

Stowe Selectboard Guidelines

Beaver Management

Pre-amble: All life is important as is the ecological importance of wetlands. The Town of Stowe has been a leader in land conservation and planning with the intent of living in harmony with nature. To that end, we recognize the value of beaver as a keystone species and the wetlands they create as important for maintaining clean water, attenuating flood potential, and providing important wildlife habitat. However, in the wrong location, beaver dams can cause the flooding of human infrastructure and sudden releases of water if they breach, potentially causing damage to downstream properties, public infrastructure and public safety.

Purpose: To establish guidelines on dealing with beavers and dams that pose a risk to public infrastructure.

Guidelines: The Town of Stowe will use the Agency of Natural Resources Best Management Practices (BMP's) as a guideline and only act in accordance with the law. Where possible the town will attempt non-lethal approaches to conflict management first. However, in cases where that is not feasible or has failed, the town may implement a population management strategy which could include trapping (see below).

Protection of trees:

Conservation Commission - The Conservation Commission is encouraged to continue its long-standing practice to protect trees on Town-owned conserved properties to help avoid damage to trees along water ways where beavers have a history of establishing dams (e.g. wrapping, installation of ridged wire fencing, painting).

Flooding:

Non-lethal Alternatives - In areas where there are reoccurring problems, the Conservation Commission on town-owned conserved land and employees on all other municipal land / infrastructure are encouraged to investigate the possibility of installing and maintaining water control structures or exclusion devices where feasible by contacting the Agency of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Department.

Culvert Maintenance:

The Highway Department shall routinely monitor culverts to ensure they are not obstructed. They must maintain culverts and ditches in order to maintain flow and prevent property damage, which includes clearing beaver dams and other debris as necessary. At sites with recurring beaver activity, Highway Department staff will contact the Fish and Wildlife Department and investigate the possibility of a culvert fence.

Large Beaver Dams:

To maximize the protection of spawning trout and salmon and the development of their eggs and fry, and if no imminent hazard exists, dam removal shall take place only between June 1st and October 1st. If the dam is less than 2 years old, employees should

contact ANR to evaluate the site and follow ANR's Best Management Practices for Resolving Human-Beaver Conflicts (BMP's) to remove the obstruction. If dealing with a beaver dam older than 2 years old, contact ANR to evaluate the site. However, if an imminent hazard exist, employees first priority must be to protect infrastructure and safety and employees are authorized to remove any obstruction and provide notice to both the Agency of Natural Resources after doing so in an emergency circumstance. If a decision is made to remove a large beaver dam that is over two-years old as the means of eliminating the hazard, the first step is to lower the water level of the beaver impoundment by using a pump or siphon. The water level must be reduced gradually so that the impoundment is lowered not more than one foot per day. This will help minimize erosion, stream degradation, the potential for downstream flooding, and personal liability for damages.

Lethal Options: The historic predators of beaver are no longer here in numbers large enough to control beaver numbers on a landscape scale. Coupled with the fact the Vermont's infrastructure was essentially built at the time when beaver had been lost due to unregulated harvest and drastic habitat changes, the beaver population currently reproduces and grows without many of the natural controls that existed prior to European settlement. The most significant remaining natural predator of beaver today is the trapper. Regulated trapping plays a role in helping to manage the current beaver population on a local level and maintain public support for the role beaver play in the ecosystem.

Trapping – Shall be considered after non-lethal means have proven to be unsuccessful. When feasible, it should be done during the regular trapping season by a licensed trapper which runs from the fourth Saturday in October through the end of March the following year. Trapping on municipal property should be approved by the Selectboard at a publicly warned meeting, except in an emergency where life and property are at risk the Town Manager or his designee is authorized to contract to trap a beaver(s) with approval Fish & Wildlife. If trapping occurs, notice of the placement of any traps will be placed in the area to notify persons for safety purposes. If trapping occurs outside of the regular trapping season, the local game warden shall be notified. The live trap and transfer of beaver is not allowed or recommended as beaver are territorial and most of the quality habitat is currently occupied by resident beaver. Moving beaver could potentially result in a longer, slower death from starvation.