

JUNE 2023

2023 BIENNIAL REPORT

PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR'S INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 150 invasive species on land and in our waters are creating economic losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars yearly for Pennsylvania farmers, fisheries, timber producers, recreation businesses, and other industries, as well as residents and local and state governments.

The Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council was formed in 2004 by Executive Order No. 2004-1 and reestablished in 2017 by Executive Order 2017-07. The council serves a significant leadership role in developing strategies and tools to address the serious ecological, economic, and human and animal health impacts statewide from invasive plants, insects, pathogens, and animals.

Action, however, is fragmentary, carried out by individual agencies, organizations, residents and businesses as resources allow, and all funding for these efforts comes from existing internal resources or federal grants. Consequently, progress on reducing the impacts of invasive species in Pennsylvania has been severely limited.

In 2021-2022, the council developed a proposal for a statewide program called Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) that provides a practical solution to this pressing issue. Modeled after successful programs in other states, Pennsylvania PRISM would combine state-level collaboration and accountability with regional expertise, networks, and implementation to significantly reduce impacts from invasive species prioritized by region. It also would be nimble enough to enable early detection of and rapid response to the next invasive species.

The council conducted the first statewide survey of Pennsylvanians' experiences with invasive species in 2022. People in every county participated, and more than 600 respondents detailed dealing with one to three invasive species. More than 350 respondents said a PRISM program would help them, and over 380 said they'd like to participate in a regional PRISM. A handful of small companies reported providing invasive removal services, suggesting that invasive species management could open up business opportunities and create jobs.

Providing tools to equip Pennsylvanians battling invasives, in 2022 the council launched the first searchable public database of what it identifies as the 150 invasive species of greatest concern to Pennsylvania. It also released an updated Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan.

The council launched the first annual Pennsylvania Native Species Day on June 18, 2022, to educate Pennsylvanians on the importance of our biodiverse native ecosystem and the increasing pressure on it from invasive species. All seven state agency council members participated in a media event, and more than a dozen state parks and communities organizations, from Erie to Philadelphia, joined in to offer their own public education and volunteer activities.



 **LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR**

The Honorable Josh Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

From tick-harboring barberry to timber-devastating emerald ash borer, over 150 invasive species on land and in our waters are creating economic losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars yearly for our farmers, fisheries, timber producers, recreation businesses, and other industries, as well as residents and local and state governments.

The Pennsylvania Governor's Invasive Species Council was established by Executive Order in 2004 and reestablished by Executive Order in 2017. It includes seven state agencies and 14 appointed organizations in agricultural and natural resource industries, conservation, and academic research and extension. Council members collaborate to advise the Governor on development and implementation of the most effective strategies to minimize the harmful impacts of invasive species in Pennsylvania.

While this report presents many activities and accomplishments the council completed in 2021-2022, I'd like to draw your attention to one in particular: development of a statewide invasive species management program called Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM).

Modeled after successful programs in New York, Michigan, and other states, Pennsylvania PRISM would establish six regional partnerships spanning the state to prioritize invasive species impacts by region and implement locally based solutions. Following council guidance, the regional PRISMs would develop and implement five-year invasive species management plans. The regional PRISMs would build on current Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts regions, to capitalize on existing resources and hit the ground running.

By combining state-level collaboration and accountability with the regional expertise, networks, and implementation, PRISM would be the practical, innovative solution Pennsylvania needs to significantly reduce impacts from current invasive species. It also would be nimble enough to enable early detection of and rapid response to the next invading species.

I believe PRISM would be a game changer in protecting Pennsylvania from the damages of invasive species.

While the Governor's Invasive Species Council provides significant leadership on the growing challenge of invasive species, our ability to take action has been restricted to the existing internal resources of our members. Consequently, the council has been severely limited in the degree to which it can facilitate solutions.

It is therefore this council's highest recommendation that a Pennsylvania PRISM program be funded by the state to address the unmet need to manage the threat invasive species pose to our state.

We see our strategic approach to invasive species management as aligning well with your administration's goals to effectively safeguard Pennsylvanians' valuable natural resources, working lands, and economic assets, today and for future generations.

I welcome feedback from Governor Shapiro regarding our proposed Pennsylvania PRISM. The first section of this report provides more details on how the PRISM program would work. Other sections share additional initiatives the council completed in 2021-2022, including the first statewide survey of Pennsylvanians' experiences and expenditures in trying to manage invasive species.

