

**EASTERN HELLBENDER THE OFFICIAL AMPHIBIAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH
OF PENNSYLVANIA - DESIGNATION**

Act of Apr. 23, 2019, P.L. 24, No. 3

Cl. 87

An Act

Designating the Eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*) as the official amphibian of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) The Eastern hellbender is a unique amphibian native to a select handful of areas, one of which is this Commonwealth.

(2) The Eastern hellbender is the largest North American salamander and is the third-largest salamander in the world, with the ability to grow to 29 inches in length.

(3) The Eastern hellbender is not listed as the official amphibian of any other state or commonwealth despite its range.

(4) The Eastern hellbender is considered an indicator species due to its sensitivity to poor water quality and pollution.

(5) Pennsylvania is widely known for waterways, rivers and streams that reach an approximate total length of 1,239 square miles and have a great value to Pennsylvania's economy and environment.

(6) Pennsylvania has had a history of poor water quality due to pollution and other elements.

(7) The Eastern hellbender is considered a species of special concern in this Commonwealth and in New York.

(8) The Eastern hellbender is listed as endangered in Maryland, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana and is considered threatened in Alabama.

(9) The Eastern hellbender population is drastically declining due to poor water quality in Pennsylvania's rivers and streams.

(10) The Eastern hellbender has been historically found in nearly every western county in Pennsylvania; however, recent studies show approximately half of those counties no longer support the species.

(11) Due to the Eastern hellbender's sensitivity and status as an indicator species, it proves to be a positive symbol for water quality efforts in Pennsylvania.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Official State amphibian.

The Eastern hellbender is selected, designated and adopted as the official amphibian of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Section 2. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.