Meeting of the Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council (PGISC)
Thursday, March 19, 2026 | 10:00am (virtual)

Table of Contents

Attendance....2

Welcome/Introductory Remarks, Roll Call, & Approval of Minutes....4

Agency and Organization Updates, Activities, & Events....5

PA Invasive Replace-ive Program....10

PA Native Species Day at the Capitol....11

Communications Committee Report....16

Invasive Species Listing Committee Report....18

Aquatic Invasive Species Education and Outreach Committee Report....20

Legislative Committee Report....25

Pennsylvania State Invasive Species Management Plan Breakout Groups....30

Breakout Group Summary Reports....34

Public Comment Period....42

Concluding Remarks and Adjourn....43

Attendance

Council Members, Designees, & Alternates Present	
State Agencies	
PA Department of Agriculture (PDA)	Chris Davis
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (PA DCNR)	Andrew Rohrbaugh
PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP)	Jim Grazio
PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT)	Ray Boronyak
PA Department of Health (PA DOH)	(Not present)
PA Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC)	Sean Hartzell
PA Game Commission (PGC)	Curtis Noll
Non-Governmental Organizations	
Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area	(Not present)
County Governments	Jeff Thomas
PA Association of Conservation Districts (PACD)	Piper Sherburne
PA Farm Bureau (PFB)	Andy Ernst, Grant Gulibon
PA Lake Management Society (PALMS)	Brian Pilarcik
PA Landscape & Nursery Association (PLNA)	Claire Zuidervliet, Gregg Robertson
PA Sea Grant (PASG)	Sarah Whitney
PA State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS)	Brian Harris
Penn State University (PSU)	(Not present)
PennAg Industries Association (PennAg)	Harold Brecht
Temple University (TU)	Jocelyn Behm
Transportation Sector	(Not present)
University of Pennsylvania (UPenn)	(Not present)
Western PA Conservancy (WPC)	Jeff Wagner, Amy Jewitt
Total Members, Designees, & Alternates Present	19

Members/Designees/Alternates Not in Attendance: Betsy Schroeder (PA DOH), Deah Lieurance (PSU), Kate Harms (PALMS), Katie Sasala (APIPMA), Lisa Murphy (UPenn), Luke Crawford (PennDOT), Rosa Yoo (DCNR), Sara Stahlman (PASG), Sean Mahoney (PhilaPort – Transportation Sector)

Other Participants Present: (27) - Amber Stilwell, April Moore, Brant Portner, Brian Daggs, Caroline Brannan, Celine Colbert, Corinne Garda, Daniel Blottenberger, Eve Adrian, Heather Fowler, Hunter Kauffman, Jeffrey Young, Jennifer Senchak, Jonathan Geyer, Josh Raulerson, Judith Harvey, Kierstin Carlson, Kris Abell, Madalyn Neff, Mandy Kendall, Mary Walsh, Michelle Stevens, MJ Gibson, Nick Trivelli, Patricia Prade, Sarah Gettys, Shayna Seeley

In total, 46 individuals (including both members and non-members) are present for today's meeting.

_____

Welcome/Introductory Remarks, Roll Call, & Approval of Minutes

*Speaker: **Chris Davis**, Acting Deputy Secretary-Plant Industry and Consumer Protection; Executive Director for the Commission for Agriculture Education Excellence; Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (chmdavi@pa.gov)*

Chris Davis (PDA) welcomed everyone to today's meeting. He highlighted that people are talking about and excited about the updated Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan, specifically moving items in the plan into actionable tasks. Chris also remarked on the upcoming PA Native Species Day event happening at the Capitol on June 1, 2026. This event will provide a great opportunity for Council members and stakeholders to participate in networking and promoting the importance of Pennsylvania's native species and the threats posed by invasive species. Also, the PA Invasive Replace-ive (PAIR) program will be happening again this year. Just this morning, a write-up was released from the Governor's office discussing the PAIR program that happened in 2025 ("Shapiro Administration Helps Pennsylvanians Replace Invasive Plants with Native Species for Free").

Chris welcomed two new members to today's meeting: Claire Zuidervliet representing the PA Landscape & Nursery Association (PLNA), and Curtis Noll representing the PA Game Commission (PGC). Chris thanked their predecessors (Arden Pontash – PLNA, and Scott Bearer – PGC) for their participation on the Council.

Chris conducted the roll call. A quorum is present for today's meeting.

MOTION: Brian Harris (PSATS) moved to approve the December 11, 2025 PGISC meeting minutes. Amy Jewitt (WPC) seconded the motion. **Motion approved.**

Agency and Organization Updates, Activities, & Events

*Speaker: **Kris Abell**, Council Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (krabell@pa.gov)*

2026 Council Meeting Schedule

Kris highlighted the Council's upcoming (virtual) meeting dates:

- June 11, 2026
- September 17, 2026
- December 10, 2026

Agency & Organization Updates

Kris invited Council members to share updates on recent and upcoming events/activities. The following individuals shared remarks: Brian Pilarcik (PALMS), Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR), Amy Jewitt (WPC), and Sean Hartzell (PFBC).

Summary: Brian Pilarcik (PALMS) highlighted an upcoming Aquatic Invasive Species seminar scheduled to take place in Honesdale, PA on April 11, 2026. He requested promotion assistance from Council members and stakeholders.

What: Aquatic Invasive Species Seminar – Do you live in a lake community, own a private lake/pond, or just want to learn more about managing aquatic systems?

When: April 11, 2026 | 10am – 12:00pm

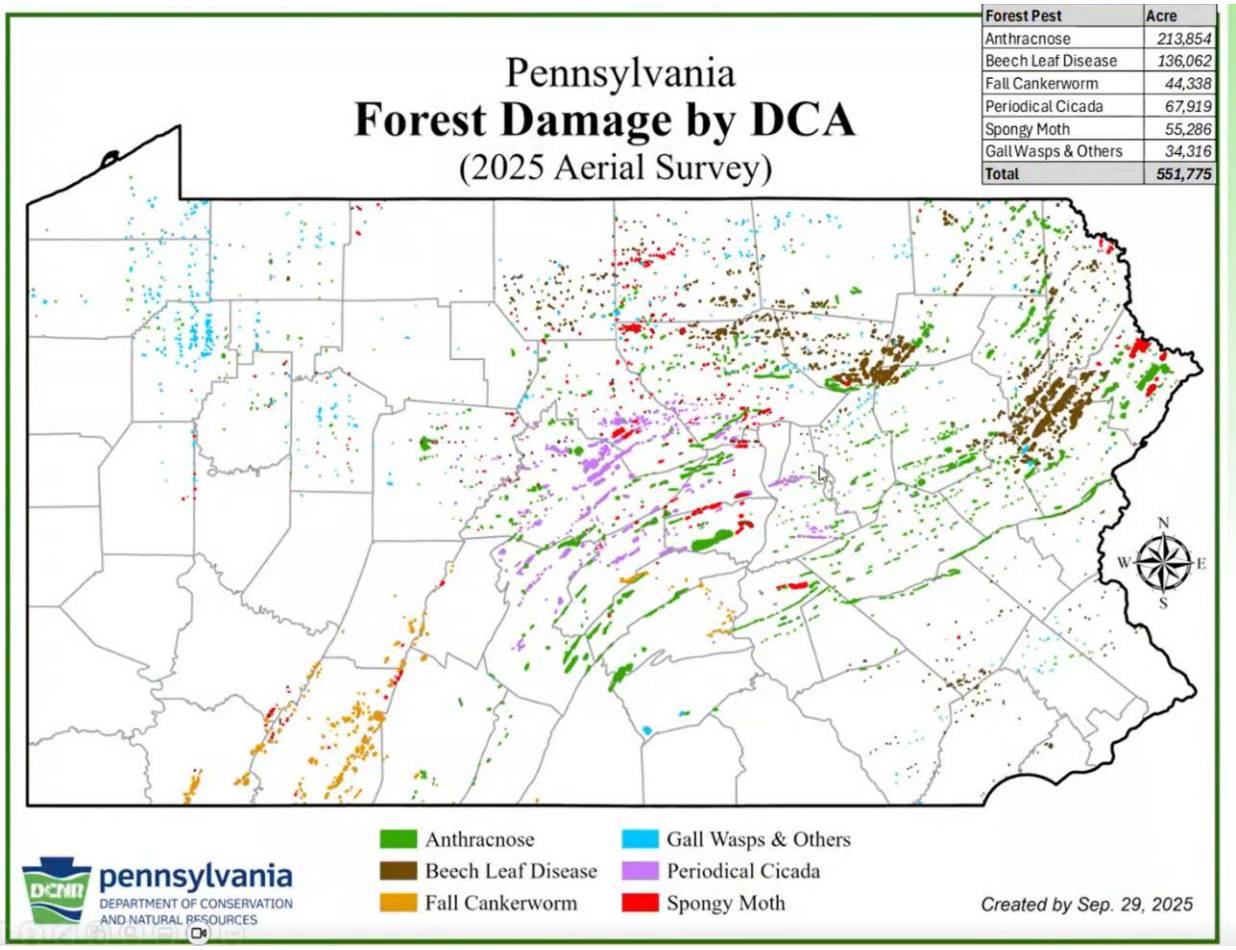
Where: 648 Park Street, Honesdale, PA 18431