On behalf of council members, thank you for the opportunity to share our work.

Sincerely,

Russell C. Redding
Chair, Governor's Invasive Species Council
Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 2021-2022

BEGAN DRAFTING PRISM LEGISLATION.

Began drafting new legislation, The Invasive Species Act, that would establish the council in statute, create an Invasive Species Fund and an annual appropriation, and provide the Department of Agriculture needed authority to administer a statewide PRISM program.

DEVELOPED PENNSYLVANIA'S FIRST STATEWIDE INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: PARTNERSHIPS FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT.

Council members developed the first statewide framework to manage invasive species in Pennsylvania, called Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). In developing Pennsylvania PRISM, the council consolidated everything needed to significantly reduce the detrimental impacts invasive species are having on Pennsylvanians' economy, ecosystem, health, and outdoor recreation.

PENNSYLVANIA PRISM COMPONENTS

1. Statewide PRISM plan
2. Guidelines for regional PRISMs' development of five-year strategic plans – PRISMs must identify their structure and partners; regional invasive challenges; strategies and actions for monitoring and mapping, management and prevention, outreach, training, resource development, and more.
3. Program budget and implementation plan, including a Request for Funding Proposals package and list of expected deliverables for recipients.
4. Authorization in the 2022 Governor's budget for a \$3.5 million appropriation for statewide PRISM. (Appropriation not passed by the General Assembly.)

HOW PENNSYLVANIA PRISM WOULD WORK

- PRISM would establish six regional partnerships of diverse stakeholders: local and state elected officials, industry leaders, subject matter expert organizations, community groups, and state agencies address invasive species.
 - The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, which chairs the Governor's Invasive Species Council, would administer PRISM. Following a Request for Proposals, department and council would select each regional PRISM leader, providing them with grant funding to operate.
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HOW PENNSYLVANIA PRISM WOULD WORK CONTINUED

- Regional PRISMs would:
 - Determine high-priority invasive species in their region and implement locally based solutions to protect valuable industries that are being hit hard by invasive species, including agriculture, timber, fisheries, vineyards, outdoor recreation, and others.
 - Protect and improve soil health and air and water quality in both urban and rural areas.
 - Develop early detection and rapid response capacity to new invasive species threats.
 - Provide public education and cultivate public engagement as an essential component of reducing the proliferation of invasive species.
 - Preserve biodiversity, ecosystem services, and critical habitats and increase the resilience of green spaces in urban and rural environments.
 - Mitigate increased damage from invasive species resulting from climate change.

WHY PENNSYLVANIA PRISM WOULD SUCCEED

- The six PRISMs would build on current Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts regions, to capitalize on existing resources and hit the ground running.
- By combining state-level collaboration and accountability with the targeted expertise and networks of regional partnerships, Pennsylvania PRISM would significantly reduce current invasive species impacts and be nimble enough to carry out early detection and rapid response to the next invasion.
- Each regional PRISM would be expected to meet specified measurable deliverables and provide mandatory annual progress reports to ensure program effectiveness and responsible use of state funds.
- Pennsylvania PRISM is modeled after successful programs in New York, Michigan, Florida, and other states. For example, the [New York program](#) consists of eight regional PRISMs, contracted by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, and funded through a real estate transfer tax.

IN THE WORKS: PENNSYLVANIA PRISM PILOT PROGRAM

The Departments of Agriculture and Conservation and Natural Resources and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy spearheaded a collaboration with the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) in 2022 to apply for a U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service grant to pilot-test a small-scale PRISM program.

The four council members' collaboration was successful: PACD was awarded \$210,000 to launch a small-scale PRISM pilot-test in 13 northwest counties in July 2023.

CONDUCTED THE FIRST STATEWIDE SURVEY OF PENNSYLVANIANS' EXPERIENCES WITH INVASIVE SPECIES AND INTEREST IN PRISM.

The council developed the [Pennsylvania Invasive Species Impacts Survey](#) and conducted the survey in fall 2022. It's the first statewide survey to document Pennsylvanians' firsthand experiences with invasive plants, insects, pathogens, fish, and animals as well as their efforts to reduce them, including out-of-pocket costs. The survey also documented Pennsylvanians' interest in the council's proposed Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management. The council

RESULTS

- Survey respondents represented every county in the state and reported dealing with invasive species in rural, urban, suburban, and natural areas.
- More than 600 participants described firsthand experiences with negative impacts from one to three invasive species. They reported impacts from over 100 invasive species. Many reported spending their own time, labor, and funds to try to reduce the invasives.
- Over 350 survey respondents said a PRISM program would help them, and over 380 said they'd like to participate in a PRISM in their region.
- A handful of small companies reported providing invasive removal services, suggesting that invasive species management could open up business opportunities and create jobs.
- The survey results web page had over 3,100 unique visits in less than one month.

