Working with Beavers

Coexistance and Resilient Landscapes

Beavers provide **important ecosystem benefits** for humans and other wildlife. These ecosystem engineers naturally reshape the landscape by building dams which create a mosaic of wetland habitat and resilience. While beaver activity can **sometimes lead to conflicts** with humans, we are **navigating ways to coexist** and keep our watersheds bountiful and resilient.

Beaver Benefits

Flood and drought resilience:
Beaver dams slow water, reducing erosion and flood impacts while helping recharge ground water.

Habitat:
Beaver activity creates wetlands, deep pools and threaded channels that support diverse wildlife.

Water quality:
Beaver ponds slow water, allowing sediment, nutrients, and pollutants to settle out and naturally improve water quality.

Wildfire resilience:
Beaver wetlands stay moist, creating natural fire breaks that recover faster after wildfire. They also filter post-fire runoff and debris.

Common Human-Beaver Conflicts

- **Forage on trees** for food and construction materials. They especially enjoy cottonwoods, aspen, and willows. This **can damage or remove valuable trees**.
- **Create dams** that slow moving water causing **ponding**. Dams can **clog water conveyance structures** like culverts and ditches or raise water levels that can **flood infrastructure** like trails and roads.

How Can We Coexist?

Beavers play an important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems and can help buffer human communities to natural disasters. Because of these benefits, **finding ways to coexist with beavers, rather than remove them, is often the most effective long-term approach.**

Tree Protection:

Protect high-value trees by wrapping sturdy wire fencing (about 4-6 ft high), leaving enough space in between to allow the tree to grow. This fencing should be secured to the ground to prevent beavers from slipping under and accessing the tree.

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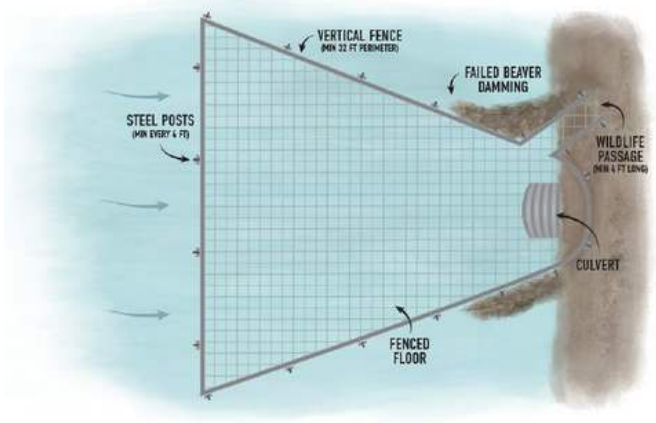
Apply sand paint (a mix of masonry sand and latex paint) to create a gritty surface that discourages beavers from chewing the tree.

Manage Water Levels:

Install flow devices to regulate pond levels and reduce flooding potential. These systems allow water to pass through or around dams without triggering beaver to block the flow of water.



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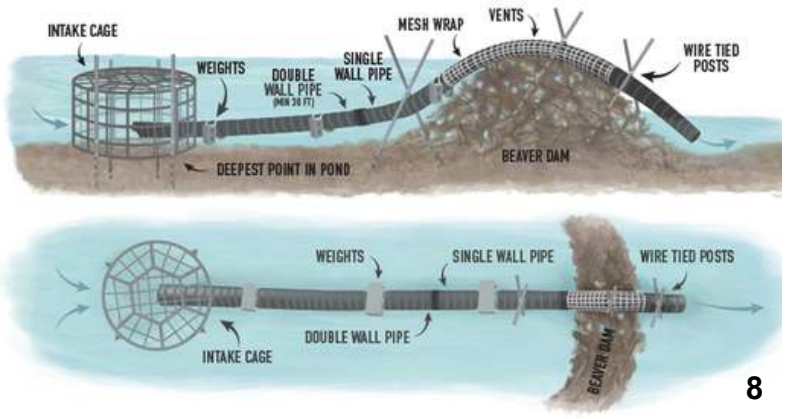

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Culvert protection typically includes fencing around inlets and outlets to prevent blockage while maintaining water movement. Some systems use submerged pipes to move water over dams or to culverts, keeping water levels stable.

Want to Learn More?

CPW Beaver Strategy

Landowner Guide to Beavers

Image Sources

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