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OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE: AMERICAN BEAVER

Contents

FACTS ABOUT OREGON'S BEAVERS

The American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is the largest living rodent in North America. Adults average 40 pounds in weight and measure more than three feet in length, including the tail. Their nose and ears seal out water. These semi-aquatic mammals have webbed hind feet, large incisor teeth, and a broad flat tail. They have poor eyesight, but excellent hearing and sense of smell. The beaver's sharp incisors, which are used to cut trees and peel bark while eating, are harder on the front surface than on the back so the back wears faster creating a sharp edge that enables a beaver to easily cut through wood. The incisors continually grow, but are worn down by grinding, tree cutting, and feeding. Beavers are territorial and mark their territory by creating small mounds of mud, leaves, and sticks, which they then cover with a pungent excreted oil called castoreum.

Once among the most widely distributed mammals in North America, beavers were trapped virtually to extinction in the 1800s to meet demand for beaver pelts. A subsequent decline in demand coupled with formal wildlife management and regulated harvest allowed beavers to become reestablished in most of their former range across North America and are now common in many areas, including urban settings.

Beavers are found in aquatic habitats where their preferred foods are in good supply—along rivers and small streams, lakes, estuaries, marshes, and even roadside ditches that have adequate year-round water flow. In waterways where deep, calm water is not available, beavers will modify habitat to create impoundments by building dams across creeks or other flowing water courses.

Food and Feeding Habitats

- Beavers eat the leaves, inner bark, and twigs of aspen, alder, cottonwood, willow, and other deciduous trees. They also eat shrubs, ferns, aquatic plants, grasses, blackberries, and agricultural crops. They are "choosy generalists", which means they will seek out the food of highest value to them before settling for the less tasty, but still tolerable options available.
- Beavers are fast swimmers, but slow on land. Although primary foraging is concentrated near the shore (within 50 feet), most foraging is done within 165 feet of the water's edge. In areas with few predators, a lean food supply, and/or larger, highly preferred tree species farther from shore, signs of foraging may be found twice that distance (330 feet) from a den site.
- Foraging levels on woody vegetation are most intense during late fall (earlier in cold winter areas of Oregon) as beavers prepare for winter.
- Areas where beaver consume vegetation, called beaver feeding stations, are located along the waters edge and characterized by a scattering of gnawed sticks and stripped branches.
- Fermentation by special intestinal microorganisms allows beavers to digest 30 percent of the cellulose they ingest from vegetation.
- When the surface of the water is frozen, beavers eat bark and stems from a food cache anchored to the bottom of the waterway for winter use. Food caches are seldom found where winters are comparatively mild, such as in the lowlands of western Oregon.

Beaver Dams

- Beavers do not live in dams.
- Beavers build dams to create deep water for protection from predators, access to their food supply, and provide underwater entrances to their den. Resultant moist soil promotes growth of favored foods.
- Not all beavers build dams. Beavers living on water bodies that maintain a constant level (lakes or large rivers) do not build dams since the water is already deep enough for their needs. Beavers also tend to not build dams (or if they do, they are often washed away) in waterways prone to flash flooding.
- Dams are constructed and maintained with whatever materials are available— sticks, logs, stumps, rocks, mud, leafy vegetation, grass, and river trash. They vary in size from a small accumulation to structures 10 feet high and 165 feet wide.
- The sound of flowing water stimulates beavers to build dams; however, they routinely let a leak in a dam flow freely, especially during times of high waters.
- Beavers keep their dams in good repair and will constantly maintain the dams as the water level increases in their pond. A family of beavers may build and maintain one or several dams in their territory, often constructed at natural incision points in the channel.
- In cold areas, dam maintenance is critical. Dams must be able to hold enough water so the pond won't freeze to the bottom, which would eliminate access to the winter food supply.

Lodges and Bank Dens

- Depending on the type of water body and the geographic area they occupy, beavers construct lodges or bank dens as a place to rest, stay warm, give birth, and raise young. These may be burrows in a riverbank or the more familiar lodges on open water or on banks. Both burrows and lodges may consist of one or more underwater entrances, a feeding area, a dry nest den, and a source of fresh air.
- Open-water lodges consist of a mound of branches and logs plastered with mud. One or more underwater openings lead to tunnels that meet at the center of the mound where a single chamber is created.

- Bank dens are dug into the banks of streams and large ponds, and beavers may or may not build a lodge over them (Fig. 1). Bank dens may also be located under stumps, root wads, logs, or docks.
- All family members concentrate on repairing the family lodge or den in late fall (earlier in cold winter areas of Oregon) in preparation for winter.