MEDIA COVERAGE

At least 18 media outlets covered the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection [press release on the survey](#). Council leader Fred Strathmeyer gave a half-dozen interviews with TV, radio, and newspaper outlets. For a complete list of coverage, see the Appendix.

- 90.5 WESA: "[Pennsylvanians struggle to fight invasive species, as experts push for a regional approach](#)"
- Bay Journal: "[Pennsylvania finds widespread problems with invasive species and aims to tackle them](#)"
- WITF: "[Survey shows how pervasive invasive species are in Pennsylvania](#)"
- The Morning Call: "[Invasive plants, insects and animals eat into the bottom line: PA officials launch survey to determine costs of invasive species](#)"
- Fox 43: "[Pilot program announced to combat invasive species across Pennsylvania](#)"

COLLABORATED ON LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF INVASIVE SPECIES AND NEED FOR PRISM IN PENNSYLVANIA.

The council collaborated with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania to hold a legislative hearing on the economic impacts of invasive species in Pennsylvania. Chaired by Senator Gene Yaw, the hearing was held on August 24, 2021.

- View the [Video, summary, and complete testimonies](#)
- [The collaborated with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania to produce a fact sheet on the economic impacts of invasive species in Pennsylvania](#)

DEVELOPED A PUBLIC SEARCHABLE DATABASE OF OVER 150 INVASIVE PLANTS OF GREATEST CONCERN FOR PENNSYLVANIA.

The database includes invasive impact assessment scores, economic importance to the landscape and nursery industry, presence on the Pennsylvania State Noxious Weed List, and more. [View the database.](#)

The council formed a committee of various taxonomic subject matter experts and developed lists of invasive species of greatest concern for Pennsylvania including insects, birds, mammals, other invertebrates, plant pathogens, and aquatic animals and pathogens. [View the lists.](#)

The invasive species lists and invasive plant database are important educational resources for the public and help to inform the development of policies and regulations for state agencies.

LAUNCHED PENNSYLVANIA NATIVE SPECIES DAY, PROMOTING THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIVE SPECIES AND PROTECTING THEM FROM INVASIVE SPECIES.

The council launched the first [Pennsylvania Native Species Day](#) on June 18, 2022. Uniquely, this occasion communicated not only the value of native plants, trees, insects, fish, and animals, but also the increasing threat to native biodiversity from the proliferation of invasive species.

- The council obtained a Governor's Proclamation of Pennsylvania Native Species Day.
- The council organized a media event at a stream restoration site on the grounds of the Fish and Boat Commission: Leaders from all seven state agencies on the council participated.

- More than 10 state parks and community organizations joined in with public activities. The interest was so strong that by October, organizations were contacting the council to ask when the 2023 native species day would be held.
- Building on this success, the council will hold the second annual Pennsylvania Native Species Day on May 18, 2023.

RAMPED UP COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH.

1. Launched the Governor's Invasive Species Council News quarterly e-newsletter to decisionmakers and educators. It's the first statewide newsletter from the most authoritative invasive species entity in Pennsylvania.
2. Created an easy to remember hotline to report invasive species in Pennsylvania, and added an aquatic invasive species option. Hotline: 1-833-INVASIV
3. Researched and compiled an [online list](#) of invasive species related grant opportunities as a free public resource.
4. Provided educational displays at the 2021 and 2022 Pennsylvania Farm Shows.
5. Created an [interactive storymap](#) showcasing the invasive species research and management projects that state agencies and organizations on the council are conducting.
6. Expanded and improved content and generated a friendly url for the council website: www.agriculture.pa.gov/InvasiveSpeciesCouncil

IMPROVED THE PENNSYLVANIA AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RAPID RESPONSE PLAN.

The council wrote and released an improved and expanded [Pennsylvania Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan](#) in 2022. This plan serves as an interagency resource and decision support tool designed to aid regulatory agencies in conducting a coordinated and structured response to new aquatic invasive species infestations. Development of this plan also qualifies Pennsylvania to receive funding from the EPA through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program.

