

Beat: Entertainment

Punxsutawney Phil predicts six more weeks of U.S. winter

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USPA News - Punxsutawney Phil, the Pennsylvania groundhog that folklore has it can predict an early spring, emerged from his burrow early Monday and predicted that six more weeks of winter-like weather is in store for the United States. "Punxsutawney Phil, the Seer of Seers, Prognosticator of all Prognosticators, was awakened from his burrow at 7:25, round then, by the cheers of his thousands of steadfast, faithful followers," one of his handlers said during the annual event in Punxsutawney, a town about 80 miles (128 kilometers) northeast of Pittsburgh in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

"Phil waved to his fans, gazed at the sky and round his stump with the help of the Inner Circle. In Groundhogese, he directed President Bill Deeley to the precise scroll, which reads: Forecasts abound on the Internet, but I, Punxsy Phil, am still your best bet: Yes, a shadow I see," the handler announced, which was followed by booing from the crowd. According to holiday folklore, if the groundhog emerges in the early morning on February 2 and does not see his shadow, there will be an early spring. If he sees his shadow, six more weeks of wintry weather are expected. The annual event that started with a small group of men known as the Inner Circle in 1886 now attracts up to 30,000 visitors to Punxsutawney each year. Since the first event, Punxsutawney Phil has only predicted 17 early springs, although records are missing for 10 years. Groundhog Day has been well-known internationally since a 1993 comedy that starred actor Bill Murray as local weatherman Phil Connors. In the movie, Connors finds himself stuck in a personal time loop that repeats February 2 over and over while he is on a hated assignment to cover Groundhog Day. "It's the same shtick every year. The guy raps on the door, they pull the little rat out, they talk to him, he talks back. Then they tell us what's going to happen," Connors says in the movie, adding later: "This is pitiful. 1,000 people freezing their butts off waiting to worship a rat. What a hype." In December 2006, the Library of U.S. Congress added the 1993 movie "Groundhog Day" to its film preservation list that was established to ensure "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant movies are preserved forever. There are currently 650 movies on the list.

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