



Pennsylvania  
Department of Conservation  
and Natural Resources



pennsylvania  
FISH & BOAT COMMISSION

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**Governor's Invasive Species Council Celebrates Native Species Day,  
Highlights Shapiro Administration Investments in Healthy Forests,  
Waterways, and Wildlife**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The **Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council** highlighted the importance of **Shapiro Administration** investments in protecting native plants, insects, and animals during the fifth annual **Pennsylvania Native Species Day** in the East Wing Rotunda of the **State Capitol** today.

The **Department of Agriculture**-led advisory council brings state agencies, local governments, and environmental organizations together to make recommendations and spearhead strategies to tackle invasive species threats to our economy and environment and promote benefits of nurturing native plants and animals.

Council member agencies shared the importance of Native Species Day and highlighted how their respective departments were investing in a sustainable future for Pennsylvania's ecosystems.

**Safeguarding Ag Resources and Protecting Crops From Invasive Threats**

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture continues to invest in science-based solutions that protect native ecosystems, safeguard agricultural resources, and strengthen the Commonwealth's resilience against invasive species and emerging threats.

“Pennsylvania agriculture depends on healthy ecosystems and thriving native species – from pollinators necessary to produce crops to native plants that protect soil and water quality,” said **PA Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding**. “Native Species Day is an opportunity to celebrate the natural resources that sustain our farms and communities and to reaffirm our commitment to conservation, stewardship, and environmental resilience across the Commonwealth.”

Under **Governor Shapiro’s** leadership, Pennsylvania has expanded efforts to combat invasive pests that threaten both natural habitats and agricultural production. The Department continues aggressive surveillance, treatment, and public education campaigns targeting the **spotted lanternfly**, an invasive insect first detected in Berks County in 2014. Through statewide monitoring, research investments, quarantine enforcement, and partnerships with industry and federal agencies, Pennsylvania has slowed the pest’s spread while protecting the Commonwealth’s \$1.77 billion grape and wine industry, nursery crops, forests, and other vulnerable plants.

The Shapiro Administration has also [invested in innovative tools](#) to detect and prevent the spread of invasive species, including funding support for **Ruby**, Pennsylvania’s second spotted lanternfly detection dog, which joins **Lucky**, the nation’s first canine trained specifically to locate lanternfly egg masses hidden on shipping materials and transportation equipment.

The Department is also leading efforts to address emerging agricultural pests, including the destructive **Phorid fly** that threatens Pennsylvania’s mushroom industry. Through more than [\\$627,000 in research investments and a new \\$1 million grant program](#), Pennsylvania is helping growers implement environmentally responsible, science-based pest management practices that protect crops while minimizing impacts on surrounding communities and ecosystems. Recently, the Administration announced [two research grants](#) of more than \$366,000 awarded to **The Pennsylvania State University College of Agriculture Sciences** to study control measures for mushroom flies and lanternflies.

The Department’s commitment to healthy ecosystems extends beyond pest management. In March 2026, Pennsylvania invested more than **\$5.5 million** in projects designed to improve soil health, restore waterways, plant trees, expand silvopasture systems, and reduce nutrient runoff throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These projects build on broader conservation successes that have resulted in nearly 945 miles of streamside forest buffers being planted and approximately 1.5 million trees added across Pennsylvania in the past two years alone.

Together, these investments demonstrate Pennsylvania’s commitment to protecting native species, preserving biodiversity, restoring critical habitats, and ensuring that future generations inherit healthy forests, farms, streams, and ecosystems.

## **Restoring Native Ecosystems and Expanding Community Conservation Efforts Across Pennsylvania**

The Shapiro Administration is making significant investments to protect Pennsylvania's native species, restore ecosystems, and help communities become active partners in conservation.

"Native plants are the foundation of Pennsylvania's ecosystems as they support pollinators and wildlife, strengthen forests and waterways, and help ensure clean air and water for future generations," said **PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "Through programs like Invasive Replace-ive, Lawn to Habitat, urban tree planting, and streamside forest restoration, DCNR is working alongside communities across the Commonwealth to expand native habitats, reduce the spread of invasive species, and reconnect Pennsylvanians with the natural landscapes that make our state special. Native Species Day is an opportunity to recognize that protecting biodiversity starts close to home, whether that's planting a native tree, restoring a meadow, or supporting healthy habitats in our neighborhoods and public lands."

Through the [Pennsylvania Invasive Replace-ive \(PAIR\) Program](#), more than 2,200 Pennsylvanians have removed invasive plants from their properties and received over 2,275 native trees distributed through regional events across the Commonwealth. The initiative, a partnership among six agencies and organizations, combines hands-on conservation with public education, helping residents understand the critical role native plants play in supporting pollinators, wildlife, clean water, and healthy ecosystems.