GOVERNOR'S INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL: MEMBERS AND COMMITTEES

COUNCIL MEMBERS

PA Department of Agriculture (Chair)

Russell C. Redding, Secretary
Fred Strathmeyer, Jr., Deputy Secretary

PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary
Rosa Yoo, Chief, Division of Forest Pest Mgmt.
Andrew Rohrbaugh, Section Chief, Program Services
& Support Section, Division of Forest Health

PA Department of Environmental Protection

Richard Negrin, Acting Secretary
Dr. James L. Crazio, Ph.D., Great Lakes Biologist

PA Department of Transportation

Michael Carroll, Secretary
Joseph S. Demko, Roadside Manager

PA Department of Health

Dr. Debra L. Bogen, Acting Secretary
Betsy Schroeder, Public Health Veterinarian

PA Fish & Boat Commission

Timothy Schaeffer, Executive Director
Sean Hartzell, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator

PA Game Commission

Bryan J. Burhans, Executive Director
Scott Bearer, Wildlife Habitat Program Division Chief

PA Association of Conservation Districts

Piper Sherburne, South-East Region Director

PA Farm Bureau

Andrew L. Ernst, Ernst Conservation Seed – Owner
Grant Gulibon, Regulatory Affairs Specialist,
Government Affairs and Communications Division

PA Lake Management Society

Kate Harms, Executive Director
Brian Pilarcik, Western Regional Director

PA Landscape & Nursery Association

Gregg Robertson, Government Relations Consultant
Mike Dunn, Brandywine Urban Forest Consulting

PA Sea Grant

Sarah Whitney, Director
Sara Stahlman, Extension Leader

PA State Association of Township Supervisors

Brian Harris, Warwick Twp. Manager, Lancaster Co.

Allegheny Plateau Invasive Plant Management Area

Emily Shosh, Co-Coordinator
Victoria Challingsworth, Co-Coordinator

County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

Cliff Lane, McKean County Commissioner

PennAg Industries Association

Mary Beth Ruh, Vice President

Penn State University

Dr. Julie Urban, Ph.D., Associate Research Professor

Philadelphia Regional Port Authority

Sean E. Mahoney, Director of Marketing

Temple University

Dr. Jocelyn Behm, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
Dr. Matthew Helmus, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
Dr. Amy Freestone, Ph.D., Associate Professor &
Director of Temple Ambler Field Station

University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Lisa A. Murphy, VMD, DABT, Professor of
Toxicology

Western PA Conservancy

Jeff Wagner, PA Natural Heritage Program Director
Amy Jewitt, PA iMapInvasives Program Coordinator

COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Communications Committee

Chair: Deb Klenotic, DEP

- DCNR: Tara Ramsey, Andrew Rohrbaugh, Ali Bowling, Cecile Stelter
- PDA: Jay Losiewicz, Zack Newby, Dana Nunemacher, Eve Adrian
- PennDOT: Jamie Kopko, Zachary Appleby, Jesse Sabitsky
- PFBC: Michael Parker
- PA Sea Grant: Sara Stahlman, Kelly Donaldson
- Western PA Conservancy: Amy Jewitt, Jeff Wagner
- Penn State Extension: Erin Lee Frederick

Legislative Committee

Chair: Eve Adrian, PDA

- DCNR: Andrew Rohrbaugh, Ali Bowling, Nate Lotze, Nicole Faraguna
- PDA: Stephen Rudman, Jordan King
- PennDOT: Jamie Kopko
- DEP: Deb Klenotic
- PA Landscape and Nursery Association: Gregg Robertson
- PA Sea Grant: Sarah Whitney
- PA Association of Conservation Districts: Brenda Shambaugh, Piper Sherburne
- Western PA Conservancy: Jeff Wagner, Amy Jewitt, Mary Walsh, Brian Gallagher

Invasive Species Listing Committee

Chair: Andrew Rohrbaugh, DCNR

- PA Fish and Boat Commission: Sean Hartzell
- DCNR: Houping Liu, Jill Rose
- PDA: Katya Nikolaeva, Lawrence Barringer
- PennDOT: Joe Demko
- PA Game Commission: Scott Bearer
- PA Farm Bureau: Andrew Ernst
- Western PA Conservancy: Mary Walsh
- PA Landscape and Nursery Association: Gregg Robertson
- PennAg Industries: Mary Beth Ruh
- Juniata College: Norris Muth

Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid Response Plan Committee

Chair: Sara Stahlman, PA Sea Grant

- DEP: James Grazio
- PA Fish and Boat Commission: Sean Hartzell
- DCNR: Nick Decker
- PA Lake Management Society: Brian Pilarcik

APPENDIX: MEDIA COVERAGE – PENNSYLVANIA INVASIVE SPECIES IMPACTS SURVEY

WBRE TV: Invasive species damage Pennsylvania's agricultural industry

<https://www.pahomepage.com/video/invasive-species-damage-pennsylvanias-agricultural-industry/8502227/>

KDKA TV: Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council to launch pilot program this summer

<https://www.cbsnews.com/pittsburgh/news/pennsylvania-invasive-species-council-to-launch-pilot-program-this-summer/>

Gettysburg Times: Results in for invasive impact survey, pilot program announced

https://www.gettysburgtimes.com/news/basket/article_7d22554d-1e75-5b5e-880e-5c40fdf04fda.html

WITF FM: Survey shows how pervasive invasive species are in Pennsylvania

<https://www.witf.org/2023/03/23/survey-shows-how-pervasive-invasive-species-are-in-pennsylvania/>

WESA FM: Pennsylvanians struggle to fight invasive species, as experts push for a regional approach

<https://www.wesa.fm/health-science-tech/2023-03-20/pennsylvania-fighting-invasive-species>

Chesapeake Bay Journal: Pennsylvania finds widespread problems with invasive species and aims to tackle them

https://www.bayjournal.com/news/fisheries/pennsylvania-finds-widespread-problems-with-invasive-species-and-aims-to-tackle-them/article_dd1bdf22-c7f8-11ed-8875-a3c573dedb42.html

MyChesCo.com: Read the findings from Pennsylvania's first statewide survey on invasive species

<https://www.mychesco.com/a/news/pennsylvania/read-the-findings-from-pennsylvanias-first-statewide-survey-on-invasive-species/>

Daily Review: State releases Invasive Species Impact Survey results

https://www.thedailyreview.com/news/local/state-releases-invasive-species-impact-survey-results/article_4c92c2b8-1155-551a-9bd2-1a49ae3d276c.html

Times Leader: Invasive Species Council shares results of invasive species impacts survey

<https://www.timesleader.com/uncategorized/1603059/north-branch-land-trust-celebrating-30-years-of-conservation-in-nepa>

Lewistown Sentinel: Pa. Governor's Invasive Species Council shares results, findings

<https://www.lewistownsentinel.com/news/agriculture/2023/03/pa-governors-invasive-species-council-shares-results-findings/>

Fox43: Pilot program announced to combat invasive species

<https://www.fox43.com/article/life/pilot-management-program-statewide-invasive-species-council/521-96f8fc3d-d34e-4a18-9fc9-ed9fc1808c22>

Bradford Era: Gov.'s Invasive Species Council shares results of survey, starts pilot program

https://www.bradfordera.com/news/gov-s-invasive-species-council-shares-results-of-survey-starts-pilot-program/article_08ae8fe0-248b-5e8c-89ec-8b74d50b1f8c.html

Franklin County Free Press: Findings from PA's first ever survey on the impact of invasive species released

<https://fcfreepresspa.com/findings-from-pas-first-ever-survey-on-the-impact-of-invasive-species-released/>

NewsTalk103.7: PA announces findings of invasive species survey, creates management program

<https://tristatealert.com/pa-announces-findings-of-invasive-species-survey-create-management-program/>

Pittsburgh Tribune Review: Invasive species are a scourge in PA, report says

<https://triblive.com/news/pennsylvania/invasive-species-are-a-scourge-in-pa-report-says/>

NorthcentralPA.com: Invasive species program promises to address ongoing issues in Pa.

https://www.northcentralpa.com/life/invasive-species-program-promises-to-address-ongoing-issues-in-pa/article_49dd18ba-c236-11ed-a0b2-e3daa105db50.html

Bedford Gazette: PA council takes aim at invasive species

https://www.bedfordgazette.com/news/pa-council-takes-aim-at-invasive-species/article_9d5ff789-2843-57d1-a731-7b5d4ac5a0a1.html

PA Outdoor News: Pennsylvania takes regional approach to fighting invasive species

<https://www.outdoornews.com/2023/03/29/pennsylvania-takes-regional-approach-fighting-invasive-species/>