What You'll Learn: Aquatic invasive species issues and prevention; treatment of aquatic invasive species; harmful algal bloom (HABs) walkthrough educational trailer

Notes: Light refreshments will be offered. Please register using the following link: https://forms.office.com/g/fM15vVrYS8. This program is available through a PA Lake Management Society Mini Grant awarded to Lake Alden Watershed Association.

Summary: Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) presented statistics for forest damage that occurred in 2025.

Anthracnose is a native fungus and occurs during wet springs; it was a major factor in defoliation of forested land. Beech leaf disease occurred as well; a newer invasive species that's defoliating overstory beech trees and likely causing mortality. Spongy moth fortunately waned, with egg mass surveys as of a month ago were much lower across the state. DCNR will continue to have an active spray program for spongy moth in the northeastern corner of PA (Pike County) to target a few key areas of state forest. The DCNR continues to look for dead Ailanthus trees in the landscape, trying to discern if they are dying from the verticillium wilt, or if they're being impacted by spotted lanternfly feeding.



Also, a new biocontrol for garlic mustard has been approved for release; however, it will take some time to work through the system. It is a weevil that attacks the roots of garlic mustard.

DCNR continues to look for sites where Bohemian knotweed is present as the agency may be able to do biocontrol releases. If anyone knows of sites where this species is present, contact Andrew Rohrbaugh (anrohrbaug@pa.gov).

Also, DCNR continues to treat invasive plants such as wavyleaf basketgrass (*Oplismenus undulatifolius*). If you know of locations where wavyleaf basketgrass is present, please notify the DCNR so these locations can be treated ASAP.

Lastly, if folks see "suspiciously" healthy trees for any of the species listed below, DCNR now has a geneticist on board who is coordinating a recovery effort and breeding for these species in order to spread genetic resistance. Look for trees amid forested stands where mortality has occurred in either southcentral or central Pennsylvania.

- Ash
- Butternut
- Beech
- Chestnut
- American elm
- Hemlock

Summary: Amy Jewitt (WPC) highlighted an upcoming webinar that will promote the Pennsylvania Invasive Replace-ive Program.

On March 26, 2026, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will host a webinar that will share details and help raise awareness about this year's Pennsylvania Invasive Replace-ive (PAIR) Program. The featured speaker will be Celine Colbert (DCNR). All are encouraged to sign up for this webinar to learn more about the PAIR program and how to participate.

At the time of composing these meeting minutes, a recording of the webinar is now available to watch on YouTube.

Summary: Sean Hartzell (PFBC) mentioned new videos the PFBC created which highlight several aquatic invasive species.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission participated in National Invasive Species Awareness Week during the last week of February. As part of the agency's involvement, Sean collaborated with PFBC's Outreach Department to record several videos on aquatic invasive species (AIS) that were released on social media and are available for viewing on YouTube. Short clips are available that are 20-30 seconds in length with others that are a bit longer – about 1 minute, 30 seconds. Video topics highlight hydrilla, rusty crayfish, golden clam (*formerly known as Asian clam*), and a few general outreach videos on cleaning gear.

Aquatic Invasive Species in Pennsylvania: Hydrilla
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
Aquatic Invasive Species
Hydrilla
PENNSYLVANIA
FISH & BOAT COMMISSION
Watch on YouTube

_____

PA Invasive Replace-ive Program

*Speaker: **Celine Colbert**, Urban and Community Tree Canopy Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (c-cecolber@pa.gov)*

A DCNR press release about the Pennsylvania Invasive Replace-ive Program was released today (March 19) and registration for public participation in the program will launch on March 31. Eight events will occur throughout the state as well as an event related to Pennsylvania Native Species Day in Harrisburg on June 1.

This year, the program will distribute 2,200 trees. DCNR was able to fund 200 additional trees with a partner for Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay from some grant funding they had.

Of the eight event locations, the Lancaster event will be the largest, with 400 trees being planned for distribution. Wait lists will be available for all events, so once registration fills up, the last half hour of each event will be for the wait list attendees to grab any extra trees that are remaining. The hope is for all trees to be distributed to people who have removed one or more invasive species.

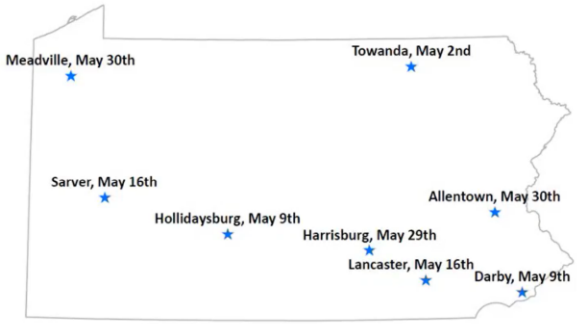
May 2
Bradford County Conservation District, Towanda — 10:00–2:00

May 9
Little Flower Park, Darby — 10:00–12:30
Natureworks Park, Hollidaysburg — 10:00–12:30

May 16
Buffalo Creek Nature Park, Sarver — 9:00–12:00
Lancaster Reservoir Park, Lancaster — 10:00–1:00

May 29
PA Dept of Ag Auxiliary Lot, Harrisburg — 1:00–4:30

May 30
Penn State Extension – Lehigh County, Allentown — 10:00–12:30
Crawford County Conservation District, Meadville — 12:00–2:00



PA Native Species Day at the Capitol

*Speaker: **Kris Abell**, Council Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (krabell@pa.gov)*

Event Overview

The East Wing Rotunda at the Capitol Building as well as Soldiers Grove (behind the Capitol) have each been reserved for Monday, June 1 in Harrisburg to celebrate Pennsylvania Native Species Day. The Council is currently developing a "Save The Date" to distribute to legislators, other officials, and stakeholders to raise awareness for the event. It will also be shared with Council members.

A PA Native Species Day poster has been created; special thanks to Caroline Estey and the PDA Communications Office for their work on this.

Press Conference & Media Presence

Daniel Blottenberger (PDA) remarked that the event at the Capitol on June 1 will begin with a 45-minute press event hosted by the PA Department of Agriculture from 10am – 10:45am. B-roll will be captured throughout the day to hit the different areas of the Capitol where events will be taking place. Commonwealth Media Services will record and take

photographs. The purpose of the press event is to highlight the Shapiro administration's departmental investments in native species and related environmental impacts in Pennsylvania. For example, at the PDA, the ag innovation research grant programs will likely be highlighted. One research grant in particular was awarded to Penn State to reduce spotted lanternfly contamination during mechanized grape harvesting.