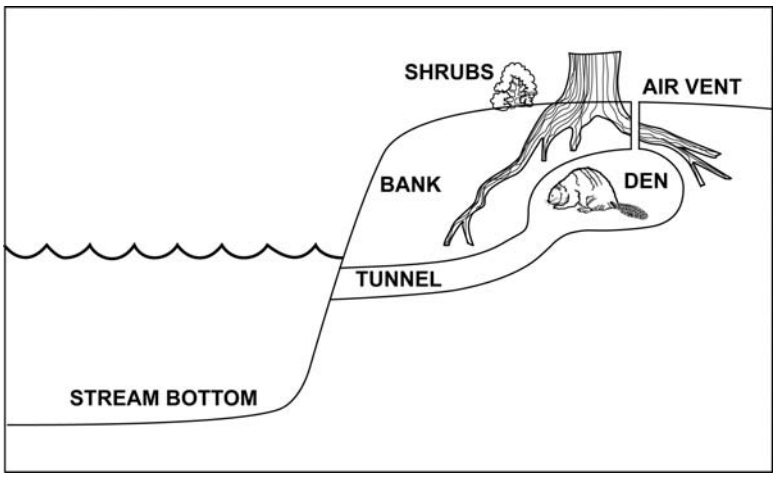

Figure 1. Like many rodents, beavers construct nesting dens for shelter and for protection against predators.

Reproduction and Family Structure

- A mated pair of beaver will live together for many years, sometimes for life.
- Beavers live in family units that may contain two to 12 individuals. The family unit is usually made up of an adult breeding pair, kits of the year, and kits of the previous year or years.
- Beavers breed between January and March, and litters of one to eight (average four) offspring, known as kits, are produced between April and June. The number of kits born is closely related to the amount of food available (more food, more kits) and the female's age.
- Only the breeding female produces offspring and will suppress the reproduction of other females in the family unit. The breeding female nurses the kits until they are weaned at 10 to 12 weeks of age.
- Most kits remain with adults until they are about two years old, although some leave as early as 11 months and some females have been documented to stay with their natal family unit until they are 3 years old. The kits disperse in search of mates and suitable spots to occupy and start new family units, which may be several miles away.
- Populations are limited by habitat quality and availability; the density of beavers appears not to exceed one family unit per one-half mile under the best of conditions.
- Beavers are fiercely territorial and aggressively defend their territory against intruders. Many beavers are missing portions of their hide or tails due to this conflict.

Mortality and Longevity

- Beavers are subject to predation when foraging on shore or migrating overland. Beavers may be killed by cougars, bears, coyotes, bobcats, wolves, or dogs.
- Other causes of death include severe winter weather, winter starvation, disease, water fluctuations and floods, falling trees, collisions with vehicles along roadways, and harvest.
- Beavers are a commonly harvested furbearer. In the PNW, the Hudson Bay Company reported approximately 20,000 beavers being harvested annually in the early 1800s. Today, approximately

1,000 beavers are harvested annually in Oregon. The decline in beaver harvest is a result of decreased participation by furtakers, implementation of a regulatory framework that prevents overharvest, and reductions in habitat quality and quantity due to human population expansion.

- Beavers can live 5 to 10 years in the wild.

VIEWING BEAVERS

Direct observations of beavers are relatively rare, but some strategies can increase odds of detection. Beaver sign, which is the evidence beaver leave behind such as tracks, droppings, etc., is very common if one knows what to look for. Please refer to the American Beaver Activity Survey Protocol for the Pacific Northwest for example images of beaver sign.

Direct Observations

Although beavers are nocturnal, they are occasionally active during the day or crepuscular periods (i.e. dusk and dawn). They do not hibernate but are less active during winter, spending most of their time in the lodge or den. Freshly cut trees and shrubs and prominent dams and lodges are sure indicators of beaver presence. Look for signs of beavers during the day and or look for the animals themselves before sunset or after sunrise. Look for a V-shaped series of ripples on the surface of calm water. A closer view with binoculars may reveal the nostrils, eyes, and ears of a beaver swimming.

If you startle a beaver and it goes underwater, wait quietly in a secluded spot and chances are that it will reemerge within one or two minutes. However, beavers are able to remain underwater for at least 15 minutes by slowing their heart rate. In order to warn each other of danger, beavers slap their tails against the water, creating a loud splash. Sounds also include whining (noise made by kits), a breathy greeting noise, and loud blowing when upset.

When seen in the water, beavers are often mistaken for muskrats or nutria. Try to get a look at the tail. Beavers have a broad, flat tail that doesn't show behind them when swimming, whereas muskrats and nutria have a thin tail that is either held out of the water or sways back and forth on the water's surface as the animal swims. When on land, beavers will generally stand their ground and should not be approached or cornered. They will face the aggressor, rear up on their hind legs, and hiss or growl loudly before lunging forward to deliver extremely damaging bites.

Tracks

Beaver tracks may be found along the water's edge. The front feet resemble a more hand-like appearance while the hind feet are significantly larger, webbed, and have 5 toes. Distinctively, tracks may be accompanied with a tail-drag indentation over and in-between the tracks (Fig. 2).

