



## For Immediate Release

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### **Fish and Boat Commission May Weaken Protections to PA's Iconic Timber Rattlesnake Despite Lack of Science and Public Outcry**

**Harrisburg, PA** The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (Commission) plans to take a vote this week at their regularly scheduled quarterly meeting in Harrisburg on July 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> on if it will delist Pennsylvania's timber rattlesnake from its current "Candidate species" listing which has been in place to protect the snake since 1978. The snake is listed because of habitat loss and hunting threats. With these current protections, certain protective measures should apply when development activities cut across the timber rattlesnake's known habitat. According to the Fish and Boat Commission, <http://fishandboat.com/images/exec/minutes/2016minu/07agd.pdf>, the Commission received over 2,271 public comments opposing the proposal to delist the timber rattlesnake.

"The proposed delisting of this snake without the science complete and without the implementation of measures laid out in the Species Action Plan, and without the monitoring data to fully understand population and genetic vulnerabilities of isolated populations of this species is greatly flawed and premature and appears nothing more than a give-away of power by the Commission to the gas drilling industry." **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.** "Expert herpetologists suggest even stronger protections and management measures be put in place for the timber rattlesnake, especially with the build out of gas infrastructure that is proposed for the state." **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.**

In addition to thousands of individuals and scientists opposing this delisting action, the Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Water (PACCW), a coalition of over 180 environmental, conservation, sporting, and religious groups from all corners of the state, are urging the Commission to not weaken protections for the timber rattlesnake. You can view Delaware Riverkeeper Network's letter to the Commission here:

[http://www.delawareriverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/DRN.timberrattler.candidate.3.18.2016.PA\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://www.delawareriverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/DRN.timberrattler.candidate.3.18.2016.PA_FINAL_0.pdf). You can view a letter from Dr. Howard Reinert, Pennsylvania Biological Survey

Amphibian and Reptile Technical Committee Chair and herpetological expert to the Commission here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3k1Tme6DLwfSlg0YmtnTlVhSm8>

You can view the PACCW letter submitted to the Commission here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B3k1Tme6DLwfQTdfb3c3MHE3NjQ>

The updated 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan lists the timber rattlesnake as one of twenty two reptiles that are a “Species of Greatest Conservation Need”. According to the Commission, despite habitat destruction and illegal killing of this snake, the timber rattlesnake continues to hold on in 50 of 67 counties in the Commonwealth. The Fish and Boat Commission meeting, open to the public, will be held July 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> at its headquarters at 1601 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110. The public will have an opportunity to provide comment before the Commission votes on this issue.

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Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN) is a nonprofit membership organization working throughout the four states of the Delaware River Watershed including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and New York. DRN provides effective environmental advocacy, volunteer monitoring programs, stream restoration projects, public education, and legal enforcement of environmental protection laws.