

Bringing Back Beaver in California: Lessons Learned from Changing Perceptions, Practices and Policies

Brock T. Dolman

Occidental Arts & Ecology Center, Occidental, CA USA

A vital part of aquatic ecosystems across the continent, the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) came close to extinction in California by the early 1900s. Thanks to the good work of many diverse advocates, this ecosystem engineer is making a comeback. Urban and rural communities are learning to partner with beaver to revive watershed health, recover endangered species and increase resiliency to drought, floods and wildfire. In this presentation wildlife biologist and beaver restoration specialist Brock Dolman, from the Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), will share entertaining stories about how this “keystone” species went from most reviled rodent to celebrated resiliency partner in California.

Over the past quarter century, OAEC has actively campaigned to change the way California understands beaver as both a native and beneficial species. Brock will share some of OAEC’s Bring Back the Beaver Campaign strategies and tactics that have worked over all these years to achieve this historic and positive statewide pivot in California’s perceptions, practices, and policies towards beaver restoration. This presentation will provide a broader description of OAEC’s overarching strategic approach with examples of actionable items others can adopt to enhance their own process-based beaver restoration efforts. He will illustrate that change is possible. Audience members will leave with a better understanding of the lessons learned and strategic elements of OAEC’s successful Bring Back the Beaver Campaign. This story of how we won will enhance the capacity of others to adapt and integrate relevant strategies into their own efforts to change beaver restoration policy and practices.

Contact Information: Brock Dolman, Occidental Arts & Ecology Center, 15290 Coleman Valley Rd, Occidental, CA, USA, 95465, Phone: 707-874-1557 ext. 106, Email: Brock@oaec.org