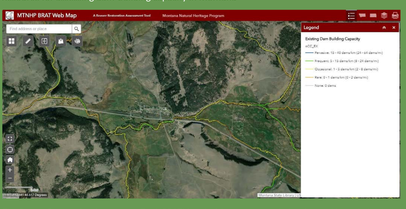
Montana Beaver Working Group

Connecting and providing resources to people interested in the role of beavers in watershed and riparian health

Stories and News

BRAT is Coming

Resource for assessing dam-building capacity in Montana



The Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT) is a decision support and planning tool intended to help researchers, restoration practitioners, and resource managers assess the potential for beaver as a stream conservation and restoration agent over large regions and watersheds. Developed by Wally McFarlane and Joe Wheaton of the Ecomorphology and Topographic Analysis Laboratory at Utah State University, BRAT was first tested for a pilot area, then extended to the whole state of Utah; there are several BRAT projects currently underway around the Western United States, including Idaho and Northern California. For an application in the Greater Yellowstone Area, click here.

In 2017, the Montana/Dakotas State Office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management contracted the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Spatial Analysis Lab to adapt and run the BRAT model in Montana and South Dakota. The interactive map tool is now being beta-tested and verified to ensure that the final version reflects input data layers and output products most relevant to resource professionals.

Learn more about BRAT from a poster at the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society annual meeting Feb. 3-7 in Butte or a live demonstration at the Montana Water Summit in Helena on March 3-4.

For more information on this resource, contact Linda Vance at the Montana Natural Heritage Program: LiVance@mt.gov

Beaver Working Group Conversation at Montana Water Summit

Attending the Montana Water Summit in early March? Consider registering for the informal lunchtime "Great Water Conversation" focused on the Montana Beaver Working Group, facilitated by Sarah Bates of the National Wildlife Federation. Additionally, Michael Downey of DNRC will facilitate a conversation on the use of beaver mimicry and beavers in riparian restoration, and Alice McNamara of the Blackfeet Agricultural Resource Management Plan will address conservation on the Blackfeet Nation including beaver mimicry.

See a full list of Great Conversations abstracts here. See program link below.

The Nature Conservancy Seeks Input on Monitoring Protocol

In 2019, The Nature Conservancy, The Gallatin River Task Force, the Custer Gallatin National Forest, and consultant Amy Chadwick began conversations about potentially using Beaver Mimicry Structures (BMS) on a few streams in the upper Gallatin Watershed. These projects would all be on Forest Service lands and would assist with improving fisheries and floodplain reconnection. The Custer-Gallatin National Forest is in the process of writing an Ecotonal Environmental Assessment (EA) that would cover projects like BMS and conifer removal on the Custer Gallatin Forest lands.

The group recently met to discuss what types of pre-monitoring could be done during the 2020 field season ahead of BMS structure installation in 2021. This prompted the idea that we would appreciate hearing from others in the Beaver Working Group about ideas and recommendations for pre-monitoring protocols that would be best to include in the early stages of our projects. It would also be helpful for us to create a similar set of practices across MT and beyond, so we can monitor and evaluate the success of our natural water storage projects using similar metrics.

Please reach out to any of the following people with ideas or input:

Sierra Harris, The Nature Conservancy: sierra.harris@TNC.org

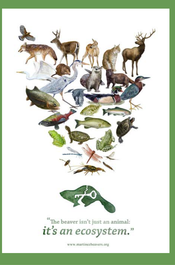
Emily O'Connor, Gallatin River Task Force: emily@gallatinrivertaskforce.org

Amy Chadwick, Great West Engineering: achadwick@greatwesteng.com

Heidi Perryman Shows and Tells the Beaver Story

Ben Goldfarb described Heidi Perryman as "one of the planet's foremost authorities on *Castor canadensis*." Her compelling, informative communications now include two new e-publications :

- 2-page "Why Beavers Matter and How to Live with Them" (aka, beaver cheat sheet)
- 12-page "Beavers on Urban Landscapes"

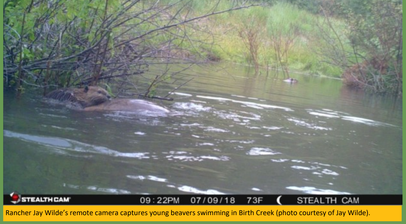


Montana Beaver Conflict Mitigation Project at BeaverCON 2020

Participants in an upcoming East Coast conference on beaver management and wetland restoration will hear about a pilot project launched in 2019 through the collaborative efforts of the Clark Fork Coalition, National Wildlife Federation, and Defenders of Wildlife. Aquatic Ecologist Aaron Hill, who works with Defenders' Rocky Mountains and Great Plains Region, will speak on Jay Beaver: Building a cost-sharing program to drawing examples from work in Colorado and Montana. See program link below.

Beaver Restoration Enhances Stream Flows on Idaho Ranch

After seeing how beavers helped Birch Creek flow again, Idaho rancher Jay Wilde has inspired hundreds of people to try beaver-assisted stream restoration. Learn more in this recent NWF blog.



Rancher Jay Wilde's remote camera captures young beavers swimming in Birth Creek (photo courtesy of Jay Wilde).

UPCOMING EVENTS

MONTANA WATER SUMMIT: AT THE CONFLUENCE OF LAND AND WATER

March 3-4, 2020

Delta Hotels Helena Colonial, 2301 Colonial Drive, Helena, MT

Event link: http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/water/management/training-education/the-montana-water-summit-2020

Can we meet the needs of a growing population and adapt to climate change by more thoughtfully integrating land and water management and policy? Yes! Solutions, though complex, abound at both regional and local scales. Join diverse Montanans and invited speakers from a variety of backgrounds to explore these hot spots and solutions at the land and water nexus.

BEAVERCON 2020

March 3-5, 2020

Delta Hotels, Baltimore Hunt Valley, 245 Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, MD

Event link: https://www.beavercon.org/

BeaverCON 2020 is a three-day conference in Baltimore, Maryland for professionals, researchers and practitioners to learn what works in beaver conflict management and watershed restoration.

Aerial view of expanding beaver activity at a restoration site at Ninemile Creek. Photo from Paul Parson, Trout Unlimited

Please send stories, upcoming events, and other resources to:
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MT Beaver Working Group newsletters are posted online at:
https://www.nwf.org/Northern-Rockies-and-Pacific-Region