



Partner Highlight: Izaak Walton League of America

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Onondaga County

The mission of FORCES fits nicely with the Izaak Walton League of America's (IWLA) desire to instill an appreciation of nature in young people in our region, and to show them how to engage in the many activities that nature offers us. Project Watershed, our IWLA Chapter's signature program, engages young people and adults in citizen science – monitoring water quality in area streams. Early on we were blessed with the assistance of NYS Parks and Recreation people lending their expertise to make program participant experiences so much better.

Following, it was our good fortune to be asked to work with FORCES in presenting programs designed to train teachers and college students in protocols of EPA sanctioned stream monitoring. One such multi-year effort we've done, together, is with Hartwick College in their TAPUS (Think, Act, Protect the Upper Susquehanna River) two day workshop. Through this program many dozens of teachers and professors have learned techniques to engage their students in watershed educational activities – activities that also inform governmental agencies on water quality issues.

There has been, and continues to be, a rich relationship enjoyed by the Izaak Walton League with FORCES and, overall, NYS Parks and Recreation. Working together with people in the FORCES program on so many projects over the years we've witnessed benefits that have come to so many. We've watched FORCES personnel in effective action on a variety of efforts, including YARE (Youth Aquatic Resource Education), Learn to Fish programs for city youth, special events with needy community center youth, to name just a few.

May the FORCES be with us ----- always!! **Mat Webber, Izaak Walton League of America CNY Chapter President**

I have the awesome opportunity of being Project Coordinator for the Young Naturalist Leadership Team (YNLT). We are a collaborative group of about 20 students and young professionals that connect the Central New York community to conservation, restoration, environmental education and stewardship projects in the area. What sets us apart from other stewardship groups is that YNLT works to create professional opportunities and advancement by connecting members to valuable experiences, trainings, and professionals in the environmental field. YNLT is a program of the Central New York Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA), and we are very grateful for all their support! We are different from college-based groups in that our member-base is not limited to just students. Our diversity in member's academic and professional status paired with our connection to IWLA members helps build and strengthen those professional connections for our members even more.



YNLT members, IWLA members, and OBG technicians after their wildlife monitoring training in March. Photo: OPRHP

Since its establishment just over a year ago, YNLT has been involved in three major community-based projects in Onondaga County. Our 'pilot project' was facilitating discussion and notetaking during break-out sessions at a Mini-Conference where over 60 local agency, organizational, and volunteer leaders met to discuss improving citizens science water quality monitoring. Second, we partnered with the Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps and our YNLT members led over 50 volunteers in monitoring activities to record the wildlife and vegetation biodiversity in a recovering wetland system.

Our third and most recent project was exceptionally important to me. I was able to bridge both my volunteer involvement with YNLT and my professional work with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to accomplish holding a successful forum on Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed. With almost 300 attendees, it was the first event of this size or scale I've ever run and I wouldn't have been able to do it without our YNLT crew. From start to finish, twelve committed YNLT members helped ensure the forum and a Q&A panel session ran smoothly. On behalf of CCE Onondaga (and YNLT), I would like to extend a major thank you to the talented, passionate, and dedicated YNLT leaders and members, IWLA, and NYS Parks/ FORCES, of whom a lot of our YNLT help came through, for helping us at Extension connect the Onondaga community with information on ways to reduce their risk of exposure to HAB toxins.

We are a new, growing group- if you have any questions or ideas about YNLT projects- or any Natural Resources projects at CCE Onondaga- please feel free to reach out! Many thanks, YNLT and thanks for featuring us, FORCES!

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