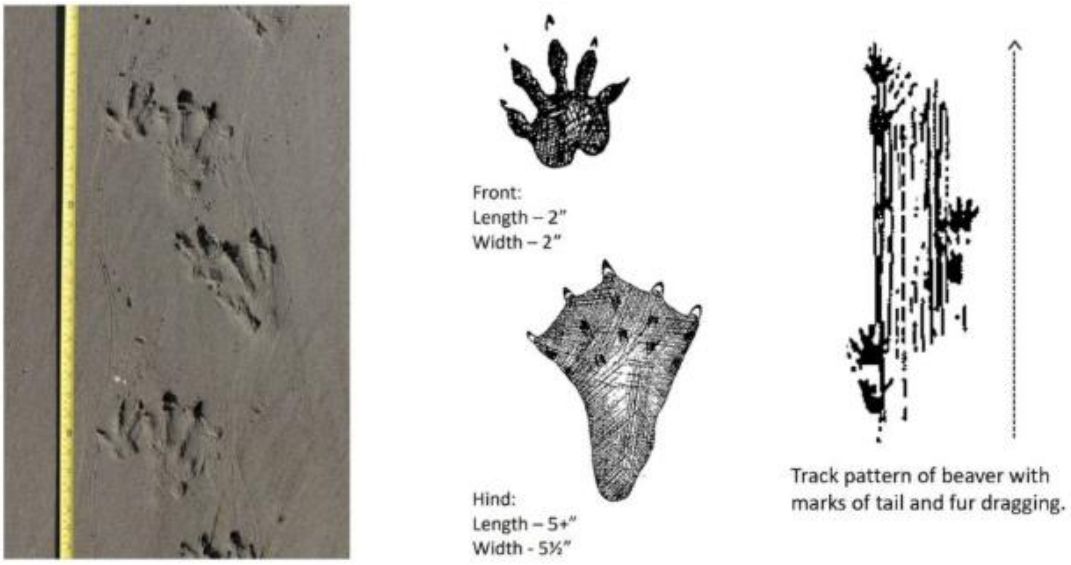

Figure 2. Beaver tracks. Photo credit: Terry Kern, Bob Bluett, Lynn Hawkinson Smith, and the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources.

Droppings
Beaver droppings are seldom found on land; those that are, will commonly be found in the early morning at the water's edge. Individual beaver droppings are usually cylindrical, up to 2½ inches long and look as if they were formed of compressed sawdust. The diameter is an indication of the animal's size—1 inch is average for adults. The color of fresh deposits is dark brown, with lighter-colored bits of undigested wood, all turning pale with age. They may be commonly found in beaver dam ponds and or outside of lodges, dens, or near food caches.

Slides and Channels
Slides are the paths beavers make where they enter and leave the water. They are 15 to 20 inches wide, at right angles to the shoreline, and have a slicked down or muddy appearance. Beavers construct channels or canal systems leading to their ponds, using them to float food—such as small, trimmed trees—from cutting sites. With receding water levels during summer, beaver activity shifts toward building and maintaining channels to access new food supplies. Channels often look man-made, have soft, muddy bottoms and are filled with 15 to 25 inches of water.

Forage Sites
Beavers cut down trees, shrubs, and other available vegetation for food and building materials. There will be a pile of wood chips on the ground around the base of recently felled trees. Limbs that are too large to be hauled off are typically stripped of bark over the course of several days. The cut on small wood usually involves a 45-degree cut typical of rodents, but at a larger scale. Branches and twigs under ¾ inch in diameter are usually eaten entirely.

Food Storage Sites
Beavers that live in cold climates store branches of food trees and shrubs for winter use by shoving them into the mud at the bottom of ponds or streams near the entrance to their bank den or lodge.

Chew sticks
Chew sticks can be found floating in the waterway. They are often smaller in size and have variable amounts of exterior bark removed. Because the inner wood of sticks is not digestible by beavers, once the bark is consumed, they are often discarded or used as structural material in lodges or dams. Chew sticks

will have characteristic marks of beaver teeth and a 45-degree cut on the ends. Similarly, branches of vegetation above the waterway (i.e., the sources of chew sticks) may also contain characteristic marks of beaver teeth and a 45-degree cut on the ends.

Castor mounds

Caster mounds are created by beavers to indicate their territory's boundary or advertise for mates. A castor mound is a pile of mud and debris along the water's edge, marked with scent from their castor and anal glands. They vary in size and are most heavily scented in spring when individuals disperse or breed.

Trail cameras

Trail cameras are a noninvasive method for observing beaver. Cameras should be motion-triggered, programmed for high sensitivity, set to properly operate at night, and placed within 30 feet of observed activity or sign. Landownership and associated permissions should be confirmed before deployment.

