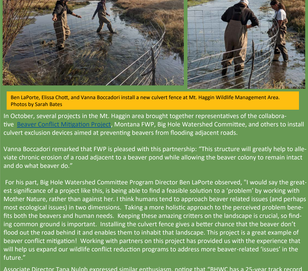
Montana Beaver Working Group

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

Stories and News

Big Hole Watershed Committee Complements Restoration with Beaver Conflict Mitigation



Ben LaPorte, Elissa Chott, and Vanna Boccadori install a new culvert fence at Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Area. Photos by Sarah Bates

In October, several projects in the Mt. Haggin area brought together representatives of the collaborative [Big Hole Watershed Committee](#) (BHWC), Montana FWP, Beaverkeepers, Trout Unlimited, and others to install culvert exclusion devices aimed at preventing beavers from flooding adjacent roads.

Vanna Boccadori remarked that FWP is pleased with this partnership: "This structure will greatly help to alleviate chronic erosion of a road adjacent to a beaver pond while allowing the beaver colony to remain intact and do what beaver do."

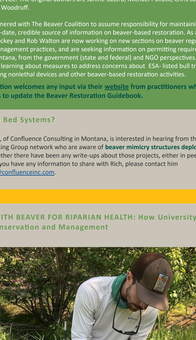
For his part, Big Hole Watershed Committee Program Director Ben LaPorte observed, "I would say the greatest significance of a project like this, is being able to find a feasible solution to a 'problem' by working with Mother Nature, rather than against her. I think humans tend to approach beaver related issues (and perhaps most ecological issues) in two dimensions. Taking a more holistic approach to the perceived problem benefits both the beavers and human needs. Keeping these amazing critters on the landscape is crucial, so finding common ground is important. Installing the culvert fence gives a better chance that the beaver don't flood out the road behind it and enables them to inhabit that landscape. This project is a great example of beaver conflict mitigation! Working with partners on this project has provided us with the experience that will help us expand our wildlife conflict reduction programs to address more beaver-related 'issues' in the future."

Associate Director Tana Nulph expressed similar enthusiasm, noting that "BHWC has a 25-year track record of investing in both wildlife conflict reduction and ecological restoration. Incorporating human-beaver conflict reduction into our programs is the perfect intersect between these two focus areas." BHWC has also been investing in beaver mimicry, taking lessons learned from beavers to re-inundate floodplains, increase natural water storage capacity, and improve fish & wildlife habitat in Big Hole River tributary streams. By learning from beavers, helping them share the landscape with humans, and using their techniques, BHWC is enhancing watershed health and providing a valuable service to landowners.

Having problems with beavers in the Big Hole watershed? Contact BHWC at info@bhwc.org or 406-267-3421.

Thanks also to the Big Hole Watershed Committee for partnering with the National Wildlife Federation to highlight opportunities to improve watersheds with beaver restoration in this [story](#).

Beaver Coalition Seeks Input to Update Beaver Restoration Guidebook



As many within the Montana Beaver Working Group know, the [Beaver Restoration Guidebook](#) is a stellar resource—a free, open-source guide to the best available science, restoration techniques, and management practices for partnering with beavers originally published in June 2015 with funding from the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative and housed since its publishing with the Oregon office of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The original authors are Janine Castro, Michael Pollock, Chris Jordan, Gregory Lewallen and Kent Woodruff.

This team has partnered with The Beaver Coalition to assume responsibility for maintaining this guidebook as a reliable, up-to-date, credible source of information on beaver-based restoration. As a first step in this process, Jakob Shockey and Rob Walton are now working on new sections on beaver regulatory mechanisms and best management practices, and are seeking information on permitting requirements for nonlethal devices in Montana, from the government (state and federal) and NGO perspectives. They are especially interested in learning about resources to address concerns about ESA- listed bull trout or other species when permitting nonlethal devices and other beaver-based restoration activities.

The Beaver Coalition welcomes any input via their website from practitioners who have used and have suggestions to update the Beaver Restoration Guidebook.

BDAs in Sand Bed Systems?

Rich McEldowney, of Confluence Consulting in Montana, is interested in hearing from those in the Montana Beaver Working Group network who are aware of **beaver mimicry structures deployed in sand bed systems,** and whether there have been any write-ups about those projects, either in peer-reviewed or gray literature. If you have any information to share with Rich, please contact him at rmceldowney@confluenceinc.com.

EVENTS

WORKING WITH BEAVER FOR RIPARIAN HEALTH: How University Research Supports Conservation and Management

Photo courtesy Andrew Lahr.

On November 18, 2020, a trio of Montana University System researchers will share presentations about their work related to beavers and stream health in Montana, as part of the Institute on Ecosystem's Rough Cut Science Seminar Series.

