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MIDWEST BEAVER NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2025

A roundup of recent regional, national, and international beaver news curated for you!

Wisconsin Developing a New Beaver Management Plan

The new Wisconsin Beaver Management Plan Committee will be providing input to the Wisconsin DNR during the development of an updated beaver management plan, ultimately resulting in a plan with broad public and scientific support. While purely an advisory committee, its membership will help the DNR better understand the diverse public interests surrounding beavers in Wisconsin. Members represent trapping organizations, fishing and cold-water organizations, wetland and habitat organizations, environmental organizations, beaver conservation/education organizations and agricultural organizations. The committee also has representation by other government agencies, Tribal communities, and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

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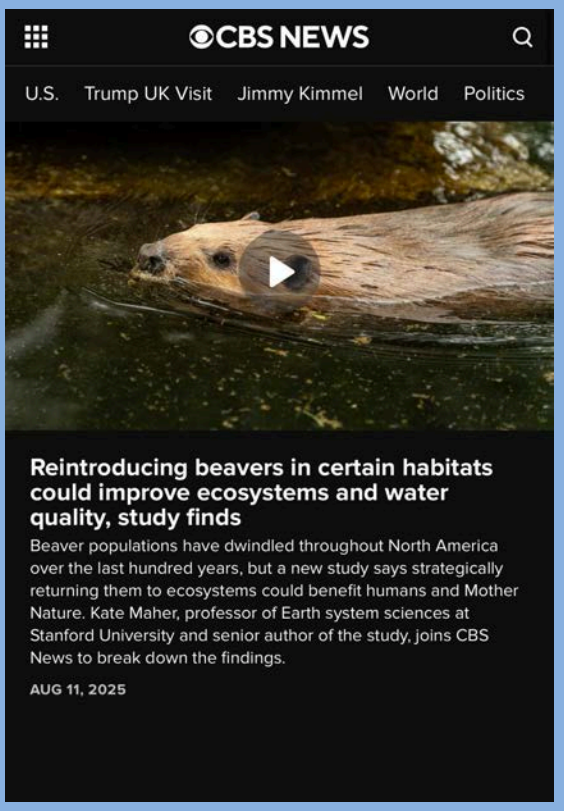
New Study Identifies Key Factors That Determine the Impact of Beavers

New research out of Stanford University and the University of Minnesota, published in the journal Communications Earth & Environment, used high-resolution aerial imagery from the USDA National Agricultural Imagery Program to map more than 80 beaver pond complexes in varying landscapes across the U.S. states of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Oregon. With help from machine learning algorithms, researchers identified key factors that determine the impact of the beavers, which they linked to the topography, vegetation, local climate, soil, and water flow. The team say their research will help in

assessing where to introduce beavers as the population bounces back. The study has received a lot of media coverage, including a story on CBS News.



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National Park Service Promotes Process-Based Restoration

An article published in *Park Science* magazine (Vol. 39, No. 2, August 29, 2025) explores the positive impact of beavers on a fire-degraded area of Great Basin National Park. In 2016, a lightning strike ignited the Strawberry Fire, which burned 2,790 acres. Among the affected areas were riparian zones along Strawberry Creek. The creek is one of several perennial streams that start in the park at high elevation and ultimately supply water for agriculture in Utah and Nevada. These streams are also critical habitat for native plants and wildlife, like the Bonneville cutthroat trout, Utah's state fish. The restoration team used beaver dam analogs (BDAs) and post-assisted log structures (PALS) to mimic naturally occurring beaver dams and wood jams. Both are critical to healthy fish populations and riparian habitat. The BDAs are built with native woody vegetation and sediment, just like their natural counterparts. They help promote stream and floodplain health, especially after a wildfire. Data shows that the positive ecological changes in the creek have not impaired water delivery to downstream users, who rely on flows from Strawberry Creek to support agriculture. In 2024, park staff discovered signs of beaver

occupation, the first sign of the species in Strawberry Creek in 19 years, which the article deemed “an exciting and welcome discovery.”

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Native Plant Nurseries Needed for Beaver Restoration

As more and more ecological restoration professionals and land stewards discover the benefits of beaver coexistence, and as beaver restoration grows in popularity, there will be an increasing demand for the types of vegetation that beavers prefer. One farm in North Central Washington State, Beaver Food Forest Farm, specializing in plants that beavers use for food and construction materials. Of course, preferred native species will vary depending on location within the beavers’ historic range across the entire North American continent.

