



Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter of
the Izaak Walton League of America
20601 Izaak Walton Way
Poolesville, MD 20837

April 22, 2021

Brief Script for the B-CC IWLA New-Member Orientation Tour

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History of the Izaak Walton League of America

- On January 14th, 1922, 54 visionary sportsmen met in Chicago to discuss the deteriorating conditions of America's top fishing streams. They ultimately formed the League with author Izaak Walton as its namesake
- The league then became a force in uniting sportsmen & outdoorsmen in driving the US to protect its water, air, "wildlife, woodlands, and open space"

History of the B-CC Chapter of the IWLA

- Chapter requested its founding charter from the IWLA on October 23rd, 1935
- 15 founding members
- Met in homes & restaurants in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area for over a decade (O'Donnell's Restaurant a LOT!)
- Amid great internal controversy, the chapter purchased the 366-acre plot (Crossbasket Farm) in 1949

History of the B-CC IWLA Conservation Farm Property

- Crossroads for Native American traffic & civilization for at least 5,000 years
- The original land was part of a land grant from Lord Baltimore to Robert Peter, a Scottish tobacco merchant, in 1750
- The 366-acre plot called "Crossbasket" was passed down upon Robert Peter's death in 1806
 - o Inherited by his son, future US Congressman, George Peter
 - o George's brother, Thomas Peter, inherited another plot nearby that included Montevideo
 - o Thomas Peter married Martha Parke Custis, the granddaughter of Martha Custis Washington
- The chapterhouse is located on the site of an old barn: there was no family farmhouse
- The farm was likely a tobacco farm and had only 10 acres or so cultivated at one time
- The farm changed hands several times before the chapter member bought it in 1949
- Four subsequent purchases of contiguous property (624 acres current total acreage):
 - o Extended original farm south to River Road with:
 - West Woods I (**127 acres**) in 1997
 - West Woods II (**30 acres**) in 2006
 - o Extended the farm's northern boundary to 1.1 miles north of Izaak Walton Way with:
 - NE Woods I (**50 acres**) in 2012
 - NE Woods II (**50 acres**) in 2015
 - o Purchases of the original farm & West Woods I funded by member contributions
 - o Land Fund later augmented by funds granted by Maryland Environmental Trust for conservation easement
- 491 acres of woodland that can be hiked following 20+ miles of trails marked in the Conservation Farm Trail Guide

The B-CC IWLA Property, Chapterhouse, & Facilities

Chapterhouse

- The original chapterhouse was built shortly after the property was purchased
- Devastated by arson in 1988 ... perpetrator unknown
- Rebuilt & rededicated by 1989 in its present form
- Very much the same shape and style as the current chapterhouse but slightly smaller
 - o Greatroom seats 90 with tables & chairs, over 100 with chairs alone
 - o Boardroom is the most rustic room in the chapterhouse; used for board meetings & smaller gatherings
 - o Bar area has coffee & tea service along with access to chapterhouse stereo & PA system
 - o Restrooms are open to members, even during other functions (be respectful)
 - o Master (commercial) kitchen is a licensed commercial kitchen with selective access for kitchen staff

- Member kitchen is a galley-style kitchen open to all members barring conflicts with other functions
- Cardroom / game room is open to members, barring conflicts, and boasts card table, TV, and office space
- Chairs & tables for large meetings are stored in the chair room in the corner
- Members are entitled & encouraged to use the chapterhouse
 - New-member electronic access includes the chapterhouse door (and front gate)
 - Post-pandemic, access panel allows entry from 5:30am until 11:30pm
 - Alarm will sound if entry is attempted outside these hours
 - Members may host up to 25 guests on the property / chapterhouse at one time
 - Family members may host 50 guests (2x); guests must stay with hosting member(s)
 - First come, first served unless reservation is previously approved by the Board of Governors
 - Ad hoc gatherings may not interfere with chapter meetings or events
 - These guest numbers do NOT include the ranges!
 - Chapterhouse, member kitchen, porches, and grounds must be cleaned & returned to normal state

Historic Cabin

- Dates back to at least 1826
- One of the outbuildings is a spring house, i.e. pre-electrical refrigeration
- The cabin was the slave master's cabin; nothing is known about slave accommodations or cemetery
- The single-story, northern section of the cabin was built first, and the southern, larger half later

Small Pond

- Very shallow: 4-5 feet deep and constantly fighting algae, duckweed, etc.
- Dredged & reconditioned in 2015
- Solar panel on pier drives bubbler that oxygenates the water during warmer months
- Repopulated with sunfish & a few largemouth bass ... all catch & release
- Great opportunity to fish with kids using worm & bobber

