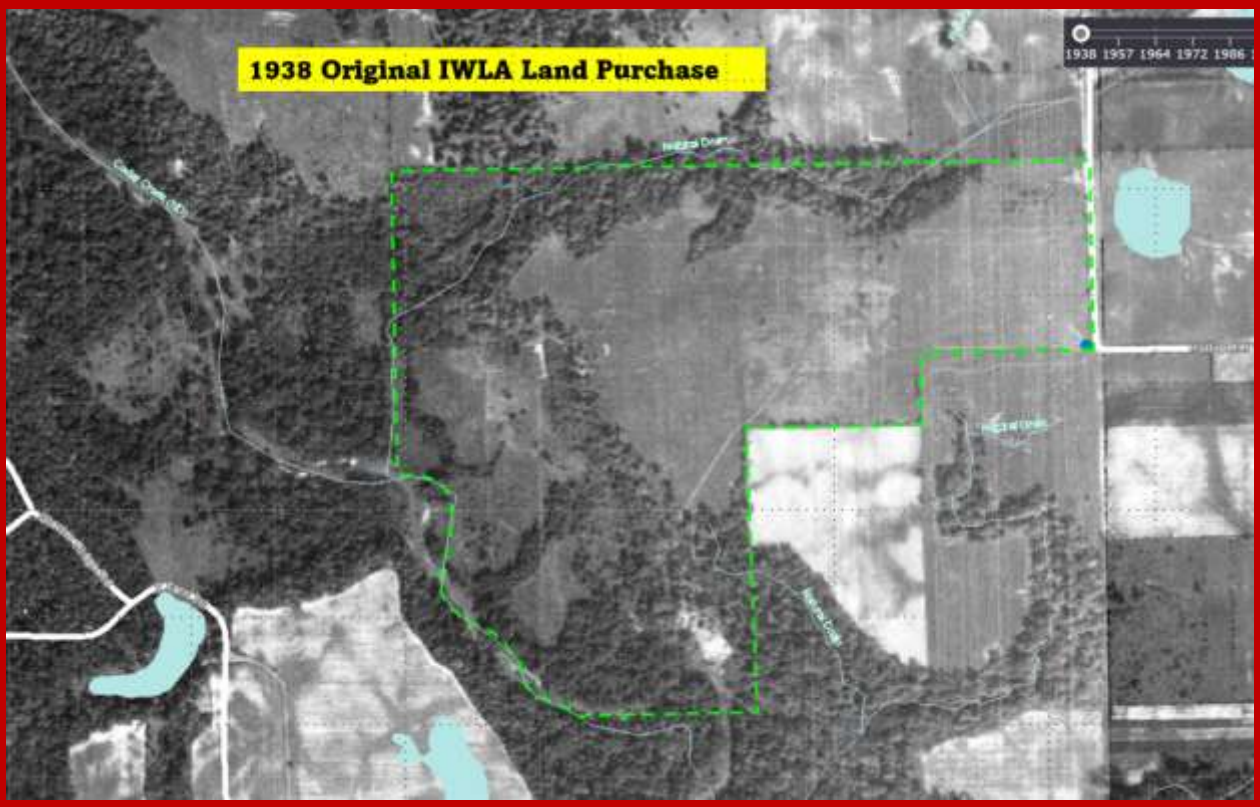
Chapter E-Mail – (iwla-fw.org/contact)
Chapter Website— (iwla-fw.org)
Chapter Phone Number - (260) 619-6768

The Original Chapter Purchase

Old Photos 1938 - 2025

See how many changes you can spot in each photo. HINT: Watch for changes in the Woodland and in structures. Green dotted line indicates property line in this origional purchase.