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Shedding Light on Urban Beavers

A new documentary film, “The Freelance Beaver Detective,” explores beaver coexistence in urban West Seattle’s Longfellow Creek. The film follows Pamela Adams, a spirited freelance beaver detective who has been tracking beavers in Longfellow Creek, Seattle since 2022. Her ongoing research has informed the city on how the beaver ecosystem is thriving. “The beavers are actually water keepers,” Adams says in the film. “They’re doing what they can, what they’ve always done for thousands of years, and they are part of our ecosystem. In this place that we have urbanized, we’ve channelized, we’ve paved over, they’re doing the natural process.”

1 of 2 | NOW: From left, "The Freelance Beaver Detective" Pamela Adams, waterway documentarian Tom Reese and filmmaker Kay D. Ray stand next to Longfellow Creek's northern culvert and trash-catcher "Monstro." (Clay Eals)

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South Dakota Closes Black Hills to Beaver Trapping

After months of discussion and study, South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks has officially closed the Black Hills to beaver trapping, and has established a threshold to guide future decisions about beaver harvest. Beavers serve a vital role in the Black Hills ecosystem by reducing stream sediment transportation, raising the water table, and reducing downstream nutrient transport, according to the Black Hills Beaver Action Plan. Plan coordinator Alex Solem said the presence of beaver can indicate a healthy ecosystem, significantly benefitting almost all surrounding species. This is an example of a state natural resource management agency weighing the interests of trappers against the interests of functioning ecosystems to determine whether the beaver population (and the subsequent ecosystem function) is healthy enough to support recreational trapping.

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Beaver Restoration in New Mexico

Beavers are being brought back to New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument! An August 2025 article in the magazine of the Sierra Club explores how these relocated ecosystem engineers are working their restorative magic. Once beavers are in an area like the Frijoles

Canyon, they're able to raise the water table and create floodplain connectivity. After the Las Conchas Fire removed vegetation and created water-repelling soils that caused destructive flash floods, the beaver dams helped fundamentally change how water moved through the canyon. Instead of rapid runoff and channel entrenchment, the beaver dams slowed water flow and allowed groundwater to saturate the surrounding soils. As a result, the ecosystem is now better at retaining water both during flash floods and drought periods. It's a huge step in restoring the natural hydrological function of the region that took a hit when beavers were originally trapped en masse in the 1800s.

"We see every species of fauna use these ponds. All are documented on camera—lions, bears, birds (even a kingfisher!), bobcats, coyotes —drinking from the ponds," according to Sarah Milligan, natural resources program manager at Bandelier. "The bears and birds frequently bathe in them as well. The vegetation has flourished, and we now have suitable habitat to reintroduce our endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse."

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Polish Beavers Lauded for Needed Water Storage

A project conducted by researchers from the Polish Academy of Sciences shows that beavers in the Białowieża Forest store nearly 1 million m³ of water in their ingenious ecological infrastructure. Dr. Tom Diserens from the Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Białowieża is leading a three-year project, "How do wolves and humans shape the spatial use and environmental impact of the beaver?" Retention is not the only positive effect of the beavers' presence in the Białowieża Forest. According to Dr. Diserens, just a few decades ago, riverbeds were completely covered by large trees, making them invisible in satellite images. The activity of these small engineers has opened up the landscape and increased light access, benefiting many plant species.

Photo by Tom Deserens

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British Beaver News

- In February 2025, the British government published its landmark policy on the wild release and management of beavers in England and invited “expressions of interest” (EoIs) from parties interested in hosting a beaver family. Program coordinators received 39 EoIs for wild beaver release across England, including some for England’s largest river systems.
- The British government shared new guidance on how to apply for a license to release Eurasian beavers into secure enclosures in England.
- NatureScot issues a call for interest in beaver release to new catchments in Scotland. The aim is to get a better picture of where there is interest in beaver restoration, with a view to bringing interested organizations and individuals together to develop broad strategic plans for beavers at a catchment scale.
- Highlands beaver rewilding efforts praised by local Member of Scottish Parliament.
- Beaver mural planned to mark species' comeback in Kent, England.
- “Balancing the Scales,” a powerful new documentary exploring the complex relationship between beavers, fish migration and wider ecosystem health in the United Kingdom, is set to be released in October.
- British beaver baby boom! Helman Tor Nature Reserve in Cornwall; Wallington Estate in Northumberland; Heal Somerset in Somerset.

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