Beehives

- Owned & operated by chapter members
- Solar electric fence for bears

Monarch Way Stations

- Milkweed patches planted all over the property
- Provide structure & food for Monarch butterflies, among others
- Provide pollen for other important pollinator species

Fruit Orchard

- Peaches, cherries, and apples
- Raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries
- Daffodils and other perennial bulbs
- Maintained by Larry Anderson & volunteers

Bird Boxes

- Bluebird houses all around the edges of the ponds and the edges of the fields
- 2 Purple Martin / Swallow houses for high-flying martins (crescent tail) and tree swallows (forked tail)
- 1 cluster of gourds for purple martins and swallows
- Bird houses are decommissioned in the fall, cleaned, and put into storage by the Wildlife committee

Bird Feeders

- Filled, maintained, watched & polled by the Wildlife committee from September to April
- Cleaned and put into storage in April by the same volunteers
- Very attractive to hungry raccoons and occasionally bears

BBQ Pits & Picnic Area

- For the exclusive use of the kitchen manager, their staff, and on rare occasions, approved proxies
- Cook the meat for chapter dinner meetings from April through October (beef, pork, chicken, & turkey)
- Weber kettle grill in the grill area for members to grill their own picnic treats
- Picnic tables & firepit are for member use as well (first come, first serve barring scheduled events)

Wellhead & Water Service

- 250-foot deep well with filtration and UV disinfection that serves:
 - o Chapterhouse & hose bib outside the chapterhouse entrance into the member kitchen
 - o Freeze-proof hydrant & hose at the BBQ pits
 - o Freeze-proof hydrant at the Rifle-Pistol Range
 - o Freeze-proof hydrant at the Shotgun Range
 - o Freeze-proof hydrant at the Historic Cabin
 - o Freeze-proof hydrant & at the Equipment Area
 - o Separate well feeds the Archery Range, gardens, and greenhouse (potable & non-potable taps)
 - o Separate hand-pumped well feeds the campground, right by the footbridge at the base of the parking hill

Rifle & Pistol Range

- B-CC IWLA ranges, and shooting sports in general, contribute directly & indirectly to conservation
 - o Promote marksmanship, safety, and ethical behavior in the field
 - o Laws like the Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson Act) channel funds directly into conservation
 - Excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, and hunting licenses
 - 100% of these funds are by law granted directly to states for wildlife management projects ONLY
 - \$18B+ raised for conservation by hunters & shooting sportsmen since 1937
- All firearms must be cased to before and while entering & exiting the range
- No one shall enter, exit, or occupy the range with a slung, or holstered firearm except on-duty law enforcement
- Ear protection must be worn while entering a “hot” range
- Eye protection must be worn while approaching the firing line of a “hot” range
- Gear may NOT be unpacked at the firing line unless & until the range is “HOT”
- Targets may NOT be placed, and no one shall venture forward of the firing line, unless the range is “COLD”
- Members & guests MUST sign in at the rangehouse before unpacking gear, setting targets, or preparing to shoot
- Notify the range officer at sign-in that you require & request a full safety briefing
- The range officers on duty shall control the hot/cold status of the range and ensure that all safety rules are obeyed
- All members may use the rifle & pistol range with a range officer on duty as space permits and restrictions allow
- Range officer programs are separate agreements between members & each range committee (no volunteer hours)
- Members must have complete 1 year of membership to take the RO class, currently taught in early March
- Range officers can only accept cash & checks for fees

Christmas Tree Orchard

- Fir Trees & White Pines
- Members are free to tag their choice ahead of time with contact 411 and groom / weed around their tagged trees
- Members may purchase a tree by sending a check for \$30.00 to B-CC IWLA, PO Box 542, Poolesville, MD 20837

Shotgun Range

- 4 Fields:
 - o Field 1 (leftmost field): no permanent machines
 - o Field 2 / "Skeet Field #1": skeet & trap machines w/ concrete walkways & wireless controllers
 - o Field 3 / "Skeet Field #2": skeet & trap machines w/ concrete walkways & wireless controllers
 - o Field 4: Five Stand setup
- Shooters must register at the rangehouse before beginning to shoot and must receive a full briefing
- Range officers can only accept cash & checks for fees
- Mobile machines are set up across all four fields for fun shoots, Winter League, and Tuesday Night Sporting Clays
- Tuesday Night Sporting Clays run from April to September on Tuesday evenings: squads start from 4pm to 5:30pm
- Sporting Clays shoots usually wrap with a potluck BBQ in the shotgun pavilion

