

A photograph of a beaver swimming in a stream. The beaver is the central focus, with its head and front paws visible above the water. The background is filled with lush green foliage, creating a natural and serene setting. The text is overlaid on the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

BEAVER MANAGEMENT POLICY

**Department of Environment Energy and Forestry
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
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PURPOSE

Beaver is a keystone species which can significantly change habitat and impact the environment. This policy recognizes both the positive and negative impacts of beaver. Its primary objective is to take an integrated management approach to beavers thus maintaining diverse, healthy, productive fish and wildlife populations and minimizing human conflicts.

BEAVER BIOLOGY

Beavers construct dams for protection, to gain access to food (poplar, willow, etc.) and to provide a means of storing their winter food. They normally breed at three or four years of age and produce an average litter of four kits. Their later maturation, low productive rate and ease of location make them vulnerable to over exploitation. This has happened historically over much of the original range. On the other hand, beavers are relatively long-lived and once a population is established, it can spread quickly over large areas.

Prince Edward Island has gentle topography, small watersheds and has the highest density of people and more roads per capita than any other province in Canada. This presents unique challenges in managing healthy beaver populations and minimizing conflicts.

IMPORTANCE OF BEAVERS and BEAVER DAMS

- Provide significant wetland habitat for a variety of birds, aquatic mammals, fish, amphibians and countless invertebrates and plants.
- Increase in both economic value and recreational value to hunters, trappers, anglers and non consumptive users from the impounded waters and the resulting increase in numbers and diversity of wildlife.
- Create nursery areas for trout.
- Provide natural water purification, which includes but is not limited to filtering out silt and uptake of nitrogen from water column.
- Official emblem of Canada and symbol of the sovereignty of Canada (1975).

ISSUES CREATED BY BEAVERS and BEAVER DAMS

- Block culverts which may result in damage to highways and other infrastructure.
- Flooding and cutting trees can cause property damage.
- Dams can block fish passage and alter fish habitat in the area flooded (sedimentation).
- Some impounded water can warm to temperatures detrimental to fish.
- Limited social tolerance for dams and associated flooding.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Beavers and beaver dams are protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act*. Beaver removal requires a trapper's license during the open season with strict regulations on the types of traps or snares used and the manner in which they are set. Nuisance animal permits can be issued during the closed season and additional restrictions may be applied. Trapper's licences and nuisance permits are issued by the Forests,

Fish and Wildlife Division of the Department of Environment Energy and Forestry. In all cases landowner permission is required to trap beaver under the *Trespass to Property Act*.

All watercourses and wetlands, which include beaver dams, are protected under *the Environmental Protection Act*. A license or a watercourse/wetland activity permit, issued by the Water Management Division of the Department of Environment Energy and Forestry is required in order to remove active and abandoned beaver dams. The Prince Edward Island Watercourse or Wetland Alteration Guidelines outline the approved procedure for the legal removal of beaver dams. Permits should only be issued after approval has been given by the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division.

The *Fisheries Act*, which is administered by the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and protects fish and fish habitat. A provincial watercourse /wetland activity permit is issued in cooperation with DFO. If the activity was deemed to be harmful to fish or fish habitat a separate permit issued by DFO would be required.

Failure to comply with any of these Acts or regulations can lead to large fines and possible time in jail.

MANAGEMENT GOALS

The Department of Environment Energy and Forestry will provide a leadership role in managing beavers. The success of this policy depends on long term planning and monitoring and the cooperation of all stakeholders to meet the management goals in order to:

1. Maintain wildlife diversity and habitat through beaver management
2. The continuation of the beaver as an integral part of the fur industry in PEI
3. Increase the number of community based watershed groups incorporating beaver management into their long term watershed management plans
4. Reduce infrastructure damage caused by beavers
5. Address water quality issues related to beaver dams
6. Maintain fish passage for anadromous fish in critical habitat/priority sites

OPERATIONAL POLICY

The Department recognizes that there are short term fixes for localized conflicts but the success of this policy is dependent on long term management plans with long term solutions. The Department also recognizes the importance of all stakeholders providing information resulting in detailed management plans. Stakeholders must be active participants in the planning and implementation and monitoring process. In order to achieve the management goals the Department of Environment Energy and Forestry will:

- Improve communication between the Department of Environment Energy and Forestry and all stakeholders to effectively and efficiently deal with issues related to beaver management.
- Review each plan involving input from biologists with the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division and may involve input from the PEI Trappers Association, Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- Provide expertise through the Forests Fish and Wildlife Division to all interested parties in the development of acceptable beaver management plans.

- Ensure that beaver removal is done in a humane and timely fashion
- Ensure that beaver dam removal is done in at a time and manner in which it will cause the least environmental damage and minimal negative impact on associated wildlife and in accordance with the “The Prince Edward Island Watercourse” or Wetland Alteration Guidelines.
- Proactively educate stakeholders and the general public on the important role that beavers play in the environment.
- Assess each watershed regarding its suitability for beaver and the impact of beaver impoundments on overall watershed objectives.
- Increase the number of people trapping beavers in areas of concern by qualifying new trappers through trapper education courses.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry, is responsible for managing Beavers on Prince Edward Island. In order to be successful this policy recognizes:

1. The Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division professional expertise in managing beaver;
2. The need for cooperation between the diverse group of stakeholders who are impacted by beaver activities in order to develop management plans that address the issues;
3. The importance of beaver to Prince Edward Islands as a keystone species which can significantly change habitat and impact the environment.