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## **Shapiro Administration Celebrates Eastern Hellbender License Plate, Wild Resource Conservation Program Efforts**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Executive Director Tim Schaeffer today celebrated the recently launched Eastern hellbender license plate, which honors the state amphibian and supports the [Wild Resource Conservation Fund](#).

The Eastern hellbender is the largest salamander in the United States with some reaching a weight of more than 2 pounds and extending an impressive length of 2 feet. It became Pennsylvania's state amphibian in 2019, a designation that promotes the need to restore water quality and preserve habitat for the amphibian. The Shapiro Administration is committed to protecting Pennsylvania's natural resources, including clean water for Pennsylvanians and the Commonwealth's native species.

"Honoring the Eastern hellbender with a license plate is a great way to raise awareness about our state amphibian and the work the Wild Resource Conservation Program does to protect our rare plants and animals," **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said**. "Thank you to DCNR staff, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and its Student Leadership Program, Senator Gene Yaw and all of the partners who helped make this license plate possible."

The first Wild Resource Conservation Fund registration plate became available in February 1999 and featured the Saw-Whet Owl. The Eastern Hellbender is the third Wild Resources Conservation Fund Plate and joins the River Otter Plate as the official plate for the fund.

“Because of its recognizable name, impressive size, and fascinating appearance, the Eastern hellbender has become a wonderful ambassador for Pennsylvania’s rich diversity of native fish, reptiles, and amphibians and other aquatic species,” **said Tim Schaeffer, PFBC Executive Director and Chairman of the Wild Resource Conservation Program.** “While many of these animals are so rare that most Pennsylvanians may never see one in the wild, this license plate is a visible reminder that all species are a valuable parts of Pennsylvania ecosystems and are worth protecting. The Eastern hellbender is also a relevant and charismatic barometer of local water quality.”

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) offers several [special fund registration plates](#), including the Wild Resource Conservation Fund plate. These \$15 plates support various causes across the Commonwealth from preserving Pennsylvania’s heritage to honoring out veterans.

“PennDOT is proud of the number of special fund plates we offer and the diverse missions of the organizations the funds generated support,” **PennDOT Bureau of Motor Vehicles Director Stephen Madrak said.** “It’s a good opportunity for a government agency to be able to give back to the people it serves.”

The Wild Resources Conservation Fund was created in 1982 to among other things, aid in the conservation of the Commonwealth’s flora and non-game fauna. It set up the ability for citizens to support the management of wild resources by creating a contribution opportunity through a tax check-off and license plate program, furthering management and conservation.

“The Eastern Hellbender is the largest and most unique salamander in North America,” **state Senator Gene Yaw said.** “It serves as a meaningful symbol of Pennsylvania’s clean water and biological diversity and is worthy of this important designation. I am grateful to the Wild Resource Conservation Program for recognizing the hellbender and encouraging citizen engagement in its preservation and protection.”

“Chesapeake Bay Foundation student leaders past and present will always be proud of the role we played in getting the Eastern hellbender designated as Pennsylvania’s official state amphibian, and we thank the Wild Resource Conservation Program for this wonderful license plate,” **said Emma Stone, former President of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s Student Leadership Council.** “We would especially like to thank Senator Yaw for helping us reach our goal and for believing in what the hellbender stands for. In the process, we learned a lot about this special salamander and how government works. Those lessons will stay with us always, as will what the hellbender teaches us about the challenges and importance of having clean rivers and streams.”

Each year, these funds support the survey, research, management, and conservation of wild resources through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's Wild Resource Conservation Program.

Visit [DCNR's website](#) for more information about the Wild Resource Conservation Program and check out [DCNR's Calendar of Events](#) for programming on public lands.

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