

Beavers



Beavers are more than intriguing animals with flat tails and lustrous fur. American Indians called the beaver the "sacred center" of the land because this species creates rich habitats for other mammals, fish, turtles, frogs, birds, and ducks. Since beavers prefer to dam small streams in shallow valleys, much of the flooded area becomes wetlands. In larger streams they often do not even build dams. Wetlands are low lying lands or areas, such as marshes or swamps that are covered, often intermittently with shallow water or have soils saturated with moisture. Beavers reliably and economically maintain wetlands that can sponge up floodwaters, prevent erosion, and raise the water table. Over time, beaver wetlands eventually develop into lush beaver meadows.

It is estimated that in primitive times 60,000,000 beavers were in North America. Beaver pelts became important in the fashion markets of Europe and many beavers were killed to satisfy this demand. By 1890 the beaver population was at a low level and severely depleted. Today, beaver populations are abundant all over North America. Beavers, transplanted in strategic areas, can greatly improve wildlife and watershed habitat.

Did you Know Beavers.....

- ...may weigh from 40 pounds up to 100 pounds.
- ...adult beavers are 20 to 30 inches in length and have a tail 10-12 inches long.
- ...favorite foods are water lily tubers, clover, apples, leaves, and bark.
- ...mate for life, breed only once a year and average four kits per liter.
- ...can remain underwater for 15 minutes without surfacing.
- ...have transparent eyelids that function much like goggles.

What can Beavers do for you?

- ...store spring runoff in ponds for late season release into streams.
- ...provide season-long flood irrigated pastures that are maintenance free.
- ...expand highly productive wetland pastures and increase forage production.
- ...slow high velocity flows and reduce bank erosion.
- ...trap sediments behind their dams and speed up the recovery rate of down cut stream channels.
- ...trap sediments to provide cleaner water downstream for fish.
- ...improve habitat for fish and many wildlife species.
- ...raise groundwater levels.
- ...reduce stream floods and droughts.
- ...help fill in highly eroded small streams.
- ...can turn an intermittent stream into streams that flow year round.
- ...beaver dams generally do not block fish migration, but the beaver ponds actually serve as critical areas for development for young fish.
- ...cool water downstream of dams.
- ...create meadows of rich soil and vegetation.

Overall, the benefits to stream habitat and overall improvements to hydrology, especially in drier areas, far outweigh the occasional nuisance problems they cause.



For more information contact the Klamath Watershed Partnership at info@klamathpartnership.org or visit our website www.klamathpartnership.org