Daniel's request for the Council is for folks to share a story or project that could be highlighted during the press conference. If you have something to share, reach out to Daniel Blottenberger to discuss and possibly include your organization into the speaker line-up. Daniel's email address is dblottenbe@pa.gov. The speaker line-up currently includes PDA, DCNR, PGC, PFBC, and PLNA.

Local Native Species Day Events

PA Native Species Day (PNSD) is a statewide event and the Council invites groups and partners to hold their own local events. Folks can complete the participation form located at the top of the PA Native Species Day webpage to inform the Council of planned activities. These will be posted on the section of the PNSD webpage titled "Scheduled Events".

Webpage Update

The PA Native Species Day webpage was recently updated to include information pertaining to participation as well as resources about native species (i.e., importance, where to purchase, how to landscape with them, etc.). There's also a section of FAQs and past PNSD event information. Last year's PA Native Species Day was successful with a video showcasing the event in combination with the Pennsylvania Invasive Replace-ive Program. Also included on the webpage are some sample social media graphics and a downloadable poster.

PLNA & FFA – Native Trees for Legislators

In celebration of PA Native Species Day, Gregg Robertson (PLNA) said that with the help of the Pennsylvania FFA Association, PLNA will place a tree on the desk of every legislator early in the morning of June 1 before the legislative session starts. PLNA has done this with the General Assembly and FFA for many years, but unfortunately had to stop when PLNA's legislative sponsor retired in 2017. However, PLNA is happy to be able to do it again this year, as it has been extremely popular in the past. It's really something to see; the House chamber looks like a forest, which is a great press opportunity! We have delivered trees to the Senate offices because they were hesitant about us getting into the chamber and placing trees in there. Hopefully this year they allow us in. Octoraro Native Plant Nursery

will donate the 300 trees needed to do this. Gregg is currently working with the General Assembly to get the necessary approvals to get into the building early, into the chamber, and place the trees.

The photos shown below are from the last time PLNA and FFA placed trees in the House chamber in 2017.

Claire Zuidervliet (PLNA) mentioned that the 300 trees being donated by Octoraro are seedlings (not big). Pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) was the species chosen because oaks are a classic native plant.

Gregg felt it would be good to have the legislators (who help PLNA/FFA) inside the House Chamber and the Secretary in the main Capitol Rotunda with the FFA members arrayed on the steps behind them. This will be visually impactful and will be a nice compliment to the press event. Gregg also thought the President of the PA FFA could individually present trees to the Secretary and legislators that are there to emphasize the importance of these native tree species. Some B-roll could be taken in the chamber early, before the legislators get there; it's very stunning to see all the trees on the desks of the legislators. Press from this would be a tremendous opportunity.

Tabling in East Wing Rotunda

Kris Abell (PDA) mentioned that outreach tables will be set up in the East Wing Rotunda where a variety of agencies and organizations will be present including PGC, PFBC, WPC, Mid-Atlantic Audubon, and others. Attendees at this event will get to interact with legislators and other participants who are present. If there are folks present at today's Council meeting that would like to participate in the event at the Capitol, reach out to Kris to coordinate further. Also, the entire green space available in Soldiers Grove behind the Capitol is reserved for folks to set up in.

Guided Walk in Soldiers Grove

Another idea proposed by Gregg is to have a guided walk-and-talk in Soldiers Grove to point out the many native trees, plants, and shrubs that are there and talk about why they are important. If there are any invasive species present, discussion could be had that would make for an educational opportunity on the threats posed by invasive species.

Communications Committee Report

*Speaker: **Patricia Prade**, Extension Entomologist, Horticulture, Penn State Extension (prade@psu.edu)*

Communications Committee Members	
Committee Chair	Patricia Prade, Penn State Extension
State Agencies	
PA Department of Agriculture	Kris Abell, Daniel Blottenberger, Sarah Shiflett, Shayna Seeley
PA Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources	Andrew Rohrbaugh, Ryan Reed
PA Fish and Boat Commission	Michael Parker
PA Department of Transportation	Zachary Appleby
Non-Governmental Organizations	
PA Sea Grant	Amber Stilwell
Western PA Conservancy	Amy Jewitt
Are you interested in joining the Communications Committee? Council members and non-members are welcome. If yes, contact Patricia Prade at prade@psu.edu.	

Council's Quarterly E-News

The Communications Committee continues to produce the Council's quarterly e-newsletter with the next issue slated to be published on June 26. Patricia reminded everyone at today's meeting to send invasive species-related events, articles, or other news to Kris or Patricia to highlight in the newsletter.

2026 PA Farm Show

Several committee members helped with the Council's booth at the 2026 PA Farm Show. Amber Stilwell will be talking more about this during her committee report (*later in this meeting*). It was very successful with a lot of people enjoying the booth and its activities.

Biennial Report to the Governor

Committee members are assisting with the development of the Council's 2025 Biennial Report to the Governor.

Education & Outreach

The Council continues to partner with Penn State Extension on webinars and educational articles. This includes contributions from many Council members who serve as speakers for Extension's invasive species webinar series, like the one from earlier this month highlighting spongy moth (*thanks Ryan Reed and Rosa Yoo of DCNR*). Also, in collaboration with WPC, an article on how to use iMapInvasives to report invasive species was recently produced (*thanks Amy Jewitt and team from WPC*).

2026 Keystone Invasive Species Forum

We also continue collaborating as a group on planning the inaugural 2026 Keystone Invasive Species Forum (KISF). This first-of-its-kind statewide forum will focus on invasive species issues in Pennsylvania and is planned to take place on September 16, 2026 at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in State College. The main goal of the event is to highlight the collaborations that exist among various partners whose work deals with invasive species in Pennsylvania. The planning committee is currently finalizing the event agenda. If any Council members or others have suggestions for speakers or topics you would like to see covered at this event, especially those that highlight collaborations around the state, contact Patricia (prade@psu.edu).

Since the KISF is happening the day before the Fall PGISC meeting, Patricia suggests holding the September Council meeting in-person as part of the KISF. We could incorporate the committee updates into the event so we could share what the Council is doing with KISF attendees from around the state. This will give an opportunity for a broader audience to learn about the PGISC and the work of its committees, and also allow members to be together in-person rather than virtually. This idea is currently open for discussion, so let Kris/Patricia know your thoughts. Kris will send an email/poll to determine the Council's interest in attending the KISF in-person and members' thoughts on combining the KISF with the Fall Council meeting.

Invasive Species Listing Committee Report

*Speaker: **Andrew Rohrbaugh**, Section Chief, Applied Science & Technology Section, Division of Forest Health, Bureau of Forestry, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (anrohrbaug@pa.gov)*

Invasive Species Listing Committee Members	
Committee Chair	Andrew Rohrbaugh, PA DCNR
State Agencies	
PA Department of Agriculture	Kris Abell, Lawrence Barringer, Ekaterina (Katya) Nikolaeva
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources	Jill Rose, Houping Liu, Ben Mummert, Hannah Huber
PA Fish and Boat Commission	Sean Hartzell
PA Game Commission	Scott Bearer
Non-Governmental Organizations	
Ernst Conservation Seeds	Andrew Ernst
PA Landscape and Nursery Association	Gregg Robertson
Penn State University	Deah Lieurance
Penn Ag Industries	Harold Brecht
Western PA Conservancy	Brian Daggs, Mary Walsh, Jeff Wagner
Are you interested in joining the Invasive Species Listing Committee? Council members and non-members are welcome. If yes, contact Andrew Rohrbaugh at anrohrbaug@pa.gov.	

Updates to Invasive Species of Concern Lists

Several folks have collaborated to update the invasive species of concern lists which have been approved by the Invasive Species Listing Committee. Kris Abell worked with the PDA Communications team to get these lists updated on the PGISC website. The updated lists highlight:

- **Aquatic Animals** — A few species were removed and added; each species was assigned a tier based on watershed/water basin because the committee felt that made more sense for aquatic species rather than regional geographic tiers.
- **Aquatic Pathogens** — This entire list has been removed; now all pathogens (plant, animal, terrestrial, aquatic) are on a single list and have been assigned a statewide tier.