Farm Equipment Area

- The B-CC IWLA Conservation Farm has 80+ acres invested in agricultural fields
- B-CC IWLA Farm Committee utilizes "no till" techniques and cover crops to achieve multiple conservation goals
 - o Provide food at the right times of the year for game species & wildlife alike
 - o Provide structure, habitat, and safe haven for migratory species (sunflowers / doves)
 - o Fix nitrogen back into the soil, especially with legumes, and improve soil pH
 - o Improve microbic health and moisture retention of soil by increasing organic material
- The equipment area contains the chapter's farm equipment, sundry tools large & small, and several outbuildings:
 - o Equipment Barn – large sprayer & planter that trail behind the tractors
 - o Tool Barn – Fuel storage, mechanic's tools, air compressor, and utility-vehicle storage
 - o Tool Shed – Hand tools, backpack sprayers, and forestry supplies
 - o Scout Trailer – Scouting supplies and equipment for destination adventures like camping
 - o Scout Barn – More scouting supplies and equipment

Aviary – Bird Pens

- Maintained & stocked by chapter members who train dogs for fieldwork & retrieving
- Many of these chapter members also belong to the North American Versatile Hunting Dog Association (NAVHDA)
- During training months, the pens contain chukars (Chukar Partridges), ducks, sometimes a pheasant or two
- All activities with the birds are controlled by the owners of the birds themselves

Crushed Stone Trail to the Big Pond

- No personal vehicles allowed on the trail
- Beware the ruts: keep a watchful eye on where you're walking
- Usually a yellow gate halfway down the hill ... awaiting repairs from storm damage

Fork in the Trail at the Base of the Hill

- To the Left: the "C-3 Plot," a reforested field deemed not worthy of maintaining as a farm field
- To the Front: the "Cathedral of the Pines," which we will walk through on the return trip from the pond
- To the Right (over the rise): the "C-2 Field," one of our 80+ acres of farming fields

The Big Pond

- Roughly 12 feet deep with a peninsula with solar cell hides another 1/3 of the pond on the other side
- Solar panel drives two bubblers that oxygenate the water during the warmer months
- Filled with sunfish and largemouth bass ... all catch & release
- Members successfully fish the pond with everything from flies to crankbaits to jigs to hooks-bobbers-worms
- Jigging along the bottom has been credited most often for catching big bass

The Cathedral of the Pines

- Creates a very contemplative conclusion to the tour
- Excellent illustration of the dangers of planting too many young trees too close together
- Needs volunteers to help the farm & forestry committees rehabilitate the cathedral

Areas not on the Walking Tour

Archery Range, Greenhouse, and Garden Plots

- First farm gate on the left as members leave the chapter's front gate (universal padlock key)
- Archery range butts / traditional targets are open to all members for free during daylight hours 365 days a year
- 3-D Archery Range is open to members who are, or are escorted by archery range officers, from April to August
- Archery Range hold biweekly 3-D archery shoots throughout the summer: check the web calendar
- Greenhouse is currently engaged in germinating chestnut seedlings for replanting
- Garden Plots are available to members for the growing season:
 - o Preference is given to members who rented a plot the previous year
 - o Once assigned a plot, members can send their \$20.00 check to the B-CC PO box ("Christmas Trees" above)

Campground

- A few tenths of a mile north of Izaak Walton Way on West Willard Road (universal padlock key)
- Free camping for members & guests as well as for scouting organizations
- Long grassy hill down to Horsepen Branch at the base of the hill
- Footbridge & hand pump for well water at Horsepen Branch
- Significant hill back up the other side to the three campsites
 - o Outhouse serves all three sites
 - o All sites have firepit, seating area and picnic table(s)
 - o One site has a lean-to shelter
 - o Sites must be reserved through the chapter website (<http://bcciwla.org/campgrounds>)
 - o Emergency services must be directed from the B-1 gate over to the B-3 field & access the sites from behind

West Woods Access from River Road

- Limited parking but easily-found trailhead on River Road west of West Willard Road
- Big concrete blocks preventing vehicle access
- Steepest climb on the property
- Native prickly pear cactus
- Triassic Shale Barrens
 - o Shale is very close to the surface
 - o Thin topsoil and slope-y terrain reduces water retention
 - o Very different profile of flora than rest of the chapter favoring shallower-rooted plants

Questions ???