BEAVERS ON THE LANDSCAPE

Beaver ponds and dams can benefit Oregon's native fish and other wildlife

- Beaver dams can create ponds that provide fish protection from strong winter flows. Dams can increase the storage of water resulting in a more stable water supply and maintenance of higher flows downstream for a longer period of time. Water storage allows surface water to infiltrate and recharge groundwater.
- By providing plenty of woody debris in which juvenile fish can hide from predators, beaver dams can help young trout and salmon survive their first vulnerable year. They also can provide winter pool habitat that is important for fish such as cutthroat trout and Coho.
- Beaver ponds create more surface area to catch and help store leaf litter in the water and in turn support aquatic insect production, an important food for fish, amphibians, waterfowl, bats, and songbirds.
- Wetlands created by long-term beaver dams can contribute to improved nesting and brood rearing areas for waterfowl in ponds and surrounding areas. The increased growth of vegetation provides additional forage and cover for a variety of wildlife such as big game animals and songbirds.
- Beaver ponds attract and provide habitat for mink, river otter, muskrats, turtles, frogs, and salamanders.
- The trees that die as a result of rising water levels behind beaver dams attract insects that are a food source for many wildlife species such as woodpeckers. Tree snags also provide homes for cavity-nesting birds.

***Note**: Oregon's landscape today is much different than that of pre-European colonization. Therefore, the benefits of beaver ponding and damming to Oregon's native fish and wildlife are highly dependent on the specific conditions at a site, such as waterway alterations; existing native fish and wildlife habitat availability, quality, and connectivity; presence of invasive fish, wildlife, and/or vegetation; competition with other browsing species; and/or proximity to human infrastructure. For example, pools created by beaver dams can promote nonnative and/or invasive species, so location and context are important considerations.*

Beavers can help private landowners

- Over time beaver dams can create wetlands which help control downstream flooding by storing and slowly releasing water, reducing the severity of high stream flows particularly after winter storms and spring snowmelt.

- Beaver created wetlands improve water quality by removing or transforming excess nutrients, trapping silt, binding and removing toxic chemicals, and filtering out sediment.
- Beaver dams facilitate ground water recharge and help raise the ground water table. This promotes vegetative growth, which in turn helps stabilize stream banks and minimize erosion. In some areas, beaver dams have been a major factor in building up soil in meadows and reducing the impact of invasive vegetation.
- Beaver dams reduce water velocity, reducing channel scouring and streambank erosion.
- Wetlands created by beaver dams attract a variety of fish and wildlife that provide recreational and aesthetic values to landowners.

Beavers can cause damage on public and private lands

- Beavers can become a problem if their foraging habits or building activities cause flooding or damage property.
- Beaver activity may result in damage to timber, crops, or ornamental or landscape plants.
- Beaver dams and subsequent increased water levels may jeopardize the integrity of septic systems, roads, or other human infrastructure.
- There are several options for landowners in dealing with beaver conflicts that are covered in the following sections: preventing conflicts and solving problems; lethal control; and moving beaver.

PREVENTING CONFLICTS AND SOLVING PROBLEMS: VEGETATION DAMAGE AND FLOODING

Because beavers can fulfill an important role in creating wetlands that provide multiple benefits in appropriate contexts, ODFW advocates for actions that encourage coexistence.

Figure 3. Newly planted tree protected from beaver damage using rebar and fencing. Rebar stake is used to hold up protective cage (Photo by Doug Ray).

PROTECTING PLANTS AND TREES

Choose and place plants carefully

Planting areas with vegetation that beavers consider low-value food choices will reduce the likelihood of beaver damage. Species such as Sitka spruce, elderberry, cascara, osoberry (Indian plum), ninebark, and twinberry can be effective options for this strategy. Alternatively, a landowner may choose to densely plant high-value food options such as aspen, cottonwood, willow, spirea (hardhack), and red-twig dogwood because established plants often resprout after being eaten. Planting preferred plants away from known beaver trails will limit losses.

Note: *Beavers clip vegetation for three purposes: 1) for food 2) as construction material, and 3) to hone and sharpen their ever-growing teeth. As a result of this varied intention behind cutting vegetation, you may still find that beaver have clipped a species normally deemed to be "low-value".*

Install barriers around trees

Wire cages around trees can prevent beavers from chewing on them. The trunks of individual large trees can be loosely wrapped with galvanized welded wire fencing, hardware cloth, or multiple layers of chicken

wire (Fig. 3 and 4). Metal flashing can also be used. Trunks should be wrapped to a height of at least four feet, or in areas where flooding is common, at least two feet above the high-water mark. A 6- to 12-inch space should be left between the wire cage and the tree trunk to allow the trees room to grow and to prevent beavers from chewing between the wires. Some form of stake or support is needed to keep beavers from pushing fencing against tree trunks and chewing. Check wire barriers every year to make sure they do not inhibit tree growth. Barriers can be painted to make them less noticeable. Painting chicken wire or welded wire fencing black will often make it look more camouflaged. Welded wire fencing coated with green vinyl that helps the fencing blend in is also available.