- **Fungi** — A brand new list of invasive and pathogenic fungi has been created and added to the PGISC webpage; each species was given a statewide tier.

Suggested Species Additions – PA Controlled Plant & Noxious Weed List

At our next Listing Committee meeting, we will review the previous PGISC suggestions for additions to the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee List.

Species Lists are Making an Impact!

The invasive species of concern lists are having an impact! Both new and old housing developments that are looking at their current and future proposed landscaping are making decisions from information available from the DCNR Bureau of Forestry, PGISC, and the PA Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed List.

As an example, the community of Stone Hill, located off Old Dutch Lane and Camp Betty Washington Road in York, PA, has undertaken a major environmental restoration project involving the removal of approximately 600 Japanese barberry shrubs, representing 1,200 linear feet of invasive vegetation. These shrubs were installed roughly 25 years ago to provide a protective barrier around a dry retention basin. At the time of planting, Japanese barberry was not classified as a noxious or invasive species, and the landscaper may not have been aware of its long-term ecological impacts. The retention basin directly borders Mill Creek Preserve, a naturalized park in York Township, making responsible vegetation management especially important.

Special Thanks

Kris Abell (PDA) thanked Hannah Huber (WPC/DCNR) for her contributions to creating the new fungi list as well as Sean Hartzell (PFBC) for his work to update the aquatic pathogen list and developing the tiers for the different watersheds.

_____

Aquatic Invasive Species Education and Outreach Committee Report

*Speaker: **Amber Stilwell**, Coastal Outreach Specialist, Lake Erie Office, Pennsylvania Sea Grant - AND - Master Watershed Steward Coordinator, Erie, Crawford, and Warren Counties, Penn State Extension (ars26@psu.edu)*

Aquatic Invasive Species Education & Outreach Committee Members	
Committee Chair	Amber Stilwell, PA Sea Grant & Penn State Extension
State Agencies	
PA Department of Agriculture	Kris Abell
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources	John Laskos
PA Fish and Boat Commission	Sean Hartzell
Non-Governmental Organizations	
PA Lake Management Society	Kate Harms
PA Sea Grant	Sara Stahlman, Sarah Whitney
Penn State Extension	Brad Kunsman, Faith Kibuye, Glen Bupp, Jenn Fetter, Megan Luke, Patricia Prade, Susan Boser
Western PA Conservancy	Mary Walsh
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Tony Honick, John Chopp
Are you interested in joining the Aquatic Invasive Species Education & Outreach Committee? Council members and non-members are welcome. If yes, contact Amber Stilwell at ars26@psu.edu.	

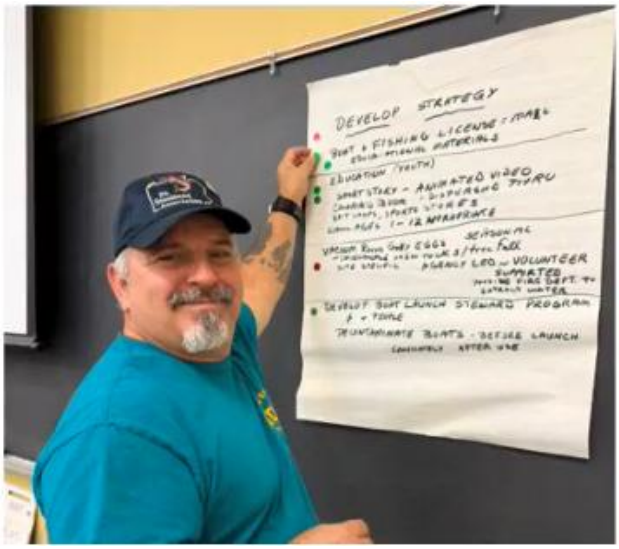
Angler Engagement Session – Highlights

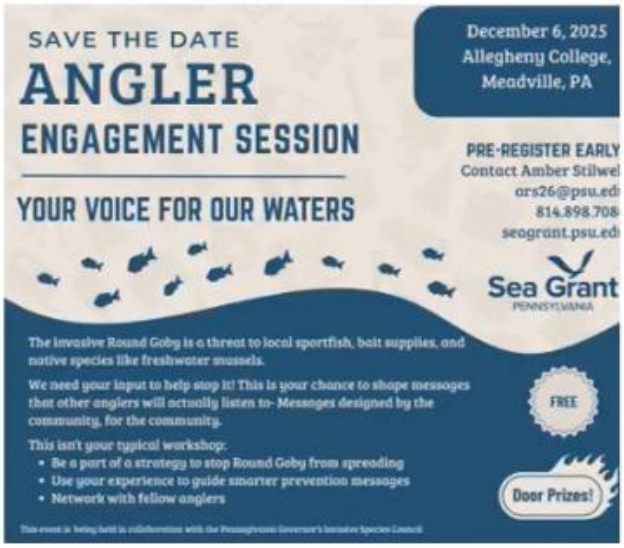
At the December 2025 Council meeting, Amber provided some statistics and information from the Angler Engagement Session (*held in December 2025*) and compiled a summary report which is now available by sending a request email to Amber at ars26@psu.edu. From the evaluation and statistical analysis, Amber was able to determine the cross-cutting efforts across the different groups present at the engagement session.

The session brought angler voices to the table for purposes of boosting community-based social marketing to determine what kinds of messaging about aquatic invasive species would best reach them. Example messaging had focuses on decontamination procedures, bait disposal, and others. From all the notes and information from the session, the outcomes that were general themes across all the different groups are as follows (*see*

bulleted list below). It's a lot of things that we already know, but things that we can also do better at and direct our outreach efforts to:

- **Education and awareness drive behavior change:** Participants frequently prioritized simple, repeated messaging across licenses, youth programs, retail locations, and water access points.
- **Infrastructure must support the desired behaviors:** Better-designed bait disposal stations, improved cleaning tools, and well-placed signage help anglers make better choices.
- **Community norms matter:** Steward programs, influencers, and community-based messaging can normalize aquatic invasive species behaviors and build trust.
- **Clear, visual, and positive messaging resonates:** Participants preferred messaging that is visual, concise, emotionally engaging, and solution-oriented.
- **Meet anglers where they are:** Effective outreach must occur at locations anglers already use including bait shops, boat launches, gas stations, and popular fishing sites.
- **Reduce confusion and barriers:** Simplifying actions through better design, signage, and instructions makes it easier for anglers to change their behavior.





2026 PA Farm Show

Our group did a lot of cross collaboration through the Farm Show outreach booth this year. Team members included Kris Abell (PDA), Daniel Blottenberger (PDA), Patricia Prade (Penn State Extension), Jennifer Senchak (community scientist), Deah Lieurance (PSU), Jocelyn

Behm (Temple U), and Amber Stilwell (PASG/Penn State Extension). A photo of the booth is shown below, highlighting the Connect 4 game that Daniel Blottenberger developed, which was very popular.

The PGISC booth was listed on the Ag Explorer website. The booth offered handouts and native species that visitors could take with them. Available species included native grasses, acorns, red osier dogwood live stakes, and more. A big thank you to Jennifer Senchak (Restoreth Roots) for providing these species! Having them available prompted people to inquire more about biodiversity, canopy layers, etc.

Approximately 7,000 people were reached from booth engagement at the 2026 PA Farm Show – very impressive! This was determined by having booth attendants write down the number of people they engaged with after their shift was over, which amounted to approximately 50-100 people per hour. Thanks to all the committee and Council members as well as PDA staff that were able to join us for this event.

Education & Outreach

In our connection to agricultural communities, Amber Stilwell and Susan Boser (Extension Resources Educator, Penn State Extension) co-presented a webinar on March 2, 2026 titled "Ag Water Series: What's in Your Farm Pond?". A total of 284 individuals registered for the event and 100 people attended the webinar live. The big draw for this event was the offering of Category 9 credits, an incentive to farmers and pesticide applicators. The webinar highlighted invasive aquatic plant identification and management, with Amber doing the ID component and Susan doing the management component. Webinar attendees were taught the things they might see in their farm pond and why it's important to not spread these species to new locations.

