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**HABITATTITUDE™ AIMS TO PREVENT RELEASE OF PETS INTO THE WILD**

*Revitalized educational campaign promotes healthy environment for pets and humans*

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – June 11, 2019 – The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), along with co-sponsors the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), today announced the re-launch of the Habitattitude™ educational campaign during the Reduce Risks from Invasive Species Coalition’s (RRISC) agency fair on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Habitattitude is a non-regulatory collaboration between industry groups and government agencies that is designed to increase awareness of the risks posed by non-native species in the environment and to positively impact consumer attitudes and practices.

“Sometimes well-intentioned pet owners who can no longer care for their companions think the best thing to do is to release them ‘back to nature’,” said Mike Bober, president and CEO of PIJAC. “With the renewed focus of Habitattitude, PIJAC, USFWS and NOAA are targeting and educating animal lovers earlier in their search for their perfect pets so they make wise choices *before* they bring them home, increasing the likelihood of a life-long relationship.”

The campaign’s centerpiece is the [Habitattitude.net](http://Habitattitude.net) website, which has been renewed with an emphasis on current environmental concerns and modern audiences from its original focus primarily on aquatic invasive species. Sponsors PIJAC, USFWS, and NOAA updated the site to appeal to younger generations with their appetite for visually engaging media platforms, and also to address the growing popularity of reptiles including Burmese pythons, iguanas and Argentine tegus as pets.

Habitattitude.net provides guidance for proper pet selection and care, along with sections on aquarium fish and water gardening. The new section on reptiles and amphibians addresses the variety of species and basic considerations and requirements for habitat, diet, and health concerns. Another new component focuses on animals and plants in classroom education, and caring for them outside the home environment, in response to concerns about the potential for classroom pets to be released at the end of a school year.

Organizations and individuals including government agencies, academic institutions, and classroom teachers who are involved in pet care, invasive species or environmental preservation concerns are invited to sign up on [Habitattitude.net](http://Habitattitude.net) to become partners and

download graphics, posters and other artwork to demonstrate their commitment to promoting responsible pet care and a healthy environment. Contact Josh Jones at [josh@pijac.org](mailto:josh@pijac.org) with any questions about becoming a Habitattitude partner.

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*Since 1970, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) has protected pets, pet owners and the pet industry – promoting animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, fostering environmental stewardship, and ensuring the availability of healthy pets. PIJAC members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers' representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.*