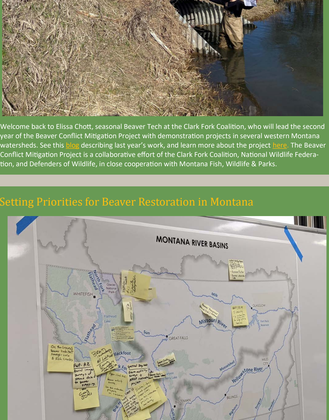
Montana Beaver Working Group

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

In this challenging time and in the face of many uncertainties, we extend our warmest wishes for good health, security, and support. Thank you for being part of our network, and please know we appreciate your engagement.

Stories and News

Beaver Conflict Mitigation Project Launches Second Year



Welcome back to Elissa Chott, seasonal Beaver Tech at the Clark Fork Coalition, who will lead the second year of the Beaver Conflict Mitigation Project with demonstration projects in several western Montana watersheds. See this [prior](#) describing last year's work, and learn more about the project [here](#). The Beaver Conflict Mitigation Project is a collaborative effort of the Clark Fork Coalition, National Wildlife Federation, and Defenders of Wildlife, in close cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Setting Priorities for Beaver Restoration in Montana

In February, fifty people representing diverse expertise gathered in Butte to identify priority strategies for restoring beaver and beaver habitat in Montana and to commit to specific actions to advance beaver restoration for the benefit of Montana's watersheds. The meeting was made possible by the generous support of the Turner Foundation and hosted by National Wildlife Federation and the Clark Fork Coalition.

We are currently finalizing a summary report outlining the priority goals, strategies, and action steps developed at this meeting, including lead groups or individuals for implementation and benchmarks for progress. As soon as this report is ready, we will send it to everyone on the mailing list for this newsletter, and will be posted online. We anticipate reconvening these participants (and others) early in 2021 to evaluate progress and next steps.

Here are the highest-priority goals identified and discussed at the meeting:

1. Integrate beaver into the design and approach of stream and wetland restoration, so that beaver restoration is scaled up and expanded beyond isolated beaver habitat projects
2. Expand beaver on public lands headwaters to restore self-sustaining ecological processes that will build resilience to drought and wildfires
3. Provide coordinated education and outreach on the benefits of beavers and options for addressing nuisance concerns
4. Remove legal and policy barriers to beaver habitat restoration and relocation of beavers to suitable, prioritized habitat

For each of these high-level priorities, work groups developed strategies and actions to pursue in order to achieve long-term goals. We are grateful to the work group discussion leaders, student and Big Sky Watershed Corps recorders, and our master facilitator Jennifer Boyer.

Thanks also to the Montana Tech professors and graduate students who shared posters about their current beaver-related research (images of these will be available online when the report is posted), and to Joe Griffin for leading the Blackfeet Community College representatives on a field trip to view beaver activity on Silver Bow Creek.

For more information:
Sarah Bates, National Wildlife Federation, batess@nwf.org

Will McDowell, Clark Fork Coalition, Will@cfc.org

Big Sky Watershed Corps Supports Restoration Projects

The Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) is an 11-month AmeriCorps partnership program coordinated by the [Montana Conservation Corps](#), [Montana Watershed Coordination Council](#), and [Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana](#). The BSWC assists Montana's watershed communities to make a measurable different in local conservation efforts while strengthening the experience of young professionals. This January kicked off the 9th year of the BSWC with the largest team of 34 members serving with 39 watershed partners across Montana. With the warming weather, melting rivers and drier trails, BSWC members are highly anticipating the upcoming field season where they will assist their host-site with work on various projects such as beaver mimicry, water quality monitoring, watershed education and outreach, and more.

To learn more about what each local conservationist is working on, please visit the [BSWC 2020 Member Biographies](#). If you are interested in serving with the BSWC or hosting a BSWC member at your organization, please visit the [Montana Conservation Corps](#) website to learn more.

Photos courtesy Liz Shull, BSWC

Riverscape Restoration Network—request for participation

With the support of American Rivers, Jackie Corday, formerly of Missoula and now in Colorado, is building a new network of folks who work on supporting process-based stream restoration policy, research, and/or projects to share news/stories/lessons learned for info - informal calls maybe 3-4/year to keep up on the latest news and help each other out. The ultimate goal is keeping this type of work going and supporting it increasing across the Rocky Mountain states. Her initial focus is states that have prior appropriation water rights - CO, MT, UT, WY, NM, and ID for now, but potentially expanding in the future. If you're interested in being a part of the Riverscape Restoration Network, please email Jackie at jackiecorday@gmail.com and she will add you to the network list.

EVENTS

PUTTING BEAVERS TO WORK FOR WATERSHED RESILIENCY AND RESTORATION

11:00 AM - noon MDT, April 20, 2020

Free live webinar hosted by Alberta Environment and Parks Watershed Resiliency Restoration Program

Registration link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7r_JHGd4RRCyJP8wIdpBuQ

Beaver impact our watersheds in a noticeable and beneficial way. Why not harness their natural infrastructure power, which they so willing provide, and allow them to do some of the heavy lifting: water storage, flood/drought risk reduction, enhance human quality of life, and more. The target audience is municipal planners, engineers and other related practitioners and professionals. For more information, contact Holly Kinas at holly@rockies.ca.

RESOURCES

THE HISTORY OF BEAVER AND THE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES THEY PROVIDE

Recorded webinar and presentations from March 11, 2020

Presented by the Association of State Wetlands Managers and the U.S. BLM

Presenters: Kent Sorenson (UT Division of Wildlife) and Amy Chadwick (Great West Engineering)

ASWM link to recordings and presentation: https://www.aswm.org/aswm/aswm-webinarscalls/3355-2020-past-beaver-restoration-webinar-series#beaver031120

STREAM EVOLUTION TRIANGLE

Lead article in *Stream Notes*, the technical newsletter of the National Stream & Aquatic Ecology Center (Feb. 2020)

Thanks to Alden Shallcross for sharing this new technical reference on managing streams for large wood and beaver dams.

Link to article: https://www.fs.fed.us/biology/nsaec/assets/streamnotes2020-02-508.pdf

BEAVER-GENERATED DISTURBANCE EXTENDS BEYOND ACTIVE DAM SITES TO ENHANCE STREAM MORPHODYNAMICS AND RIPARIAN PLANT RECRUITMENT

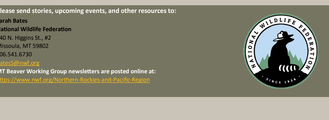
Article by Rebekah Levine and Grant A. Meyer in Scientific Reports (2019)

Link to article: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44381-2

RANGER RICK BEAVER LEARNING ACTIVITIES

For kids of all ages, available from the National Wildlife Federation

Link: https://rangerrick.org/?s=beaver&fbclid=IwAR0UUHIGsJPF6S51JNYxwUL6xaYB2LFbkqiP2CyyMVaA2sz8WVJqVOTBqaWFk



Beaver activity at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, Bitterroot Valley, MT (photo by Sarah Bates)

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