Another program being worked on through PA Sea Grant is "Beyond the Blitz: A Statewide Pennsylvania Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach and Prevention Partnership". PA Sea Grant is applying for funding to support and coordinate multiple summer long statewide outreach events. The grant will provide materials, training, safety information, and more. The Landing Blitz typically occurs over a 10-day period, but this year it's extended to occur over several months of the summer. Partnering events will collect data to determine how many people were reached, how many boats were checked, etc. Participation is no extra effort on the partner except reporting and communicating. PA Sea Grant currently has plenty of partnered events for their grant application, but others who are interested should contact Sara Stahlman (sstahlman@psu.edu).

The committee is planning to host an aquatic invasive species workshop in Harrisburg in August 2026. The target audience will be geared towards professionals seeking aquatic invasive species identification skills. The current agenda is as follows:

- Early detection and rapid response: Sara Stahlman (PA Sea Grant)
- Vertebrates and invertebrates: Sean Hartzell (PFBC)
- Plants: **Looking for someone to teach!**
- Outdoor field trip to practice identification and reporting: Amber Stilwell (PA Sea Grant)

Other efforts happening statewide include:

- **Penn State Extension Pond Management webinar series**
    - May 12, 2026; continues for 4 weeks
    - Includes invasive species management
- **Penn State Extension Pond Twilight Walks for 2026**
    - Good feedback from 2025!
    - Setting up summer/fall walks currently

    - Warren County walk will incorporate invasive species awareness, identification, and reporting
- **PA Invasive Replace-ive (PAIR) Program** – *planning for 2026*
    - Amber will be leading the charge for the PAIR event in NW PA, hosting an event in Meadville in collaboration with Josh Thomas at DCNR

Legislative Committee Report

*Speaker: **Eve Adrian**, Executive Policy Specialist 2, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Office of the Secretary (eadrian@pa.gov)*

Legislative Committee Members	
Committee Chair	Eve Adrian, PA Department of Agriculture
State Agencies	
PA Department of Agriculture	Stephen Rudman, Sarah Hammond
PA Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources	Andrew Rohrbaugh, Ben Mummert, Ali Bowling
PA Fish and Boat Commission	Kailee Glock
PA Game Commission	Krisinda Corbin
PA Department of Transportation	Jeff Young, David Lapadat
Non-Governmental Organizations	
Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture & American Bird Conservatory	Amanda Duren
Audubon Mid-Atlantic	Jim Brown
PA Association of Conservation Districts	Piper Sherburne
PA Sea Grant	Sarah Whitney
PA Landscape & Nursery Association	Gregg Robertson
Western PA Conservancy	Amy Jewitt, Brian Gallagher, Jeff Wagner, Mary Walsh
Are you interested in joining the Legislative Committee? Council members and non-members are welcome. If yes, contact Eve Adrian at eadrian@pa.gov.	

Invasive Species Act (Legislation)

The Invasive Species Act has gone through its final initial reviews with PDA's legal division, and the language in the legislation seems to be okay with both the Legislative Committee and PDA's legal folks. We will continue to do internal review of the legislation. Kris will send out the legislation for review by Council members.

The current version of the Act is very similar to previous versions seen by PGISC. The only significant changes are language around jurisdiction that ensures PGISC doesn't usurp other jurisdictional authorities that agencies have.

In the legislation, the PGISC membership listed was pared down quite a bit. We originally intended to have 25-30 members; however, there were concerns about managing a big

group of people that could lead to excessive administrative duties related to keeping vacancies filled. This would take way from the larger mission of PGISC. The compromise is to bring people on as public members and subcommittee members. These individuals wouldn't be able to vote on anything, however, the votes we take as part of PGISC are advisory only. Therefore, it would behoove the Council to ensure we capture opinions and insights from external folks. In essence, nothing is significantly lost by paring down the membership list to a more manageable group of folks.

The membership roster will include a few more agencies and also legislative members (two senators and two representatives). There will be 14 public members. Everything else in the legislation is the same as what the Council has seen before.

The Invasive Species Act will allow PGISC to receive funding from multiple different sources. If the Council were to receive funding, we couldn't spend it ourselves. It would have to go through a different channel for access and funding distribution (which is all hypothetical at this point, since the Council doesn't have any current funding). If funding were to come to the Council, such as through a grant program that PGISC administered, that would go to a pass-through entity in a region that had (for example) multi-county contracts. Funding could go through that multi-county contract to coordinated, on-the-ground projects. We would receive grant applications, we would give recommendations to the Secretary, and then money would flow through the Bureau of Plant Industry. *(That's the general concept.)*

Once we get approval from PGISC on the current version of the Invasive Species Act, we will start doing the more significant internal reviews and give to the PDA Secretary for his consideration.

It would be great to have the Invasive Species Act introduced by June 30, 2026. That timing is beneficial with how the state budget is introduced and negotiated among the legislators and the General Assembly. If we don't get the Act introduced by then (which is likely), we can introduce it during the next session. We have legislators in mind who could be champions of the Act.

Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management (Proposal)

We have drafted a concept document outlining a proposed Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management. In the PA Department of Agriculture alone, there are several other existing Centers of Excellence on various topics. The concept document will outline what the Center is and will do.

Internal discussions have raised questions on how to fund the Center and looking for existing funding sources rather than asking for new funding. It is highly unlikely that we would be able to access any new funding sources through the state.

The Center's central coordinating entity would be PGISC and its main goal would be to advance invasive species management in a coordinated way in Pennsylvania. Sound familiar? It's basically what the Council has been trying to do for the last five years *(in connection to starting a regional PRISM program, which was unsuccessful)*. The Center would administer a hypothetical grant program, be multi-sectoral, and be the state or governance arm that helps facilitate public-private partnerships to help advance on-the-ground projects. Projects would focus on education, research, and prevention and ultimately help to advise policy recommendations, just like we do now. Kris Abell (PDA) would remain the Coordinator of the Board of Directors for the Center of Excellence.

Next steps are to continue thinking through some questions about governance, staffing, and funding. There will likely be some gaps in our understanding of what we can expect the Center to do. Once the concept paper for the Center is drafted, it will be sent to PGISC for review and consideration.

Kris Abell (PDA) remarked that something that will be greatly needed in the proposal for a Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management is a demonstration of return on investment. We've talked about this as a Council for many years, maybe in slightly different terms, but many of the other existing Centers (e.g., Center for Plant Excellence, Center for Organic Excellence) are each benefitting a specific industry, so their return on investment is very tangible and obvious, whereas our Center would be a little less obvious in that regard. Therefore, it is imperative that we come up with a rationale, and if possible, actual numbers that would serve our proposal in a strong way.

Piper Sherburne (PACD) commented that she felt the Committee was going in the wrong direction *[with the Center]*, but agreed that quantifying the Council's goals was good and felt that having more structure was better than having less. It's been 10 years and people are just now talking to Piper about the PRISM concept because they now know what it is, but it took this long to do so. To try and find something else now *(instead of PRISM)* seems like we're starting at square one.

Piper further commented that she's been spending a lot of her time nationally working with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and the Farm Bill process, trying to get legislation to include language that includes all the conservation districts across the country in this invasive species work. This work has "exploded" and feels unmanageable with our current workload and the organizations that are trying to do what they can to

address it. So, unless you have something already in the works, such as a partner with experience and the toolkit to take on this work, I think we're going to be floundering. Piper commented that PACD has frequently been sending letters to legislators and trying to get people to pay more attention to the hard work they do.

In follow-up to Piper's comments, Eve Adrian (PDA) remarked about the importance of the stakeholder network reaching out to legislators. There are two different types of outreach. First, there's the persistent and ongoing outreach that can happen at any time, like a group of individuals from a stakeholder group or constituents can do an orchestrated outreach to members of the General Assembly. This is important because if legislators don't hear from their constituents, they're going to think that an issue isn't really an issue. And if legislators are hearing about a need from an agency like PDA, but not from constituents, they're not going to take PDA's word for it. Of course, there are exceptions to this, but by and large, don't underestimate the power of constituent outreach and legislative engagement. That means more than outreach from state agencies, in many cases.