Note: *Plastic planting tubes and dark-colored corrugated plastic drainpipe are not recommended for plantings due to issues of overheating and/or burning trunks in full sun.*

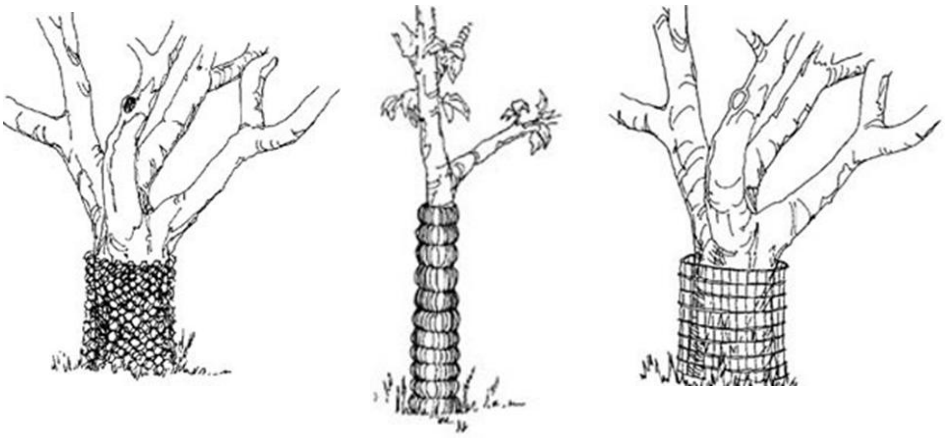

Figure 4. Various barriers can be used to protect plants from beaver damage. All plants should be protected to at least 4 feet above ground—or the snow line—and inspected regularly to ensure that wire does not become imbedded in the bark (Drawing by Jenifer Rees).

To protect groups of trees, construct 4-foot high barriers made of galvanized, welded wire field fencing or other sturdy material (Fig. 5). A beaver's weight will pull down chicken wire and other lightweight material. Stake the barriers to prevent beavers from pushing them to the side or entering from underneath. An electric fence with two hot wires, suspended 4 to 6 inches off the ground for the lowest wire with a second wire hung 10 to 12 inches above the first, is also effective at protecting groups of plants. It is critical to weed-whack or brush-cut vegetation down to bare earth prior to the installation of electric wire fencing. Cutting roughly a 2-foot swath (1-foot to either side of fence) should effectively keep vegetation away from the lowest wire. This helps to prevent wildfire risk as well as the potential that the vegetation will short out the fencing. Vegetation and fencing should be checked weekly. Consult local codes and experts before installing electrical fencing.

Figure 5. Groups of plants can be protected from beaver damage by surrounding them with wire fencing (Photo by Russell Link).

Protect large areas that border beaver habitat by installing 4 foot-high field fencing. Keep the bottom of the fence flush to the ground, or include an 18 inch-wide skirt on the beaver side of the fence to prevent beavers from entering underneath.

Note: *Preventing access to preferred food sources may force beavers to eat other nearby plants, including roses and other ornamentals. Be prepared to cage/fence all vegetation of value to you. If you are willing to leave some native plants uncaged, it may provide enough forage to keep the beavers satiated and away from your high-value vegetation.*

Apply repellents on trees
Painting tree trunks with a sand and paint mix (2/3 cup masonry grade sand per quart of latex paint) has proven somewhat effective at protecting trees from beaver damage. The animals presumably don't like the gritty texture. Keep in mind that this "repellent" only works after beavers have taken a few bites. This method is ineffectual on plants whose stems can be clipped in a single bite. Generally, this method is only recommended for large trees (not saplings).

Commercial taste and odor repellents have provided mixed results, perhaps because they need to be reapplied often, particularly in moist weather. Taste and odor repellents are most effective when applied at the first sign of damage, when other food is available, and during the dry season. Two repellents that have had some success are Big Game Repellent® and Plantskydd®.

PREVENTING FLOODING

Before starting ***any*** of the following treatments or activities, landowner approval must be obtained. In addition, as these activities require work in wetlands or streams, permits may be required from various local, state, and federal agencies (including ODFW) before work is started. Please refer to the *State Water-Related Permits Users Guide* for more information.

Help maintain beaver dams and ponds with flow devices
It may be possible to change the maximum depth of a beaver pond to prevent flooding by installing a flow device. A flow device, such as a culvert caging or flexible pond leveler, keeps the water level in a pond at a set elevation by using one or more plastic pipes to continually drain the pond to the desired depth. Keep in mind that at least three feet of water is needed in the pond for beavers to persist. See Figure 6 for a diagram of a flexible pond leveler.

