



Communities face growing water crisis

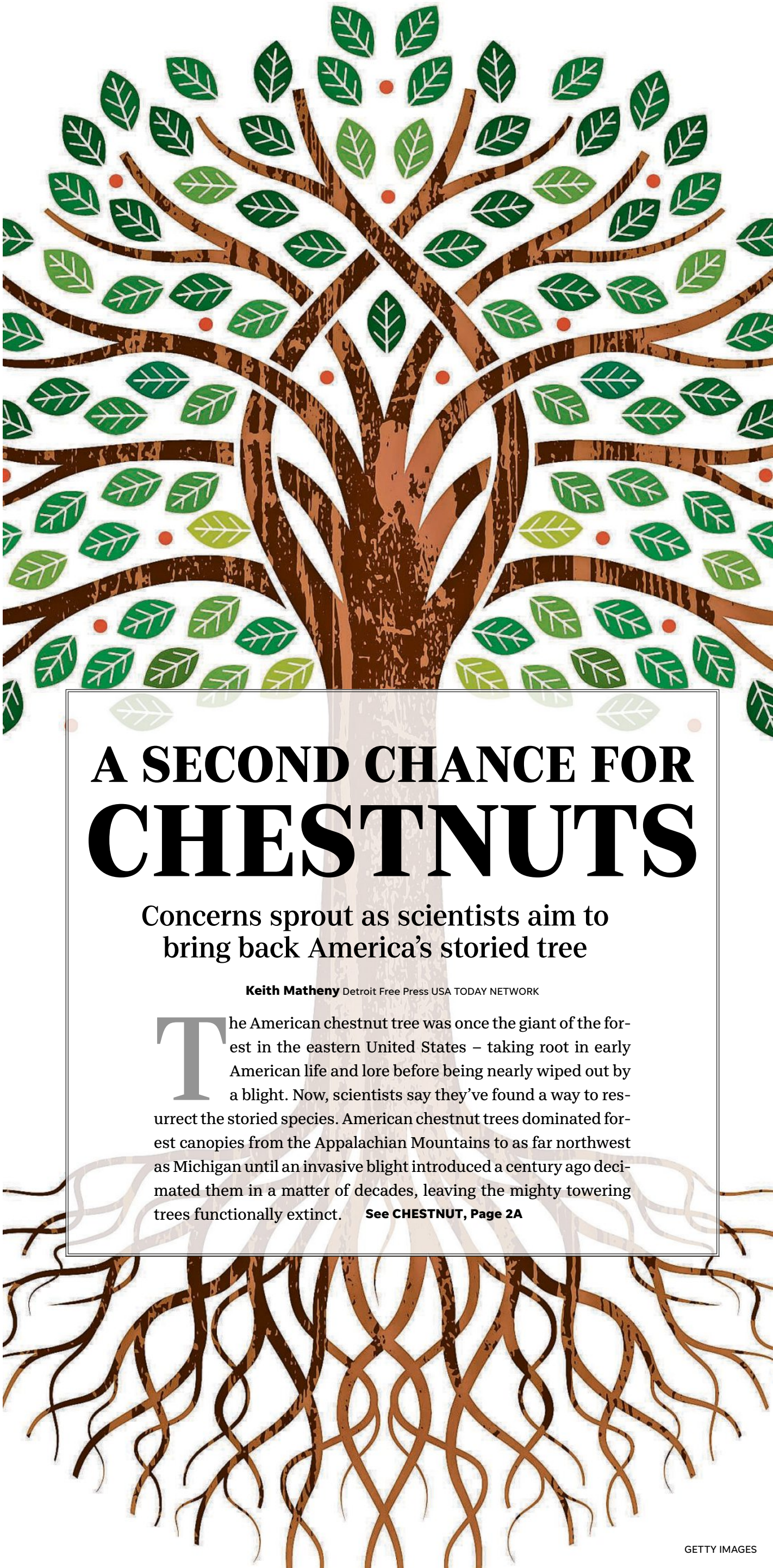
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A SECOND CHANCE FOR CHESTNUTS

Concerns sprout as scientists aim to bring back America’s storied tree

Keith Matheny Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

The American chestnut tree was once the giant of the forest in the eastern United States – taking root in early American life and lore before being nearly wiped out by a blight. Now, scientists say they’ve found a way to resurrect the storied species. American chestnut trees dominated forest canopies from the Appalachian Mountains to as far northwest as Michigan until an invasive blight introduced a century ago decimated them in a matter of decades, leaving the mighty towering trees functionally extinct.

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White House blasts iconic museum

Smithsonian’s portrayal of American history uninspiring, report says

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Tensions between the Trump administration and the Smithsonian Institution have escalated after a White House report accused the National Museum of American History of promoting a “radical, activist ideology.”

In the days after the report was released, historians rallied around the museum, Smithsonian leadership criticized the report, and visitors – including some supporters of President Donald Trump – told USA TODAY they saw little evidence of a radical agenda at the museum.

The 162-page report, released July 4 by the White House Domestic Policy Council, is part of the Trump administration’s ongoing review of the Smithsonian, which includes 21 museums and the National Zoo.

The report accuses the museum of overemphasizing themes like racism and inequality and says its leaders steered from historical scholarship toward social justice advocacy. It also argues that the museum’s exhibits fail to sufficiently highlight American achievements and instead “teach disdain and inspire disgust of our great country.”

The Smithsonian Institution has not publicly addressed the claims, but in an email obtained by USA TODAY, Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch told staff the report was “not a fair characterization of the work and totality” of the American history museum.

More than a dozen people who visited the museum on July 9 said it gave a fair and nuanced portrayal of the country. Meanwhile, the Organization of American Historians, the nation’s largest group of U.S. history scholars, backed the Smithsonian and condemned the report as an attempt to “turn back the clock.”

Since returning to office, Trump has sought to reshape cultural institutions to his liking, including the Kennedy Center, universities and the Smithsonian Institution. In 2025, Trump signed an executive order directing the Smithsonian to remove what he called “divisive, race-centered ideology.” He then

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School groups visit an exhibition on American presidents at The Smithsonian National Museum of American History. JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY FILE

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