The second type of outreach is legislative timeline specific outreach where, for example, you have a bill that's introduced, and you do a big outreach campaign when it gets introduced and then again before it's voted on. Before we (the Council) get to that point with the Invasive Species Act, we should take a serious look at how we do this type of outreach, with the understanding that the state cannot do this type of outreach to legislators. Eve feels the strategy we use to conduct outreach to legislators is very important and could make or break our success.

Piper Sherburne (PACD) followed up on Eve's comments, saying there's been a lot of stumbling blocks with PACD lately. They recently lost their lobbying momentum when their Executive Director, Brenda Shambaugh, retired. PACD is trying to make up for this loss in its lobbying efforts. In the past, they have gone to Harrisburg to meet with their legislators in their offices each spring, but haven't done this lately. There's also a lot of new legislators which PACD hasn't yet connected with, which is an added challenge.

Piper mentioned grants offered through NRCS. They may be a partner we haven't utilized as much through the other agencies, but conservation districts do all the time. There's already language in many NRCS grants that allow invasive species work to occur. In other words, there's already a lot of work being done that is not being captured that could be reported to legislators, telling them info such as how many trees have been planted, info on stream bank replacement efforts, or work with noxious weeds.

Regarding the Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management, we need to have an end game and a goal. How are we going to quantify and measure our success with this

program? If we don't measure our success, we can't report that the money given to us was well spent. That is a great scrutiny right now. Much of that information is available and could be captured if we coordinate that effort. We could then use that information to communicate how much work is being done that legislators don't know about.

Kris Abell (PDA) followed up on Piper's comments, mentioning the importance of capturing information. This is one of the intentions of our updates and announcements portion of Council meetings, for members to report on projects and initiatives that are going on in the state which are recorded in Council meeting minutes. We can also take that information and compile it into something that's useful.

_____

Pennsylvania State Invasive Species Management Plan Breakout Groups

*Speaker: **Kris Abell**, Council Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (krabell@pa.gov)*

We've had breakout group sessions for a couple of recent PGISC meetings. Kris asked Council members (today) to comment on how effective they felt the breakout groups have been so far. Should any changes be made? Should the focus of the groups be different? Are four groups too many to meet at one time? Should we be meeting monthly outside of Council meetings?

Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) remarked that he has struggled to get his group up-and-running, expressing apologies to those who have had an interest and willingness to help with the Long-Term Management and Restoration group.

Jocelyn Behm (Temple University) commented that at the beginning of the meeting, Kris mentioned there was a lot of excitement and expectation for advancing the action items of the PA Invasive Species Management Plan, and we're trying to bolster that with these breakout groups. However, Jocelyn's group, which has been assigned to discuss Containment & Eradication topics featured in the plan, doesn't really exist because there hasn't been much participation. Jocelyn says she's also lost track of the other groups as far as their accomplishments and overall momentum. Therefore, Jocelyn said that she would like an update of what the other groups are doing and where they stand. She also questioned if breakout groups are the most effective way to pursue the action items of the plan. Does it make sense to reconfigure the groups at this point? Are we still in the exploration stage and figuring things out?

Amy Jewitt (WPC) commented that Kris had asked her and Mary Walsh to give an overview of where things are with the Early Detection & Rapid Response (EDRR) committee today. This group met during the September and December Council meetings, but has also been meeting outside of Council meetings too (in January and March 2026). The group has been very active and is having some good conversations, but there has been effort on the group leaders' part to get the group formalized and created. On part of those who are leading and facilitating these groups, there is definitely a hurdle to jump to get them going. However, now that the EDRR group is past that point, Amy mentioned she just scheduled the group's next monthly meeting and set an agenda.

Mary Walsh (WPC) is also leading the EDRR group in tandem with Amy. She remarked that it would be useful to determine what we hope to get out of hosting the breakout groups. In

speaking generally about the discussions had so far in the EDRR group, meetings have been about looking at the recommendations in the plan and digging deeper into them. We're asking questions like, what are the existing resources that could be used to make something happen, or what else could there be? By having a diverse group with collective knowledge take part (i.e., individuals with knowledge of invasive species policy and management), we're discussing what some of the existing resources are that maybe not everybody knows about.

Mary could see an outcome of the breakout groups being, at minimum, pulling together some of the existing resources into something shareable with others who do similar work (e.g., available funding, volunteer groups to partner with). Moving forward, given folks' time and capacity, the struggle is, where do we see further actions needing to occur to make things happen in the statewide plan? How do we get momentum and have folks take time out of their busy schedules to work on these tasks?

Amy Jewitt (WPC) followed up on Mary's comments, saying that from conversations in the EDRR breakout group, it has been very interesting and enlightening to learn about some of the existing funding resources that already exist. For example, there's line items in the state budget for various entities to receive funding for several purposes, which Amy personally was unaware of. She always thought the biggest challenge when it comes to invasive species work in the state was that there's no money for it. However, there is money for various things that perhaps could be used creatively through partnerships with other entities (i.e., the work that someone is doing could also tack something else on related to invasive species).

An example of this is the PA Invasive Replace-ive Program. This program was born because of a partnership between the PGISC, PDA and DCNR. For years, the Council wanted to do an invasive plant buy-back program. Then at some point along the way, there were conversations that determined DCNR has funding to give away free trees, and so a partnership was born and the PA Invasive Replace-ive Program is now in its second year running. Moving forward, perhaps similar partnerships, such as with the Invasive Replace-ive Program, could come about to accomplish some of the tasks outlined as recommendations in the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Management Plan. Essentially, we need to rethink what's possible and know what tools are available to utilize regarding funding and capacity.

Piper Sherburne (PACD) thanked Amy for her comments, also remarking that we have lists of invasive plants, fungi, and other species, but we don't have a list to share of available money sources that Council members and stakeholders could utilize until we get dedicated funding from the state. Maybe that's what we should focus on – telling our

partners, agencies, conservation districts, and others doing the work about available opportunities. This, of course, will create competition, but at least it would help advance work to control and/or eradicate some of the invasive species impacting the state. That's what the end game is – getting people out in the field doing the work. Also, if we spend all the money that's available, we have a better shot of saying we need more money because this is how much work we've already accomplished. Does a list highlighting available funding exist?

Funding information is not being shared because we're probably all competing for the same dollars. However, such a list would be an effective way of getting more work done while we're trying to get a legislative champion for the Invasive Species Act and PRISM concept (i.e., Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management).

Piper also mentioned forestry grants, some of which can be used to replace beech trees to restore lost canopy. You can get $20-30K at a time, and one grant goes up to $1M. Some grants have match included as a criterion. If a funding list were compiled, we may find that municipalities, conservation districts, and other organizations would apply for grants and keep working on invasive species efforts until the Council can get dedicated funding.

Kris Abell (PDA) remarked that one of the early committees of the Council (about five years ago) was a Grants Committee that worked to compile all the available funding opportunities related to invasive species. A webpage with this information is available on the Council's website, though may be outdated at this point. If Piper and/or other Council members feel that a list of available funding opportunities is a strong need and priority, we can look at updating that information. Such a task would depend on Council members' interest, but Kris would be happy to coordinate the effort.

Jocelyn Behm (Temple University) posed a question to Amy Jewitt and Mary Walsh, co-leaders of the EDRR breakout group. Of the issues discussed in the EDRR group, how many are unique to EDRR and how many are cross-cutting? For example, topics related to funding, personnel, and education/outreach are relevant to all of the breakout groups. Jocelyn wondered if the other breakout groups have topics that are unique to them, or if all groups are discussing these cross-cutting topics. If the latter, then it makes sense to join forces on these issues that are leverage points/stop gaps in the process.