Installation of flow devices may require an approved fish passage plan to ensure that native migratory fish are able to move up and downstream of the device without risk of entrainment. To learn more, please see the *State of Oregon Fish Passage Approvals for Beaver Coexistence Flow Devices – Pond Levelers and Culvert Exclusion Fencing* document and visit the fish passage section of the ODFW website for passage plan approval process and application. People may also contact their local ODFW office for more information.

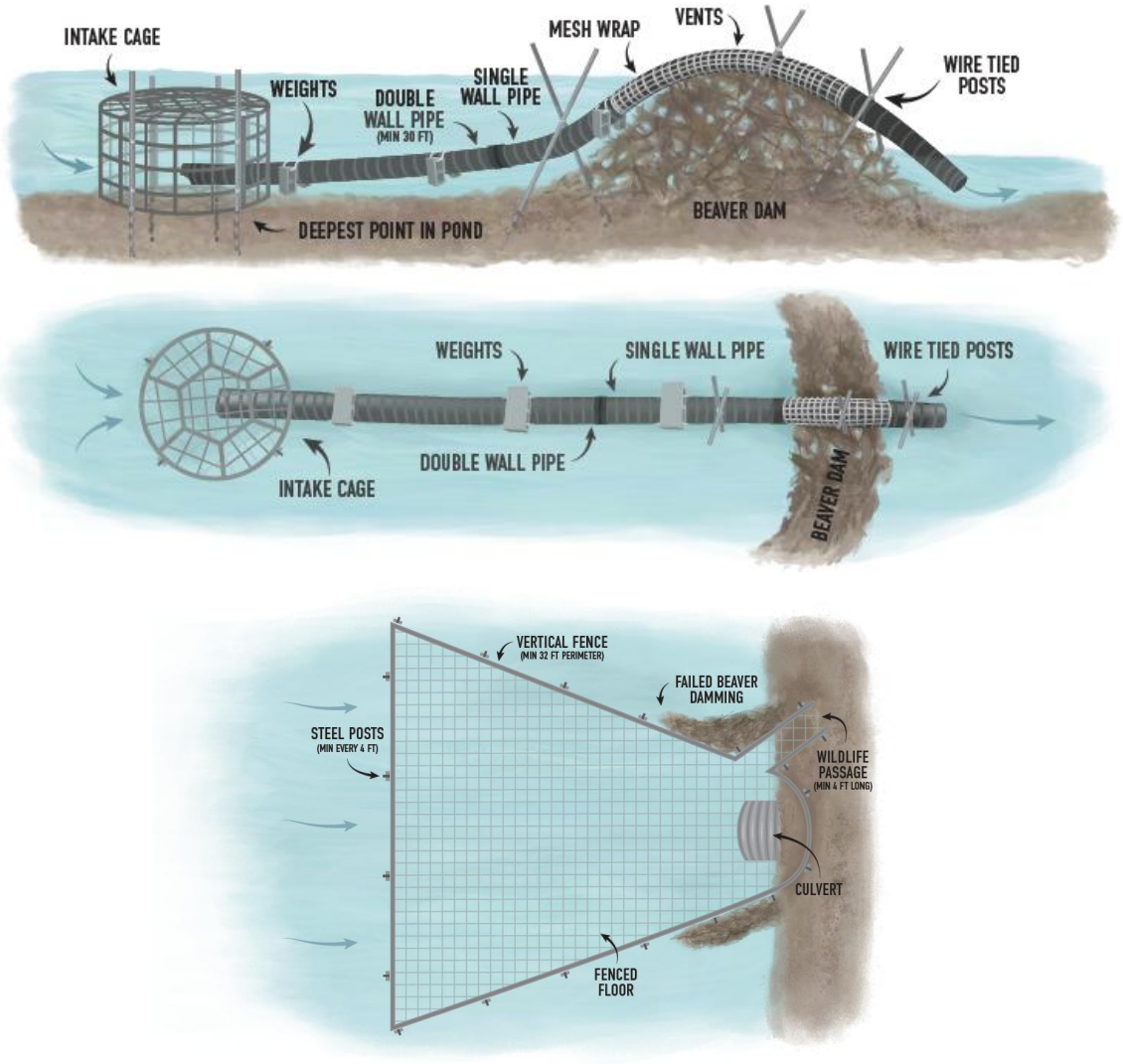

Figure 6. Standard flexible pond leveler with no modifications. Image source: *Project Beaver Best Management Practices for Pond Levelers and Culvert Protection Systems, https://projectbeaver.org/beaver-management*.

Beginning in 2024, the Oregon Department of State Lands (ODSL) included pond levelers and exclusion device installation as an action triggering a type of permit called General Authorization (GA) for Minimal Disturbance within Essential Salmonid Habitat (OAR 141-089-0660 through 141-089-0675). Based on aforementioned rules, essentially this ODSL GA permit requires prior ODFW Fish Passage authorization, although there can be exceptions to the ODFW process that may not meet the requirements of the ODSL process. Additionally, effective January 1, 2026, new GA applications require a $450 fee at the time of submittal. For more General Authorization information, please contact your local ODSL Aquatic Resource Coordinator and refer to ODSL's Removing or Filling Material website.

