

**President’s Message**

As we progress into the Holiday Season, having already consumed too much turkey, don’t forget your IWLAR is available. Be it for a walk, trip to the ranges or just a sit on a bench with nature. (If you are looking for a bench, try the new one with a great view on the bluff overlooking the lake area.) Come out for a hike or just hit the ranges. It gives you a place to escape from the relatives who are still around.

Note that I did not mention fishing in the first paragraph. I hope that by the time you read this the trout will be in the lake and available to catch. As I am keying this message, the Lake Committee has not yet chosen a stocking date because the lake is so low. It is about 2 feet below the spillway. The low lake level without any water coming in or going out, coupled with the leaf-fall, can lead to low oxygen and high levels of toxins in the lake. Hopefully we will get some rain and be able to schedule the trout stocking by the time you read this message. Watch for the notice via a google group e-mail.

Remember after we stock, the lake is closed for 24 hours to give the fish a chance to spread out and acclimate to their new home. Remember to follow the Lake Rules, posted on the IWLAR website <https://www.iwlar.org/jim-berrier-memorial-lake/>.

While you are at the lake, take advantage of the trails that both circle the lake and lead to other parts of the property. (Fun fact, take 3 trips around the lake on the trail and you will have walked a mile.) Enjoy the fall before winter sets in.

In other news, you, the membership approved the budget for 2026 and we have a full slate of activities in the planning stages. Spend some time with the Chapter’s calendar <https://www.iwlar.org/calendar/> to see all the activities on a day-by-day basis.

In this short message I have referred to the Chapter Website two times. When is the last time you visited the website <https://www.iwlar.org/>? There is a ton of information there. Check it out!

Finally, don’t forget to renew your membership by midnight December 31. If you miss that date, your access passes will be turned off and there will be a fee to renew late. So, get your renewal off to the membership chair.

Get out and enjoy IWLAR!

Tight Lines  
Noel Gollehon

**December GMM Speaker Focus**

Dean Naujoks has over 20 years of environmental non-profit experience. He began his non-profit career in 1991 with the NC Wildlife Federation. After graduating from NC State University, with a self-created degree in Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development, he was hired as the first Upper Neuse Riverkeeper, serving from 2001 to 2008. He became the first Riverkeeper on the Yadkin River with Yadkin Riverkeeper, Inc. in 2008, also serving as Executive Director until 2014.



Dean has been awarded River Network’s 2009 National River Heroes Award. River Network’s River Heroes Award celebrates rivers and those who protect them by recognizing victories and honoring those who provide leadership and inspiration along the way. Yadkin Riverkeeper also won the 2011 North Carolina Wildlife Federation Governor’s Achievement Award Water Conservation Organization of the Year.

Most recently, he has been recognized by Waterkeepers Chesapeake as a recipient of their 2019 Waterkeeper Outstanding Win (WOW) Award for his fight against Dominion and accomplishments in making safe disposal of coal ash a requirement in Virginia.

**Reminder: December Turkey Shoot**

Join with your fellow Ikes and guests on Sunday, December 7 between 1 and 4 pm for the 2025 Turkey Shoot. Ammunition will be provided for all participating members and guests, bring your own lucky shotgun. The targets are not actual live turkeys but the grand prize is a frozen turkey.

## **Wood Duck Conservation in January**

With January just around the corner, it's time to once again prepare the Chapter's wood duck nest boxes for the spring nesting season. This is a great opportunity to get a jump on your volunteer hours for 2026, contribute to a worthwhile conservation activity, and work alongside some great people in the process. This year's work days will include January 11th, 18th, 25th, and February 1st and 8th. Each Sunday, volunteers will go out in the field to repair and replace boxes, check the predator guards, cut away brush and, most importantly, record nesting success from last spring. And as you can imagine, it takes many hands to get the job done so please consider joining us for one or more work days. This is also a great opportunity for middle school and high school students to earn Student Service Learning (SSL) hours!



If you are not familiar with the program, the Chapter's Wood Duck Conservation effort has helped maintain nesting boxes and monitor wood duck populations since the 1950's. IWLAR maintains about 75 wood duck nesting boxes in Montgomery County, mostly in McKee Beshers Wildlife Management Area west of Poolesville. Winter is the best time to prepare them for the birds' arrival in late February/early March.

A few days before each wood duck work day, details about the next work day's meeting location, etc., will be announced via the IWLAR Google Group. Assignment of specific tasks will happen that Sunday morning, on-site. In general, we meet at the designated location at 10:00 a.m. and work is usually done by 1:00 p.m. The boxes are in wooded swamps and that requires wading in shallow water so chest waders or hip boots are ideal. For those who do not have their own, the Chapter has loaner pairs available. All tools and repair materials are supplied; you just bring the warm, willing body.

Keep an eye out for the weekly announcements in January on the IWLAR Google Group and sign up when you can. To sign up for any of the work days contact Joe Walther ([iwlarwoodducks@gmail.com](mailto:iwlarwoodducks@gmail.com)). Hope to see you out there!

