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## **Wolf Administration, Fish and Boat Commission, and Game Commission Celebrate First Pennsylvania Native Species Day**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Leaders from seven state agencies highlighted the importance of protecting native species, which are critical to protecting our natural resources, at a stream restoration site at Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission headquarters. Governor Tom Wolf has proclaimed the first [Pennsylvania Native Species Day](#).

The agencies, along with 14 organizations in academia, environmental advocacy, and agriculture and other industries, are members of the [Governor's Invasive Species Council](#) (GISC). The council created Pennsylvania Native Species Day to celebrate the state's diverse native plants, insects, and animals and increase people's understanding of the importance of protecting them as invasive nonnative species proliferate.

"Municipal and state officials, business owners, community organizations, and local residents are realizing the need to conserve this essential part of Pennsylvania's natural infrastructure," said Tim Schaeffer, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director. "We are thrilled to join these partners in highlighting the work on our property that reduced erosion and restored natural stream flow while keeping native species in mind. Along with the 4,000 native plants and trees that have been added to the landscape, other habitat improvements will benefit native aquatic species and wildlife."

A diverse native ecosystem provides a range of benefits to Pennsylvanians, including food sources, timber, climate resilience, outdoor recreation, such as fishing and hiking, and related economies.

"Biodiversity is important to the health of our water, land, and air, and therefore important to our quality of life in Pennsylvania," said Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

DEP works with partners around the state to reduce aquatic invasive species, including sea lamprey in Lake Erie and European frog-bit in Pymatuning Reservoir, and to support native species, including the American eel in the Susquehanna River basin and native vegetation on stream banks.

“Pennsylvania has 2.2 million acres of state forests, millions of acres of state park and game lands, and private forestlands that must be protected from invasive species,” Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Assistant State Forester Matt Keefer said. “To help raise awareness and minimize impacts, DCNR provides training and outreach on invasives, works with federal agencies for early detection and rapid response, participates in Pennsylvania’s Invasive Species Management Plan, and strives to prevent and reduce the extent of invasives. Protecting our native plants and forests is critical to keeping Pennsylvania landscapes beautiful and productive for future generations.”

Survival of many native species is under increasing pressure from the proliferation of invasive nonnative species that has occurred as global commerce and travel have increased.

Spotted lanternfly, which arrived in 2014 in southeastern Pennsylvania and has now spread to two-thirds of the state, is a very recent example. It follows sea lamprey, emerald ash borer, quagga mussels, hydrilla, and numerous other nonnative species that have arrived and spread throughout Pennsylvania with detrimental impacts in the past century.

Invasive nonnative species not only damage food chains and habitats for native species, but also have negative economic and health impacts on Pennsylvanians.

"Pennsylvania Native Species Day is an opportunity to celebrate and protect our native plants, insects, and animals. Native organisms provide outdoor experiences, ecosystem services, and natural resources that all Pennsylvanians depend on," said Kristopher Abell, coordinator of GISC, for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. "When invasive species like the spotted lanternfly spread, they have detrimental effects on native species, and our environment, economy, and quality of life can be impacted. That is why it's so critical to create awareness on how to best manage invasive pests and support the commonwealth's native species."

“Public health is interconnected with our environment,” said Acting Secretary of Health and Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson. “The Department of Health supports efforts to combat the prevalence of invasive species because they directly affect our health in many ways. From the mitigation of diseases such as Lyme, to decreasing allergic reactions and even playing a part in improving mental and physical health, this is a worthy goal that we’re proud to be a part of.”

"Working with federal environmental partners, we're refining our roadside seed mixes to focus on native species and pollinators," said Department of Transportation Acting Executive Deputy Secretary Melissa Batula. "Additionally, we've entered into a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant partnership with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania to develop pollinator plots on PennDOT rights-of-way, with two sites selected for seeding."

“Our state's diverse wildlife resources depend on our native ecosystems. Invasive nonnative insects and plants can disrupt these delicately balanced systems, and create difficult challenges to managing for healthy wildlife and healthy habitats. Through partnership, we can share knowledge and resources to promote native species and ensure healthy habitat for wildlife for current and future generations of Pennsylvanians,” said Pennsylvania Game Commission Director of Wildlife Habitat Management David Gustafson.

The GISC recently developed a program called [Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management](#). If funded, the program would establish and support six regional independent

public-private partnerships statewide to address local invasive species priorities and for early detection and rapid response to new invasive threats.

A number of state parks and other organizations are celebrating the first Pennsylvania Native Species Day with local events, including talks, walks, and volunteer activities, such as pulling nonnative invasive plants.

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