Amy Jewitt (WPC) replied to Jocelyn, saying that across the four breakout groups (Prevention, Early Detection & Rapid Response [EDRR], Eradication & Containment, and Long-Term Management and Restoration), we all grapple with issues of funding, staff capacity and resources. This is a common theme across all groups. Each group has its focus of how to accomplish its main goal (e.g., EDRR, eradication and containment, etc.),

but we all are facing similar challenges. Amy felt there is a need to address some of these specific topics since ultimately, each group is going to be talking about them anyway. It makes sense to join together for collaborative conversations on funding, resources and staffing capacity, etc., and how each of these focal areas can be applied to the various categories that we're focusing on in our breakout groups.

Kris Abell (PDA) agreed with Amy's comments, saying we may want to go back to the drawing board and restructure the breakout groups by identifying the cross-cutting recommendations that are occurring between the four groups. We can then discuss them as a full Council and the breakout groups can focus on their unique (non-overlapping) issues.

_____

Breakout Group Summary Reports

*Speaker: **Kris Abell**, Council Coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (krabell@pa.gov)*

Only two of the four breakout groups met during today's Council meeting. The chair of the Prevention group (Deah Lieurance, PSU) is currently traveling internationally and could not attend today's meeting, and the EDRR group (led by Mary Walsh and Amy Jewitt of WPC) met two weeks ago, so it didn't make sense for their group to meet again so soon.

Groups that hosted breakout sessions today included the Eradication & Containment group led by Jocelyn Behm (Temple University) and the Long-Term Management & Restoration group led by Andrew Rohraugh (DCNR).

Following the 20-minute breakout group sessions, reports were given from the following groups:

Early Detection & Rapid Response Group – Speaker: Amy Jewitt (WPC)

The EDRR group is currently having monthly meetings to develop strategies for implementing the Early Detection and Rapid Response section of the PA Invasive Species Management Plan. *Let Amy Jewitt (ajewitt@paconserve.org or Mary Walsh (mwalsh@paconserve.org) know if you'd like to participate.*

Current participants include:

- Frank Schneider, Shane Phillips, Sarah Shiflett, Kris Abell (PDA)
- Angela Spagnoli, Nick Decker, Ben Mummert (DCNR)
- Sean Hartzell (PFBC)
- Grant Gulibon (PA Farm Bureau)
- Tom Cermak (PA Sea Grant)
- Lisa Murphy (University of PA)
- Jim Zoschg (Sinnemahoning Invasive Plant Management Area)
- Heather Fowler (Southern Laurel Highlands Plant & Pest Management Partnership)
- Brian Daggs, Mary Walsh, Amy Jewitt (WPC)

Highlights

It's critical for Council members, natural resource professionals, and others to know how/where to reach out when an EDRR species is detected; info exists for some EDRR species at a local level, but there isn't a statewide, collaborative effort currently in existence to talk about EDRR species at a broad scale. This would need to occur to build momentum around more efforts related to EDRR species.

People need to know what to look for—what species are considered EDRR. Specific resources on EDRR species do exist; some have been made by WPC, PA Sea Grant, and others. Perhaps these resources need to be more recognized by the state?

Pennsylvania has an effective ICS system in place, as could be seen when PA responded to an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), commonly known as bird flu. It would be great for a similar structure to be in place for EDRR invasive species that are identified through risk analysis or horizon scanning.

A common theme that has come out of EDRR-related conversations: Someone is needed to organize and distribute species information in a coordinated way. If that can be identified, then information could be sent to people who could put boots on-the-ground. Perhaps this could be the role of the Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management.

Some Agencies Have Existing EDRR Resources/Funding

- PDA has rapid response (RR) funds that are being used for Avian Influenza and spotted lanternfly via the PDA's RR Fund. Other agencies like PFBC and DEP have no EDRR funding.
- For the PFBC aquatic invasive species (AIS) program, there is limited funding which is currently used to support the AIS coordinator position (only).

What Outside Funding Could be Used for RR?

- Obtaining federal funds can have too much administrative burden
- PA Sea Grant/GLRI supports a lot of AIS projects, and WPC uses GLRI funds too. Perhaps some of those projects could be used in a creative way to support EDRR work.
- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through NRCS can be used for brush management. *Note that a forest management plan is required to receive this grant funding.*
- The Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) runs through conservation districts for distribution. Working invasive species control into all of these projects seems like it's an option that someone could pursue.

- The Center of Excellence model could be a way to channel funding for EDRR. The planned model would give out grants.

Who Could Be "Boots on the Ground"?

- West Nile technicians are funded by a line item in the state budget and work in every county. They handle West Nile and ticks, and therefore have pesticide applicator licenses. To do herbicide treatments for plants, they'd have to amend their licenses.
- Existing Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs) in Pennsylvania:
    - Southern Laurel Highlands Plant & Pest Management Program (SLHPPMP)
    - Sinnemahoning Invasive Plant Management Area (SIPMA)
    - Lake Erie Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area (LEW-CWMA)
    - Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area (APIPMA)
    - French Creek Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area (FCW-CWMA)

Obstacles for State Agencies to Act Quickly in EDRR Scenarios

- Not having in-house expertise (like herbicide certifications)
- Administrative challenges to hire contractors (burdensome)

Lessons Learned & Ideas for the Future

- When spotted lanternfly was first found in Pennsylvania in 2014, PDA took the lead on this effort and relied on funding from USDA to implement actions.
- When the fish kill happened in Dunkard Creek (SW PA) from invasive golden alga, staff from the PFBC, DEP, WVDNR, and EPA came together. This collaborative effort has included long-term monitoring and restoration.
- Volunteers can help in certain situations—for example, a water lettuce pull organized by Master Watershed Stewards and PA Sea Grant. However, coordinating volunteers requires time and staff effort.

Following the EDRR report, Kris Abell (PDA) remarked that after hearing about the many different projects being done and other topics related to EDRR *(from Amy's report),* sharing this information will ultimately be helpful to what the Council is hoping to accomplish with the Statewide Invasive Species Management Plan. We should discuss this further as far as what mode of communication would be best suited to disperse this information to the appropriate audiences; perhaps a written report.

Eradication & Containment Group – Speaker: Jocelyn Behm (Temple University)

Participants from today's breakout group session included:

- Grant Gulibon (PA Farm Bureau)
- Judith Harvey (PA One Health Consortium)
- Nick Trivelli (Mercer County Conservation District)
- Brian Pilarcik (PALMS/Crawford County Conservation District)
- Heather Fowler (Fayette County Conservation District)
- Mary Walsh, Amy Jewitt, Corinne Garda (WPC)
- April Moore (Forest Service, Allegheny National Forest)
- Claire Zuidervliet (PLNA/Octoraro Native Plant Nursery)
- Harold Brecht (PennAg)
- Jeff Thomas (County Governments)
- Kris Abell (PDA)
- Jennifer Senchak (Restoreth Roots)
- Jocelyn Behm (Temple University)

Participants reviewed what the group has done so far and discussed the Eradication 7 Containment recommendations in the statewide plan, specifically points of collaboration between this group and the EDRR group. For reference, the recommendations from the Eradication & Containment portion of the plan include the following:

- #1 - Increase agency staff and capacity for early detection and rapid response (EDRR) to emerging invasive species threats.
- #2 - Identify invasive species that warrant rapid response (RR) efforts (e.g., containment and eradication) using a standard evaluation process and proactively develop plans to implement RR.
- #3 - Improve public awareness and engagement for early detection and RR activities.
- #4 - Improve coordination between jurisdictional agencies and stakeholders for invasive species containment and eradication efforts.
- #5 - Support research to develop more effective EDRR and control methods for invasive species.

When this group first met in September and December 2025, there was limited participation both times. Thus, the group has not built much momentum to date. So far, the group has only ranked its respective recommendations from the statewide plan by order of priority for Pennsylvania (*see ranked list above*).

The group has said (in the past) that agency and staff capacity are a priority and discussed associated hurdles such as hiring freezes, personnel caps, funding, etc.

