

Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council News



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If you have a question or comment about an item in this newsletter or are interested in learning more about the Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council, drop me a line or visit the [council website](#). — [Kris Abell](#), Coordinator

Pennsylvania Game Commission and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Team Up Against Invasive Species



This year, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) are working together to survey for invasive species on Game Lands in the northwest.

WPC Ecologist Mitch Meuser and supporting staff will conduct surveys and catalogue data in [iMapInvasives](#) for use by the PGC to identify areas in need of treatment to protect and improve wildlife habitat and rare plant communities.

Additionally, to aid PGC staff in conducting invasive species surveys, the WPC recently compiled a publicly-accessible digital field guide titled, "[Invasive Species Field Guide for PGC's Northwest Region](#)."

This resource highlights 26 established, emerging, and potential invasive plants and insects for PGC staff in northwest Pennsylvania to be aware of.

The guide explains why each species is a problem, as well as identification tips, look-alike species, and preferred habitat.

Additionally, the guide includes a plethora of images, videos, dynamic distribution maps, and online resources, all with the goal of facilitating a more thorough knowledge base for PGC staff to help the agency maintain and protect valuable natural communities, ecosystems, and habitats on Game Lands.

An informative [webinar that provides a detailed overview of the field guide](#) is available on YouTube.

The PGC and the WPC plan to continue this collaboration in the future to conduct surveys and create field guides for Game Lands throughout the state.

If you would like more information, please contact [Jeff Wagner](#), Director of Heritage at Western Pennsylvania Conservancy or [Scott Bearer](#), Chief of Habitat Planning, Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Pilot Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management Program Initiated in Northwest Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) was awarded a \$210,000 Landscape Scale Restoration grant from the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service to pilot a [Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management \(PRISM\) program](#) in the northwest region of Pennsylvania.

The northwest region covers 13 counties: Erie, Warren, McKean, Crawford, Mercer, Venango, Forest, Elk, Lawrence, Butler, Clarion, Jefferson, and Armstrong.

Conservation districts for each of these counties will form advisory groups consisting of local partner organizations and community members to identify and prioritize projects in their counties.

Projects may be educational events and/or treatment projects:

- \$40,000 of the grant will be used for education and outreach mini grants. Northwest conservation districts will apply for up to \$2,000 at a time to offer project tours, guided walks, invasive species visuals and factsheets, workshops and trainings, community science projects, and more.
- \$149,000 will be used for invasive species treatment and management projects. Funding will be distributed evenly among conservation districts participating in the program to allow for a wider span of treatment projects. Where applicable, projects may span multiple counties and multiple conservation district teams to treat large areas threatened by invasive species.

A 50:50 match is required.

Partners, including the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Penn State Extension's Master Watershed Steward Program, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative, and Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group are collaborating with PACD to contribute matching funds to the PRISM pilot program.

Like all of PACD's sub-grant programs, the conservation districts will be the primary applicants.

Conservation districts, through consultation with their diverse advisory groups and conservation district boards, will submit applications for projects to PACD for approval.

The program opened July 1, 2023, and will close June 30, 2027.

Second Annual Pennsylvania Native Species Day a Success



The Governor's Invasive Species Council and partners celebrated Pennsylvania's native species on Thursday, May 18, 2023, at [North Creek Nurseries](#) for the second annual Pennsylvania Native Species Day.

Leaders from the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Environmental Protection, Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission highlighted the importance of native species and the actions state agencies are taking to protect them from being overrun by invasive species.

The president of the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association, which serves on the council, and the owner of North Creek Nurseries also spoke and provided a tour of the nursery which specializes in native plants.

Partners like the master gardeners, watershed stewards, and the Pennsylvania Native Fish Coalition also held events across the Commonwealth at state parks, gardens, nature centers, preserves, and more.

There was also tremendous support and participation on social media platforms. Search for posts with the tag: [#PaNativeSpeciesDay](#).

Information about [Pennsylvania Native Species Day](#), including video of the event, and for links to helpful information on native and invasive species is available at the council website.

For information on next year's Pennsylvania Native Species Day and how you can be involved, please contact [Kris Abell](#), council coordinator.

Invasive Virile Crawfish Discovered in Rose Valley Lake



In June 2023, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Division of Environmental Services discovered a previously undocumented population of invasive virile crayfish (*Faxonius virilis*) in Rose Valley Lake, Lycoming County.

Virile crayfish were found during surveys for aquatic invasive species supported by grant funding through Pennsylvania Sea Grant and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Virile crayfish were found to be abundant throughout the lake and were collected by trapping and kick netting.

This is a notable find as non-native virile crayfish have primarily only been found in southeastern and southcentral Pennsylvania. It is likely that this species was introduced into Rose Valley Lake by introduction as live bait.

Introductions of non-native crayfish species such as virile crayfish can lead to significant ecological consequences, including extirpation (local extinction) of native crayfish, declines in aquatic macroinvertebrates, reduction of aquatic vegetation, negative impacts to species of conservation concern, and declines in sport fishes.

As a means to prevent the spread of non-native crayfish in the Commonwealth, since 2015, it has been unlawful to sell live crayfish as bait and unlawful to collect and use crayfish as bait without first removing the head behind the eyes, unless used as bait in the water from which they were taken.

Because virile crayfish are well established in Rose Valley Lake, eradication is not possible, and management will focus on education such as signage to prevent the spread of this species to other waters.

Additional information about invasive crawfish, other aquatic invasive species, and regulations to control them, is available at the [Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission website](#).

Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110
(717) 787-4737