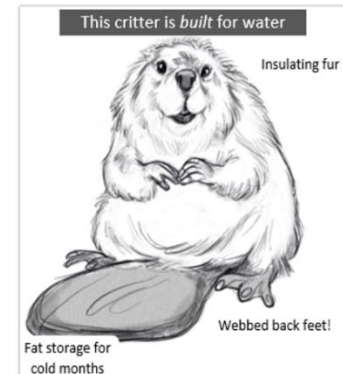


What Attracts Beavers to Visit and Stay?

Long term beaver recolonization and success will depend on basic biology, beaver population dynamics, and habitat considerations.

Here are some key considerations in attracting beavers to come *and* stay.

- Beavers are basically “aquatic rodents”. Body conformation, including webbed back feet makes beavers awkward and slow on land, but fast and well-equipped for movement under water. Every choice they make about where to den, dam and settle – results from this conformation.
- Food access and water depths drive all behavior/activities. Beavers do best when food supplies are available within 50-75 feet of their water created “safety zone”. Harvesting food on land risks death as beavers are a favorite food of cougars, coyotes, bears and other predators. Beavers build ponds generally a minimum of 2.5 feet deep or more – deep enough to escape predators.
- Beavers are hard-wired for water retention. The sound and ‘feel’ of flowing water triggers a response. As smart engineers, beavers want to minimize energy in construction activities, so will look for good pinch points as a base for construction – such as a crook in the creek, boulders, rock slides or downed trees – or even PODs or culverts. The good news, is that beavers will only dam to a limit. They won’t spend energy building larger dam height/width, unless they see an opportunity to further access food sources, or deepen their pond/s for predator escape.
- Food Abundance. As a general guide, one adult beaver requires 1000 lbs of food/annually. To establish a healthy beaver family unit as a long term ‘source’ population to re-colonize a system generally requires 3 to 8 acres of food (this varies with plant density/size) within ½ mile territory of stream reach (that’s close to their primary den site). The food source should also be close to water (within this 50-75 foot from streamside access, described above). Riparian species provide the optimal food – grasses, willow varieties, cottonwood, aspen and sometimes alder. The further food is away from water safety, the more likely beavers will be predated.
- Sediment needs. Beavers are excellent diggers and need mud to build effective dams. ‘Dispersing’ beavers will therefore typically ‘settle’ within stream reaches that have plenty of soft sediment instream, or adjacent soil banks that may erode and provide sediment supply over time through erosion.
- Recolonizing a system from a natal beaver family. Our approach to promoting beaver recolonization emphasizes the health and livelihood of a ‘source’ beaver family unit. As



the family grows, offspring will naturally migrate upstream and downstream throughout a stream system wherever there's not already beaver present, and a sufficient food source (proximate to water/safety), hydrology, sediment and undisturbance.

- Minimize disturbance. Too much disruption to beaver den and dams - in form of punctured/collapsed dens will push beavers away from reaches for unknowns lengths of time. Beavers generally dam within 0.5 miles upstream/downstream of where they den. For long term beaver concentrations over time, you'll want to have good stream protection throughout the year – while also allowing for cow access by water gaps in selected spots.
- Why relocation doesn't work. Although a popular trend, relocation stressors often kill prematurely and unnecessarily through capture, handling, transport and release. For those who survive – they will often move away if the conditions above aren't present. Further, beavers are highly territorial, and any existing beaver populations within the destination system would be stressed by 'foreign visitors' – putting unnatural stress on population dynamics in the system.

About Beaver Works Oregon

CONTACT US FOR A FREE SITE ASSESSMENT

Our Goal: To support beaver and the required components and processes that 1) sustain them and 2) allow them to function as keystone species.

In short, we work to remove human obstacles to beaver success by providing:

- 1) *Landholder support – Providing tools for coexistence when beaver activity conflicts with infrastructure.*
- 2) *Habitat enhancement – Working with watershed organizations to prioritize restoration efforts and the conditions necessary for beavers to be successful on the landscape. We also work with private landholders directly providing beaver habitat assessments and volunteer crews to plant and protect trees for establishment on riparian waterways.*
- 3) *Education and Outreach – Building awareness of beavers as a keystone species, by tabling at community events and spreading the beaver word in both working land communities and in town.*

