

It's About Dam Time to Modernize Beaver Management Through Watershed-Wide Policy Change

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North American Beavers helped shape our watersheds, expanded the diversity of species, and supported tremendous biological communities prior to near extirpation by the mid-19th Century. Though beavers are a tenacious, critical keystone species making their way back from the brink of extinction, beavers are managed by state regulatory agencies as furbearers with unlimited harvest opportunity, and more impactful, as a nuisance/conflict wildlife species with unregulated lethal removal. Yet, we do not have a grasp on beaver population sizes in any state nor comprehend what a functional or sustainable population size is in modern, highly modified watersheds in tremendously varied habitat across North America.

Additionally, climate adaptation priorities and public tax dollars are increasingly supporting partnering with beavers for broad, long-term, process-based ecological benefits, especially toward habitat restoration and recovering endangered salmonids and other freshwater dependent species. Despite beavers being a native, natural, self-maintaining, pragmatic, and publicly subsidized solution to many human caused climate challenges, not one state currently provides legal protection of any beavers. Even states piloting sanctioned beaver relocation programs do not offer enforceable protections of relocated beavers.

The last two decades have seen a broader recognition of beavers as a critical keystone species, a partner in restoring complex ecological systems, and one of the best strategies for rebuilding resilience to climate change but this isn't enough. This acknowledgement and prioritization of beaver-based restoration and climate resilience needs to be written into our state wildlife management policies as law and regulatory code.

Come explore how you can make critical headway towards modernizing beaver management in your state: where to start, partners to cultivate, leaders to engage, existing federal and state requirements to support your arguments. Beavers finally got a publicist, now they need legislation. Help secure a future for beaver-based climate resilience across the US!

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