

BEAVER CONTROL PROTOCOL TEMPLATE
June 2024

TOWN OF <NAME>
BEAVER CONTROL PROTOCOL

Purpose

To establish protocols for <TOWN NAME> Town staff on control of beaver dam-building activity on Town property or in Town rights-of-way. Beaver dams can sometimes threaten Town infrastructure and public safety by flooding, unexpected releases of water upon breach, damage to trees along affected waterways, and degradation of downstream water quality; but they can also, in many cases, provide essential safeguards for maintaining Town infrastructure, while providing essential habitat for multiple species. Please see Appendix A for the areas in <TOWN NAME> where beavers are or have historically been active.

General Guidance

The Town Selectboard will determine, in consultation with relevant wildlife and road experts, if beaver-related activities (including dams, ditches and channels) pose a threat to Town infrastructure and/or public safety. This determination should be made on a regular and proactive basis, rather than waiting for an emergency situation to arise.

Upon determination that a serious threat to Town infrastructure, and/or to public safety exists, the Town Selectboard will direct appropriate Town staff to initiate beaver controls following the following principles:

- Any proposed actions must be in full accordance with applicable Vermont State law, including those governing wildlife and wetlands, and those governing impoundments of water created by beavers;
- Any proposed actions should follow Vermont's Best Management Practices for beaver management;
- Any proposed actions should consider non-lethal means as a first priority, exercising a lethal option only after non-lethal means are found to fail to control threatening beaver activity, or when and as an emergency situation to road infrastructure and/or human safety so merits; and
- Any proposed actions should seek the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife advice and assistance.

Non-lethal means of beaver control

The <TOWN NAME> Selectboard should maintain contact with providers of technical non-lethal beaver management resources, such as the Protect Our Wildlife VT, Beaver Deceivers LLC, Vermont Wildlife Coalition and the Beaver Institute, in addition to relevant Vermont State agencies, for information and assistance in employing nonlethal means as the first and priority practice for beaver management, and as basis for training of appropriate Town staff.

There are several non-lethal means of beaver control to consider, including the following:

- Installation of wire or electric fencing;
- Installation of water control structures, or pond levelers, such as a 'beaver deceiver',

- Installation of a culvert fence
- Installation of an exclusion device, such as a 'beaver baffle.'

Dam removal

In exceptional and rare cases when the above methods fail, and following all Vermont state guidelines and Best Management Practices for Resolving Human-Beaver Conflicts, removal or clearance of dams and/or alteration of beaver channels may be necessary. For any site, relevant Town staff shall follow Agency of Natural Resources Best Management Practices in removing the obstruction, and only upon approval by the Selectboard. For beaver dams that are more than two years old, the Selectboard shall seek Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) evaluation of the site before conducting removal. In the case of an imminent hazard to life and property, the Selectboard, ANR, and the Department of Fish & Wildlife, is authorized to remove the obstruction at the time, following ANR Best Management Practices to the degree possible under the circumstances of the threat.

Lethal means of beaver control

If non-lethal means have been exhausted, and there are recurring instances of threatening obstruction at a specific site, or in situations of emergency response to a threatening obstruction, the Selectboard may authorize relevant Town staff to employ population control, in accordance with the following principles:

- Killing of beaver shall be by the most humane means available.
- Selection of the specialist hired to kill the beaver/s shall be approved by the <TOWN NAME> Selectboard.
- All landowner rights shall be maintained; any landowner maintains the right to refuse killing of beavers on his or her property.
- If trapping is the method used, it shall be conducted by a licensed trapper, in strict accordance with all applicable Department of Fish and Wildlife requirements, and the local Game Warden shall be notified if trapping occurs out of season. All efforts should be made to conduct trapping within the applicable trapping season.
- There shall be full public notice to ensure public safety, particularly for residents near the beaver activities.
- Live transport of trapped beaver by either Town staff or contractor is not authorized.

Avoiding human-beaver conflicts

Every effort should be made to avoid human-beaver conflicts, and to avoid lethal methods of resolving such conflicts when they occur. Relevant Town staff shall conduct routine monitoring of actual and potential beaver activities and dam sites at each of the known areas in <TOWN NAME>, in order to ensure that situations do not evolve that imminently threaten public safety and property, or Town infrastructure, and to promote a more proactive, non-lethal and preventative approach to managing conflicts.

Appendix A: Areas in the Town of <TOWN NAME> where beavers are currently active or have been active in the past

<List of areas/roads with photos>