Along with introductory remarks by Sarah Bates of the National Wildlife Federation and Sierra Harris of The Nature Conservancy, speakers will include:

Andy Robst, Hydrogeologist with the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, and a PhD candidate in the Land Resources and Environmental Science Department at Montana State University-Bozeman

Andrew Lahr, PhD candidate in the University of Montana's Wildlife Biology degree program, working with Dr. Lisa Eby on research focused on the potential for beaver-based restoration to create climate resilience in Rocky Mountain headwaters

Jamie McEvoy, PhD, associate professor in the Earth Sciences program at Montana State University, has worked with graduate students in the Musselshell River and Upper Missouri Headwaters Basins of Montana to understand the social and institutional barriers and opportunities for natural water storage projects (e.g., water rights, permitting, conservation and restoration incentives, trust in information and agencies, and public perception).

Join the webinar here at noon (MST) on Wednesday, November 18.

NEW MEXICO BEAVER SUMMIT

Webinar presented in four sessions, **October 27-November 4.**

Information on program schedule and how to register available here.

RESOURCES

VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP: NON-LETHAL BEAVER CONFLICT MITIGATION

If you missed this webinar presented by the Clark Fork Coalition, National Wildlife Federation and Defenders of Wildlife on October 8, you can view the webinar here.

Thanks to speakers Mike Callahan, Sarah Hall, Elissa Chott, and Torrey Ritter, and over 130 participants who submitted excellent questions during the live session.

The webinar recording is also posted on the collaborative project webpage, where you can learn more about our work to build tolerance for beaver on our landscape, reduce beaver conflicts, and increase awareness through outreach and education.

ASWM-BLM BEAVER AND RESTORATION WEBINAR SERIES

The Association of State Wetland Managers and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management cooperated to provide a webinar series on beaver restoration, including the following programs:

- Webinar #1: The History of Beaver and the Ecosystem Services They Provide (March 11), with presentations by Kent Sorenson and Amy Chadwick
- Webinar #2: Identifying Where to Place Beavers and When to Use Beaver Mimicry for Low Tech Restoration (Sep. 24), featuring Joe Wheaton
- Webinar #3: Case Studies of Long-term Changes from Beaver Restoration Activities (Oct. 13), with presentations by Nick Bouwes and Ellen Wohl

All of these presentations are available now at: https://www.aswm.org/aswm/aswm-webinarscalls/2325-2020-past-beaver-restoration-webinar-series#beaver1

Note that the most recent presentation recording is not yet posted, but the presenters' slides are available.

PAINTING TREES TO REPEL BEAVERS

During summer/fall of 2020, the Calgary-based Putting Beavers to Work Collaborative (Mistakis Institute and Alberta Cows and Fish) piloted the technique of applying a textural repellent to discourage beavers from chewing and felling trees. The pilot took place in Fish Creek Provincial Park, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. They used a latex paint and sand mixture applied from the base of the tree to 4' in height up the trunk, and did not paint saplings under 6' in height. **Keep an eye on this website for methodology and results (coming in winter 2020/21), and enjoy this video illustrating the work.**

SMOKEY THE BEAVER GAINS TRACTION

Ben Goldfarb published How Beavers Became America's Best Firefighter in the online National Geographic site on Sep. 22, 2020, highlighting the findings of Emily Fairfax's research on natural fire breaks provided by beaver habitat, plus maps and photos from Joe Wheaton's research. "Emily's study couldn't be more timely," says Wheaton, who wasn't involved in the research. "This points toward the importance of nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure, and gives us the science to back it up."

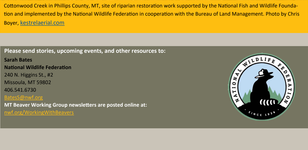
In addition, **Joshua Rapp Learn covered Dr. Fairfax's research in Beavers Create Fire-resistant Forest Patches in The Wildlife Society's online newsletter on October 9, 2020.**

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF BEAVER COEXISTENCE TOOLS

Another great resource from the Putting Beavers to Work Collaborative, this **new fact sheet brings together research from Alberta and across North America,** which shows that beaver coexistence tools such as pond levellers and culvert protectors are a cost-effective way to manage chronically flooded beaver conflict sites. View the two-sided fact sheet and please share with others that will find this information useful in building a business case for using coexistence tools in place of traditional management approaches (lethal beaver removal, dam removal, etc.).

BEAVER BELIEVERS VIDEO NOW AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE

Sarah Koenigsberg's popular film is finally about to be available for purchase on DVD and Blu-Ray. Pre-orders are 20 percent off through November 1, here, with shipping expected by December 1.



Cottonwood Creek in Phillips County, MT, site of riparian restoration work supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and implemented by the National Wildlife Federation in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. Photo by Chris Boyer, kestrelaerial.com

Please send stories, upcoming events, and other resources to:
Sarah Bates
National Wildlife Federation
240 N. Higgins St., #2
Missoula, MT 59802
406.541.8730
batess@nwf.org

MT Beaver Working Group newsletters are posted online at:
nwf.org/WorkingWithBeavers