Regarding species that warrant RR, people keep coming back to the idea of sharing information among agencies. This could be a great way to facilitate more coordinated action efforts, though limitations and roadblocks would have to be determined.

Continued public awareness and engagement is helpful in regard to communicating the importance of eradication and control efforts. Coordination among agencies is helpful too.

Ultimately, folks from the original breakout group (from Sept and Dec) gravitated towards the first two recommendations, feeling they were the most important to focus on.

Jocelyn reiterated that the recommendations listed in the Eradication & Control portion of the plan don't seem to be unique issues to only her breakout group, but rather are cross-cutting with the other parts of the plan (i.e., Prevention, EDRR, and Long-Term Management & Restoration).

Mary Walsh (WPC) remarked that there is overlap with the EDRR group for the recommendation that describes the need for increased agency staff and capacity for EDRR of emerging species threats. She felt there could be collaboration on this particular recommendation with the EDRR group to use similar resources, volunteers, and grant funding to achieve these goals. Mary commented that she doesn't know what the agencies are currently doing for detecting species of concern and whether their efforts were focused on early detection or just established invasive species.

Amy Jewitt (WPC) said that in regard to the recommendation about identifying invasive species that warrant RR effort, in many cases it seems like the species that get the limelight and media attention, and thus the funding, are species that people can readily see and complain about. An example of this is spotted lanternfly, a prolific invader in much of PA that affects many things including agricultural production. However, there are many invasive species that don't get the limelight, and yet we know they can have severe impacts, albeit somewhat indirectly, that affect tourism and recreation or the enjoyment of nature that may bring someone to an area who wants to build a house. All of this contributes to the economy and taxes for an area. These are just a few examples; there are many other examples of how industry and issues from invasive species interconnect.

Some of the lesser-known invasive species present in PA have negative impacts, but currently there is little to no funding to do something about them. For example, there are volunteer efforts to do pulls of invasive water chestnut in various parts of the state, like in Lake Towhee in Bucks County; there's been a water chestnut pull event there for years. But there is no concerted effort across the state to eradicate water chestnut. Thankfully, this is a species that isn't widespread across the state. And so, the question is, why can't we do something that's focused on one specific species or a subset of species where we could

get ahead of and do something productive to limit their spread. Unfortunately, the funding to do something like this just isn't there right now. It feels like the "gate never opens" and we're stuck not being able to move forward because the funding, resources, and staff capacity aren't there.

Nick Trivelli (Mercer County Conservation District) remarked about a patch of invasive water chestnut on a county-owned impoundment (a flood control dam) that the district has been working on since 2018. At that location, which originally had about a 6-acre surface water infestation from water chestnut, now has just a garbage bag full of water chestnut that's being pulled when district staff conduct monitoring surveys. The district tries to do as much education as possible and has hosted an in-person educational event at the impoundment every June for agencies and public educators. This has proven to be a great success story for eradication of an aquatic invasive species. Nick commented that he's helped Sara Stahlman (PA Sea Grant) with the state rapid response protocol in regards to this scenario of eradicating water chestnut in Mercer County.

Jocelyn asked the group, in terms of eradication, is it really a funding issue? And are we confident of which species can be eradicated, or are continued research, surveys, and supplemental information needed to know this? Eradication is a losing battle for some invasive species that are already too widespread, or just too difficult to eradicate. However, for other species, eradication can be achievable.

Brian Pilarcik (PALMS/Crawford CCD) commented that the need is for funding to conduct EDRR. The EDRR species are already known.

Amy Jewitt (WPC) remarked that there are also efforts happening to prevent a species from becoming established. For example, the PA Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee (CP&NWC) is working to list plants that would be banned from sale in the state. Unfortunately, at the last CP&NWC meeting, several species that were discussed for listing, including leatherleaf mahonia, were not listed. Leatherleaf mahonia is an ornamental invader that is not widespread in PA currently, but is being sold. Unless the CP&NWC lists and bans leatherleaf mahonia from sale, this species could become another invader that could spread rapidly and cause economic and environmental harm in Pennsylvania.

Regarding current research and understanding what species can be eradicated compared to those that are too widespread, the Western PA Conservancy has led an effort with partners to conduct invasive species tiering, ranking species according to their statewide and regional distributions. This ranking process identifies species that could be eradicated statewide, or perhaps just contained to a certain region and efforts implemented to

prevent their further spread. So far, around 150-200 species have gone through this tiering process. This effort will help land managers and others prioritize where efforts should be focused by getting a better understanding of existing species distributions. Data for this effort was sourced from iMapInvasives and iNaturalist.

Mary Walsh (WPC) said that the PGISC Listing Committee is looking systematically at invasive species and doing some standardized analyses to determine what other species should be added to the PA noxious weed list as well as other invasive species lists. This collective work takes manpower to accomplish. Dr. Deah Lieurance (PSU) has a research project where she's trying to do an automated version of this type of analysis. The next step would be to use this information to amplify the need for RR efforts and/or promote certain invasive species as being species of concern.

Long-Term Management Group – Speaker: Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR)

Participants from today's breakout group session included:

- Eve Adrian (PDA)
- Andy Ernst (PA Farm Bureau/Ernst Conservation Seeds)
- Brian Daggs, Jeff Wagner, Kierstin Carlson (WPC)
- Brian Harris (PSATS)
- Curtis Noll (PGC)
- Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR)

Participants worked through some of the recommendations from the Long-Term Management section of the statewide plan. The first recommendation was about improving coordination and funding for biocontrol across the Northern U.S. This included some language changes; the group also had some implementation ideas.

Andrew had an initial thought of creating a statewide rearing facility, but Andy Ernst (PA Farm Bureau) had a great suggestion of formalizing some agreements with New Jersey's Phillip Alampi's Beneficial Insect Rearing Laboratory and support them financially or by other means to do biocontrol rearing that the state of Pennsylvania would be interested in. This facility already has the needed staff dedicated to do biocontrol rearing. (*No need to reinvent the wheel*.) These agreements could take place between individual state agencies, or if a Center of Excellence for Invasive Species Management were to be created, agreements of this sort could be done through the Center.

Another implementation idea for biocontrols is to organize a work group in the Northeast, pulling together partners from different states and their agencies and large conservation

groups. The idea would be to set up an annual meeting to discuss possibilities, funding, research, rearing release points, and next steps for biocontrol implementation.

Also, agencies should provide historic and current biocontrol release data to citizen science databases as needed.

The group also worked on the next recommendation of applying ecological restoration at sites with well managed or eradicated invasive species to improve biodiversity, natural processes, and habitats. Unfortunately, the group didn't have a lot of time to discuss this in detail. However, of note are the many areas already prioritized, thanks to the work of WPC and partners in creating County Natural Heritage Inventory Areas. From this information, we know where there are various concentrations of rare (native) species, and the areas that should be prioritized for invasive species work. We also have the PA Plant Conservation Alliance (PPCA) which works in areas with globally rare plants. With this information currently available, we need to work with regional partners, possibly through a Center of Excellence, to ensure these important areas are prioritized for work related to invasive species.

Public Comment Period

Nick Trivelli (Mercer County Conservation District) asked if a link was available to view a draft of the Invasive Species Act. Kris Abell (PDA) said that the draft version is currently not available online; however, Kris will check with Eve Adrian (chair of the Legislative Committee) to ensure the Act can be shared. If it can be shared, Kris will send it to Nick.

_____

Concluding Remarks and Adjourn

Motion: Andrew Rohrbaugh (DCNR) moved to adjourn the meeting. Jeff Thomas (County Governments) seconded the motion. **Meeting adjourned.**

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Amy Jewitt, Senior Coordinator of the Pennsylvania iMapInvasives Program at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program.

Questions or comments regarding these minutes can submitted via email to Kris Abell, Council Coordinator, at krabell@pa.gov. If you are a member of the public and wish to attend the next meeting of the Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council, please contact Kris for more information on the meeting date, time, and location.