



SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA BILL SUMMARY

Senate Bill 658 Printer's No. 776

Prime Sponsor: Senator Yaw
Committee: State Government

SYNOPSIS:

Designates the Eastern hellbender as the official amphibian of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

SUMMARY:

The Eastern hellbender is a unique amphibian native to a select handful of areas, one of them being this Commonwealth. It is the largest North American salamander and the third largest salamander in the world, with the ability to grow 29 inches long. The Eastern hellbender is considered an indicator species due to its sensitivity to poor water quality and pollution. 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. The Eastern hellbender is considered a species of special concern in this Commonwealth and New York, and is endangered in Maryland, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana, and considered threatened in Alabama. The Eastern hellbender population is drastically declining due to poor water quality in Pennsylvania's rivers and streams.

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. 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.

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

Effective Date: Immediately.

BILL HISTORY:

Referred to State Government, May 2, 2017

Prepared by: Totino 6/8/2017