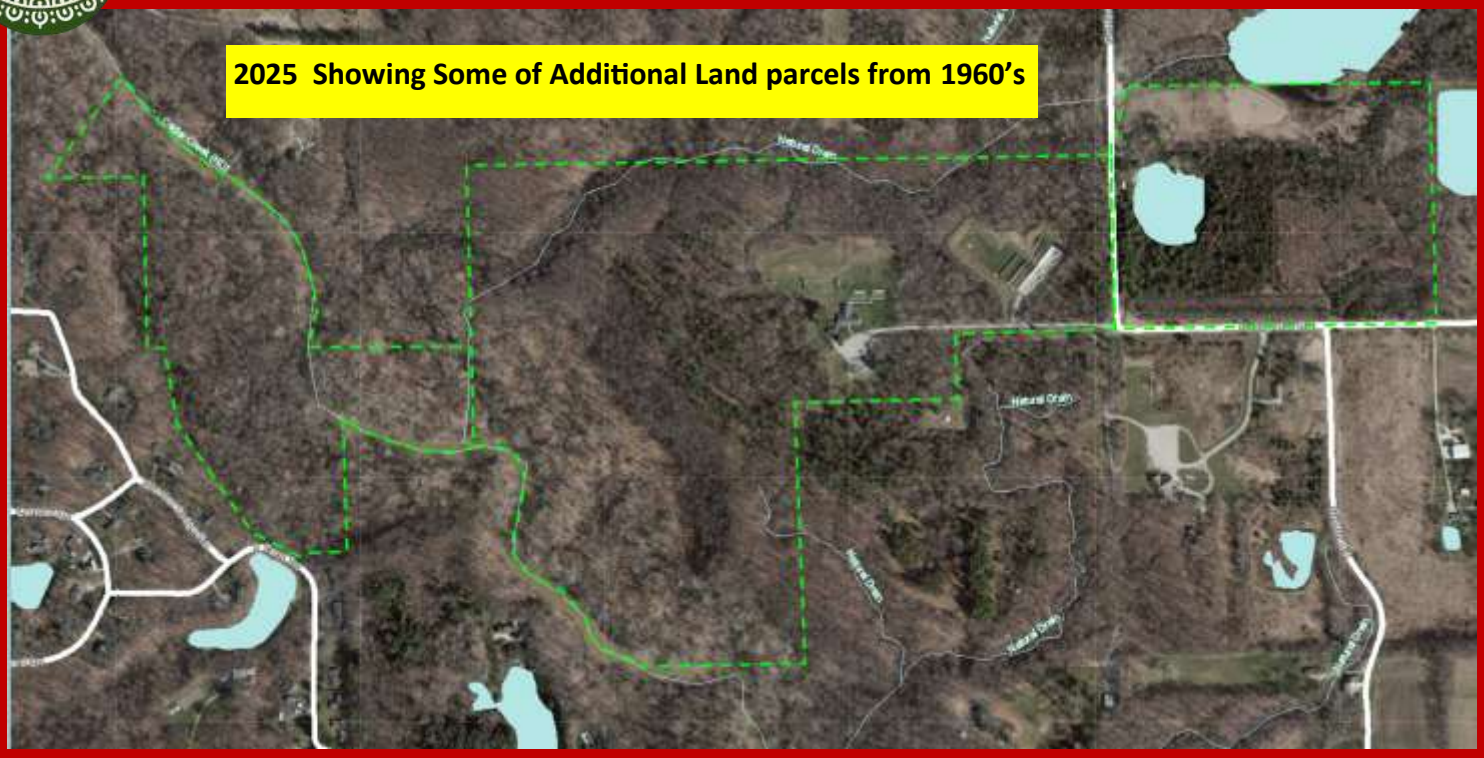


The Original Chapter Purchase

The Original Chapter Purchase

IN WHAT PHOTO YEAR?

1) Does the North Hall 1st show?
2) Does the Loop Trail have no trees around it?
3) In which years does Walton Pond have no woodland around it?
4) In which year does the Rifle & Pistol Range Baffels first show?
5) In what year does the Girl Scout property show Woodlands.
6) In what year does the Rifle & Pis-tol Ramge show surrounded by trees?



We Now Accept Credit Card Payments!

The Fort Wayne Chapter is now equipped to accept credit card payments for:

- Guest Fees
- Membership Dues
  - Membership Renewals
  - New Membership Applicaptions

Note: As a non-profit organization, a small processing fee will be added to your annual membership dues.

Guest Fees

Simply follow the posted signs and scan the QR codes to pay quickly and securely.

Membership Dues

Online Credit Card Payment:

Visit iwla-fw.org/membership to get get started.

Current Member Renewal — Current Member Renewal

OR

New Membership — New Member Applications

You will be asked to complete a online form to provide information required by the new National database.

Then you will simply select your membership level.

Check Payment:

Remit your annual dues payment with the enclosed envelope!

We're making it easier than ever to support our chapter and enjoy all the benefits of membership. Thank you for helping us grow!

January Issue

Next month, we will feature an in-depth exploration of Tom Dustin, our most illustrious FW Chapter member, as highlighted in obituaries published in newspapers across the United States. These tributes not only reflect on his remarkable life but also capture the sentiments of those who knew him, including both friends and adversaries, who all regarded him with a profound respect. We have secured the necessary permissions to republish these poignant reflections and insights. This promises to be a captivating read, offering a nuanced portrait of a man whose impact resonated widely, as evidenced by the heartfelt commentary from various corners of his life.