Pennsylvania is also expanding efforts to restore habitat and increase tree canopy, investing more than \$28 million since 2016 to establish approximately 4,000 acres of riparian forest buffers, resulting in the planting of an estimated 735,000 trees. In urban communities, nearly 7,000 trees were planted in 2025 alone, supported by \$13.3 million in grants for urban and community forestry projects since 2022. DCNR also held an invasive-replacive event at **Soldier's Grove**.

Recognizing that conservation begins at home, the Administration has supported the conversion of more than 650 acres of lawn into native meadows and forests since 2020 through the [Lawn to Habitat Program](#), helping reduce runoff, improve water quality, and create critical habitat for pollinators and wildlife. Demand for the program continues to grow, with more than 1,500 Pennsylvanians expressing interest in newly launched [Pocket Meadow Kits](#) that provide native seeds and resources for backyard habitat restoration.

The Administration is also advancing scientific understanding of Pennsylvania's biodiversity through investments in **native fungi research**, including a statewide inventory of fungi in **old-growth forests** that has already identified a new state record species. Together, these efforts reflect the Shapiro Administration's commitment to conserving Pennsylvania's more than 2,300 native plant species, combating invasive species, restoring healthy habitats, and ensuring future generations inherit thriving forests, waterways, and natural landscapes.

## **Investing in Wildlife Habitat Restoration and Supporting Native Species Across Pennsylvania**

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) continues to make strategic investments in native species of wildlife and quality habitats to sustain them. Since July of 2024 the agency has planted more than 100,000 native trees and shrubs, improved more than 1,250 acres of wildlife habitat with native and beneficial vegetation, and actively managed more than 10,000 acres of wetlands to support Pennsylvania's native birds, amphibians, pollinators, and aquatic species.

The Game Commission also advanced large-scale wetland restoration projects through the **Pennsylvania Wetland Habitat Initiative** and partnered with private landowners to develop or enhance 338 conservation plans, improving more than 22,800 acres of habitat statewide. These efforts are helping ensure Pennsylvania's native plants and wildlife can thrive for future generations while supporting healthy ecosystems, clean water, and resilient landscapes across the Commonwealth.

"Of the 480 species of wild mammals and birds in Pennsylvania, roughly 466 are considered native. The diverse makeup of wildlife in our state depends heavily on our native ecosystems," said **Pennsylvania Game Commission Executive Director Steve Smith**. "Through a concerted effort of education and partnerships across the commonwealth, we can ensure a healthy habitat for wildlife for current and future generations of Pennsylvanians."

## **Investing in Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Improving Waterways for Native Species**

Through partnerships with other agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, DCNR, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Game Commission, and PennDOT, the PFBC continues to invest in habitat improvement projects and other initiatives that benefit native aquatic species.

"Native species that contribute to our aquatic ecosystems are an essential part of life in Pennsylvania, well beyond fishing and boating," said **Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission**. "Where managed and protected responsibly, these native fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and plants bring our waters to life and provide incredible recreational and economic value, and sustenance. "In many cases, the presence of these delicate native species within our waterways is nature's indicator of clean water, which is something everyone can appreciate and want to protect."

Investments include cooperative use of public land within PFBC Access areas, State Parks, and State Forests for the planting of beneficial riparian buffers that cool waters and repel runoff pollution along rivers, streams, and lakes. Additionally, the design and incorporation of naturalistic fish passage structures around dams and road culverts

have restored connectivity for native aquatic species including wild Brook Trout and freshwater mussels by thousands of miles.

The nationwide leader in dam removal, during 2024-2025, the PFBC partnered with DCNR, American Rivers, and others to remove 40 dams across the Commonwealth, including the 755-foot-long Oakland Dam on the North Branch Susquehanna River, Susquehanna County, which was the longest dam removal in United States history. Dam removal restores natural water flows and fish passage, while improving overall water quality.

Legislators, including **State Senator James Malone**, highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts to protect native species and address the threats posed by invasive species across the Commonwealth.

"Our native wildlife is our heritage and our home," said Senator Malone. "As Minority Chair of the Senate Game & Fisheries Committee, I'm proud to support the work of the Governor's Invasive Species Council, the PA Game Commission, and the Fish & Boat Commission as they protect native species here in the Commonwealth. Being proactive in this effort is vital for the ongoing health of our ecosystem and economy, and I'm thankful for the public servants carrying out this important work."

The council issues a list of invasive species that threaten Pennsylvania's ecosystem and environment. Find the list as well as guidance on how to report invasive species on the council's [website](#).

State parks and organizations are joining the council's effort by offering public education and volunteer activities across Pennsylvania. For more information, visit [NativeSpeciesDay.pa.gov](http://NativeSpeciesDay.pa.gov).

Video and photos of today's are available at [PAcast.com](http://PAcast.com).

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