Dam removal

Notching or entirely removing a dam can alleviate immediate damage from dam-derived flooding. The effects of these strategies may only be temporary because beaver can rebuild a dam as quickly as overnight. However, notching or removal will tell you: 1) if the beavers are still present and active in the area and 2) what the basin depth threshold is in order to evaluate whether a pond leveler is a reasonable

solution for the site.

For information on beaver dams while conducting forest management activities on private land, contact the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF). Except as needed for road maintenance, operators must submit a written plan to ODF prior to the removal of beaver dams and other natural obstructions from waters of the state during forest operations. In compliance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act rules, removal of any beaver dam that is within 25 feet of a culvert can be considered necessary for road maintenance. See Oregon Department of Forestry *Forest Practices Rules* and Oregon Administrative Rule 629-660-0050.

See also Department of State Lands sources listed at the end of this document.

Removal of beaver lodges or dens

In Oregon, beavers tend to live in bank dens or bank lodges as opposed to the more traditional beaver lodge, which is an in-water structure. ODFW does not generally recommend that lodges or dens be removed unless there is a public health or safety risk due to flooding of roadways or infrastructure. Removal of beaver lodges or dens does not require a permit from ODFW, but dependent kits may be occupying the structure which could lead to associated mortality. During spring or early summer, consult your local ODFW office for more information or required permitting.

Blocked culverts

Beavers tend to build their dams at pinch points where they would need to put in the least amount of energy to create an impoundment. To a beaver, a culvert probably looks like a hole in an otherwise fine dam, and when they plug the hole, a flooded road can result. One option to keep beavers from plugging a culvert is to create an alternative location for the dam. There are many ways to build a decoy dam, but a simple and effective method is to use a series of 3- to 5-inch diameter, non-treated lumber posts or live willow posts spaced 18 to 24 inches apart to serve as a foundation for the beavers to build a new dam. If you place the woody material from the removed dam upstream from the posts, beavers will reuse it to start the new dam (Fig. 7). Other options to prevent beavers from plugging a culvert include culvert exclusion fencing. This method can be extremely effective with proper maintenance (periodic vegetation clearing). However, this treatment may obstruct native fish migration and would need to be sized appropriately to accommodate fish passage.

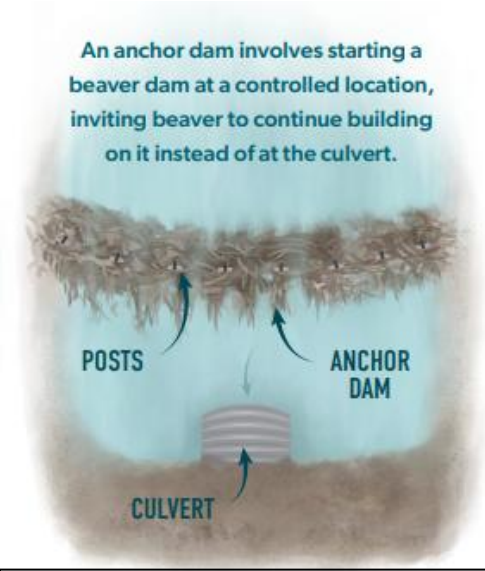

Figure 7. An anchor dam is one solution to prevent beaver from blocking a culvert. Image source: *Project Beaver Culvert Protection Systems, https://projectbeaver.org/beaver-culvert-protection-systems*.

Contact your local ODFW biologist for the best option for the property in question and refer to the *State of Oregon Fish Passage Approvals for Beaver Coexistence Flow Devices – Pond Levelers and Culvert Exclusion Fencing* guidance document to determine if an ODFW approved fish passage plan is needed.

MOVING BEAVERS

It is illegal for anyone to ***move*** beaver in Oregon without a permit from ODFW. If relocation is desired, please review the *Requirements for Relocation of Beaver in Oregon* document. This resource outlines the

minimum requirements for the pre- and post-release monitoring surveys as well as capture, holding, and translocation methods to encourage success. The intent of the requirements is to maximize the ecological benefits provided by beaver while minimizing potential conflicts (e.g., damage to private property) where beaver relocation is deemed appropriate and is authorized by ODFW. Contact your local ODFW biologist for more information.

Note: *Contemporary relocation efforts of beavers in Oregon have a relatively low success rate. Regardless, it is not considered a long-term solution for landowners dealing with beaver damage, as other beavers will soon move into the habitat once the previous beaver(s) has been removed.*

LETHAL REMOVAL

Lethal removal is an option for mitigating conflict with beavers. To increase success, whole family groups should be removed. Success may be temporally limited, in that if the habitat is suitable, a dispersing beaver or a new family group may reestablish the area and resume realized damage.

