

Designating and adopting the Eastern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*) as the official amphibian of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, The Eastern hellbender is a unique amphibian native to a select handful of areas, one of which being the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, The Eastern hellbender is not listed as the official amphibian of any other state or commonwealth despite its range; and

WHEREAS, The Eastern hellbender is considered an indicator species due to its sensitivity to poor water quality and pollution; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is widely known for waterways, rivers, and streams which reach an approximate total length of 1,239 square miles and have a great value to Pennsylvania's economy and environment; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania has had a long history of poor water quality due to pollution from coal mine drainage, agricultural runoff, urbanization, habitat destruction and other causes; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern hellbender is considered a species of special concern in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and in the state of New York.

WHEREAS, The Eastern hellbender is listed as endangered in the states of Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana; in addition, the Eastern hellbender is considered threatened in the state of Alabama; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern hellbender population is drastically declining due to poor water quality in Pennsylvania's rivers and streams; and

WHEREAS, the salamander has been historically found in nearly every western county in Pennsylvania, however recent studies show almost half of the counties no longer support the species; and

WHEREAS, due to the hellbender's sensitivity and status as an indicator species, it proves to be a positive symbol for water quality efforts in Pennsylvania