

Beaver Facts

The beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is the largest rodent in North America and one of only a few species known to actively and regularly construct its habitat through the construction of dams.

Beavers rarely travel more than 100 yards from a pond's edge in search of food or building materials.

Beavers are herbivores and eat a variety of plant material including the bark of deciduous trees and aquatic plants. Beavers store woody plant material in food caches for winter use.

Beavers live in family groups called colonies, consisting of a monogamous adult pair and often two generations of offspring.

Second year offspring are driven from the colony. As a result, young beavers disperse annually from productive areas to create new colonies.

The ponds created by beaver support a large diversity of wildlife and act as sediment traps serving to enhance water quality.

Flow devices are often the preferred management option to limit flooding.

Comprehensive Beaver Management Plan Merrimack, New Hampshire

Laws and Regulations

State of New Hampshire law (RSA 210:9, 2015) allows a landowner or municipal official to conduct common beaver management activities without a permit. According to RSA 210:9, "A landowner, landowner agent, or any municipal official or employee may destroy beaver, remove beaver dams, or install beaver pipes or beaver fences on property under their supervision without a permit under RSA 482-A if machinery does not enter the water and filling or dredging in or immediately adjacent to surface water, wetlands, or their banks does not occur. Removal shall be done in a gradual manner so as not to cause erosion, siltation, or a safety hazard." Under RSA 210:9, beaver pipes do not require a state permit if they consist of no more than three temporary structures with the widest pipe no larger than 15 inches placed in a dam.



Dam Removal and Trapping

Beaver dam removal and trapping are often the first or primary tools used to address management conflicts. However, removal of beaver dams is generally a poor management choice because the alteration of dams often triggers immediate dam repairs by beaver and may even stimulate the construction of additional dams. For these reasons, full-scale dam removal is often not successful and may even exacerbate a problem. Trapping in one year is always a temporary measure as beaver disperse from their natal colonies every year. As a result, trapping is not a preferred or long-term method to addressing beaver conflicts.



Water Flow Devices

In many cases, existing beaver conflicts are associated with flooding and infrastructure maintenance. The installation of properly designed water flow devices can often address beaver conflicts in many scenarios, and is the primary management tool identified in the Comprehensive Beaver Management Plan created by GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. Flow devices may be installed in beaver dams, or in infrastructure such as culverts and drop inlets to maintain flow and limit flooding.

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Flexible Pond Levelers

Flexible Pond Levelers are devices that may be installed in beaver dams to control and limit the extent of flooding. Levelers are relatively easy to maintain, allow for site specific placement of an outlet, and have a proven track record of working in similar watersheds.



Fence and Filter Systems

A variety of fence systems may be employed at culverts and drop inlet to prevent plugging from dam construction. Fence systems may be trapezoidal, triangular, rectangular/square, or round in construction. The actual shape of the fence system is often influenced by site conditions including channel width and depth. The use of a “double filter system” may be used to extend the feel of flowing water away from the drainage structure being replaced, to encourage damming away from the critical infrastructure.



The Merrimack Conservation Commission seeks to promote good stewardship of the land and natural resources within the Town of Merrimack.

For further information and resources about sound wildlife management techniques relating to beavers and their habitat, please contact us with your questions.



Merrimack Conservation Commission

6 Baboosic Lake Road
Merrimack, NH 03054

Located in the Lower Level of Town Hall
(Community Development Department)

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday
8:00am-4:30pm



Phone: (603) 424-3531

Email: merrimackoutdoors@merrimacknh.gov