Private landowners or their agents may lethally remove beaver with a permit from ODFW (OAR 635-43-0071). Beavers are defined in state statue and rule (ORS 610.002(2)(c) and OAR 635-050-0050(7)) as a furbearing mammal. Therefore, it is illegal to lethally remove beaver without a furtaker's license and outside of the beaver harvest seasons (OAR 635-050-0045), or without an ODFW issued permit.

Note: *A permit is not required where beavers are imminently threatening infrastructure or agricultural crops, or to protect private forestlands. "Imminently threatens" is defined in OAR 635-043-0066 as the occurrence of recent beaver activity, including but not limited to gnawing, digging or dam building, that could result in loss or harm to infrastructure or to agricultural or forest crops if the activity were to continue. "Imminently threatens" does not mean the mere presence of a beaver without evidence of activity that could result in loss or harm. Contact ODFW for details and* ***all take must be reported****.*

If a lethal control permit is issued by ODFW, the landowners can hunt or trap the beaver themselves. Alternative to obtaining a lethal control permit from ODFW themselves, landowners can hire an ODFW-permitted Wildlife Control Operator (WCO) who works directly with property owners to resolve wildlife-conflict situations on a fee basis. Call your local ODFW office or visit the ODFW website for a current list of Wildlife Control Operators. Private landowners can also allow a trapper with a valid ODFW furtaker license to remove beaver during the established harvest season. All take (with an authorized permit, removal by WCOs, and furtaker harvest) must be reported.

Private forest landowners have different rules pertaining to mitigation of beaver damage via lethal removal (ORS 498.062). If beavers are causing damage or have the potential to cause damage on small forestlands (<5,000 acres), a permit to lethally remove beaver is not required (ORS 498.012). If beaver damage poses a threat to infrastructure on forestlands larger than 5,000 acres, a formalized process of beaver damage notification with ODFW needs to be employed. This first involves contacting and requesting coordination with ODFW to address the threat to infrastructure using non-lethal methods. After a 30-day window from the initial request, lethal removal may be utilized as a tool to mitigate beaver damage. All take on both small and large private forestlands must be reported (ORS 498.061) and pelts/carcasses cannot be kept or sold when take occurs on large private forestlands.

Note: *Removing beavers is often a short-term solution as other beavers will move into the area if suitable habitat is present.*

REGULATED TRAPPING

Trapping, like most technologies, has changed dramatically during the last two hundred years. Traps and trapping systems have made tremendous advances since the 1800s when beaver were nearly eliminated. Today, all regulated trappers in Oregon must first complete a study course and successfully pass a written test showing an acceptable level of knowledge of animal behavior, current laws and regulations, and trapping skills. Modern, science-based information is used to establish strict regulations, enforced by Oregon State Police, which allows regulated trappers to harvest beaver during authorized seasons using state-of- the-art traps and techniques. Such trapping systems are a benefit by removing damage-causing beaver while maintaining healthy and abundant beaver populations. The vast majority of beaver trapped today fall into this damage category. ODFW Furbearer Regulations can be found on the ODFW Website. All beaver taken by landowners, Wildlife Control Operators, and trappers are reported directly to and accounted by ODFW.

PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS

There are few public health concerns to the general public in regard to beaver. Beavers are mammals and therefore can expose humans to any zoonotic diseases they carry. Hunters, trappers, and biologists should follow safety rules when handling beaver. Likewise, the public should be knowledgeable on safety recommendations when recreating in shared environments with wildlife.

Beavers can be infected with the bacterial disease tularemia or the microscopic parasite giardia. Tularemia and giardia may be transmitted to humans if they drink contaminated water or come into contact with the contaminated water or infected animal (e.g., accidentally ingest water or water enters open cuts or wounds). A human who contracts tularemia or giardia commonly has a fever, headache, body ache, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, and sweats. Mild cases may be confused with the flu and ignored. Humans can be easily treated with antibiotics, but these infections can be fatal to animals. Contact your family doctor immediately if you believe that you have contracted tularemia or giardia.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ODFW Offices
ODFW Fish Passage Website: Application Forms and Guidance Documents
Requirements for Relocation of Beaver in Oregon (pdf)
ODFW Furbearer Regulations (pdf)
American Beaver Spotlight for Oregon's State Wildlife Action Plan (pdf)
ODFW Website
State of Oregon Water-Related Permits Users Guide
Oregon Department of Forestry Forest Practices Rules Factsheet (pdf)
Oregon Department of State Lands Website
Oregon Department of State Lands Removal-Fill Guide (pdf)
ODOT Routine Road Maintenance Water Quality and Habitat Guide: Best Management Practices (pdf)
Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management: Beavers
USDA Beaver Damage Management factsheet (pdf)
USDA Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series – Beavers (pdf)
Oregon State University "Think Like A Beaver" Lesson (Grades 4-6; pdf)

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