

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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“CRITTER QUEST PA” NOW ONLINE

Interactive Environmental Activity Unveiled

SLIPPERY ROCK – “Critter Quest PA,” a unique online activity that allows users to create habitat maps for Pennsylvania species, is now available online at www.pcee.org.

Developed by the Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education (PCEE), Critter Quest PA combines current computer technology with a natural history database to generate distribution maps for common and endangered species native to the commonwealth.

Critter Quest PA was funded by a grant from the Wild Resource Conservation Program of PA’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Developed as an environmental teaching tool primarily for middle school students, the program can also help Pennsylvanians of all ages learn more about the “critters” that might be living in their own backyards. The program uses ARC-IMS software to create graphic data overlays on a map of PA, displaying features such as watersheds, cities, rivers, shaded relief, land use/land cover and school districts. The user can then select from a list of critters, displaying the predicted habitat of one or more of the 468 mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish native to Pennsylvania.

“We designed Critter Quest PA to help Pennsylvanians better understand and appreciate the natural diversity that surrounds them,” said Kathleen Paul, PCEE Director. “It makes learning about the environment fun and engaging—for kids of ALL ages!”

Future plans include grant proposals to develop educational materials that will support the online resource. PCEE hopes to develop virtual learning spaces (“Critter Wikis”) equipped with Web 2.0 technologies, providing teachers with even more powerful and interactive tools for teaching students about the environment.

The Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education (PCEE) was created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1997 and established by statute in 2008 to “provide an avenue for increased participation by educators, local officials, citizen and non-profit groups, business and industry as partners in the implementation of quality environmental education on a state-wide basis.” Administered by the PA State System of Higher Education, PCEE is housed at Slippery Rock University.

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