



## **Opening Remarks to the House and Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committees' Informational Meeting on Spotted Lanternfly**

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Chairman Vogel, Chairwoman Schwank, Chairman Causer, and Chairman Pashinski, members of both the Senate and House Agriculture committees and other distinguished members, thank you for inviting the Department of Agriculture to speak with you about this important issue. I appreciate the opportunity to outline for you the Commonwealth's efforts to control this invasive pest. While I am here to represent the Department of Agriculture, we are fortunate to have a great team working with us to combat this pest that includes several Commonwealth agencies, including the departments of Transportation and Conservation and Natural Resources, as well as the Game Commission.

Before we begin, I would like to thank Chairwoman Schwank especially and all members of the General Assembly whose constituents live with the daily threat and nuisance of the spotted lanternfly. I know that you have dealt with it on your own property and have fielded thousands of calls from concerned residents. I greatly appreciate your partnership as we continue the fight together.

Berks County has been at the center of the battle against this pest. Since its detection there in 2014, we have relied on the cooperative support of many to combat it, including elected officials at the state, county, and local levels; agencies at all levels of government, including the United States Department of Agriculture; non-government organizations; universities; farmers and landowners; and the concerned public. Despite this concerted effort, the pest has spread. It now covers much of southeastern Pennsylvania. Even as we meet here today, spotted lanternfly is on the move, and we anticipate more changes in our quarantine area throughout the remainder of the year.

Pennsylvania has dealt with invasive species before successfully. As a case in point, we eradicated the plum pox virus. In those instances of triumph, we have been resilient in rebounding from the economic and environmental wounds those pests have inflicted upon us. But on those occasions where we have not been as successful, such as with the emerald ash borer or the gypsy moth, we have lost forest species, drained industry resources, and incurred long-term costs as we drag out the fight while attempting to protect our parks, forests, and backyards.

With spotted lanternfly, we are facing a new threat whose behavior and biology continues to unfold over the three years we have watched it. Across the Commonwealth, we have a rich and diverse landscape: forests, towns, cities, parks, thriving businesses, and productive agricultural lands. Unfortunately, each of these are at risk today given the spotted lanternfly's destructive behavior.

Today, you will meet two exceptional public servants who are on the frontlines of responding to this threat, Sven Spichiger and Dana Rhodes. They will guide you through the lessons we have learned and explain the spotted lanternfly's potential long-term impact on Pennsylvania. Sven and Dana have worked tirelessly on the spotted lanternfly program, making it a priority far above and beyond their normal duties. In doing so, they have established themselves as among the nation's foremost experts on this new invasive threat.

But they are not working alone. At the Department of Agriculture, we have already devoted an estimated half-million dollars in staff time responding to this pest, while the USDA has provided \$5.5 million in direct local support, in addition to research funding. Our partners in government, universities, business, and communities have spent their own funds to control spotted lanternfly, as well.

While the expense of responding to this threat mount, it is important to remember that the costs to our economy could be far, far greater ultimately. This pest threatens to destroy \$18 billion of plant-based commodities here. It also threatens our interstate and international export industry.

Fortunately, thanks to the team's on-the-ground work and coordination, we have not yet seen spotted lanternflies destroying Erie County grape vines or Adams County apples. No one in Pittsburgh has had to deal with the rain of sticky honeydew dropping from insects in the trees of their favorite park. Pennsylvania businesses have been spared trade barriers from other states or countries that do not want to accept shipments harboring spotted lanternfly hitchhikers.

That could all change, however, if we do not rise to the challenge and devote a level of resources commensurate with the scale of this threat. Our success so far has rested on the partnerships we have formed to fight this pest, but increasingly, it is becoming clear that resources will be necessary to support more extensive outreach and greater levels of collaboration across more areas of the state.

I look forward to continuing to work with Governor Wolf, our federal, state and local partners, farmers and landowners, and the Senate and House Agriculture and Rural Affairs committees to control—and eradicate—spotted lanternfly in Pennsylvania.