## **DNR evaluating Double-Crested Cormorants**

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Black Bass Advisory Committee may begin discussing management strategies for double-crested cormorants. These large, dark waterbirds, known for their long necks and hooked bills, feed heavily on fish in parts of the Potomac River. A committee member has expressed concern that growing cormorant populations may be putting pressure on Maryland's black bass, some of the Chesapeake Bay watershed's most prized sportfish. Each cormorant can consume over a pound of fish daily.

In several areas across the country, high numbers of these birds have been linked to declines in juvenile bass. Some agencies have attempted to introduce more forage fish to lakes to divert cormorant predation away from bass. However, managing cormorants on a large river system like the Potomac is complicated. If the Maryland DNR moves forward, they may need to consider a mix of non-lethal mitigation measures. Lethal control is controversial, heavily regulated, and not allowed without a federal permit.

Cormorants often gather in large groups called "gulps," named after their habit of swallowing fish whole. Studies suggest that concentrated predation can reduce the number of fish that survive to legal size.

The Committee could initially focus on non-lethal, preventative approaches. For example, stocking fish when cormorants have migrated or releasing them in deeper water, away from shorelines where cormorants feed most efficiently.

Because cormorants are protected under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, any lethal control, such as removing adults or destroying nests, requires federal approval. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends trying non-lethal measures first and emphasizes the need for scientific support and ongoing monitoring.

**Assessing Impacts and Habitat Improvements:** Before acting, DNR would need to assess where cormorants and bass overlap, especially in shallow spawning and nursery areas. Research from Eastern Lake Ontario has shown that unchecked cormorant growth can sharply increase juvenile bass mortality and cause fishery declines.

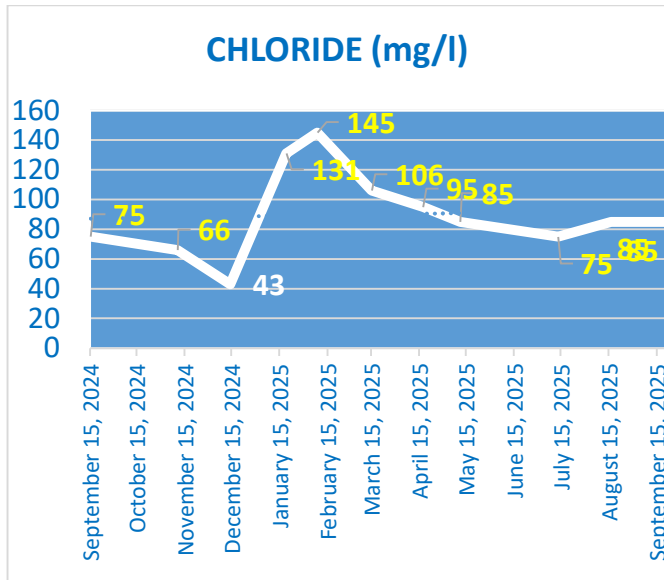
If similar risks exist in Maryland, DNR might consider deterrents like adding brush piles or rock clusters to provide juvenile bass shelter from predators. Priority sites for habitat improvements could include Mallows Bay and Violette's Lock, major cormorant nesting locations.

Should non-lethal efforts fail, DNR could consider stronger measures, including nest removal, with federal permits, and clear data backing. For now, the Committee's focus should remain on understanding the issue and finding science-based solutions that protect both wildlife and Maryland's treasured black bass fisheries.

## **Salt Watch**

Since September 2024, Rocky Soumyajit has been keeping a close eye on Great Seneca Creek through monthly Salt Watch tests with the Rockville Chapter. He's been tracking monthly changes in the creek's chloride levels — and this past winter, his results told a story.

When snow and ice covered our roads, salt was spread to keep them safe. But soon after, Rocky's tests began to show spikes in chloride levels in the creek (see graphic below). The biggest jumps happened right after a major winter storm, when melting snow likely carried road salt into the water.



## **Salt Watch (continued)**

The first big storm hit on January 5–6, 2025, dropping 6–10 inches of snow. More snow followed on January 10–11, with lighter dustings on January 16 and 19. After these events, Rocky's tests recorded chloride readings of 131 mg/L and 145 mg/L — well above the creek's usual levels.

Over the year, from September 2024 to September 2025, the creek's average chloride level came in around 90 mg/L. While that may not sound alarming, it's high enough to put our stretch of Great Seneca Creek in the warning zone for salt pollution. For context, the Maryland Department of the Environment considers chloride levels above 50 mg/L a potential threat to fish and other aquatic life.

Rocky's steady testing reminds us that even well-intentioned actions, like salting roads for safety, can have lasting impacts on our local waterways. By paying attention to these trends, we can all play a part in keeping Great Seneca Creek — and the life it supports — healthy year-round.

## **New Members Recently Inducted**

Alex Amorim  
Paul Kim  
Ken and Bridget O'Regan  
Andrew Popadich  
David Portas  
Saif Sadeq and Alexa Tehansky  
Wes Suttle and Jackie Sather  
A warm welcome to all!

Gaithersburg  
Germantown  
Silver Spring  
Silver Spring  
Bethesda  
Germantown  
Silver Spring