

# Solutions to Beaver/Human Conflicts



## Is it a Real Problem?

Ignorance about beavers and their role in nature can cause alarm about having these large animals in the neighborhood. Fear of the unknown also often causes exaggeration, such as saying dozens of beavers are present when there are only a few. When a beaver fells a tree, a landowner may panic, unaware that such change is part of nature's cycle. Tree cutting stimulates more growth in many trees, such as willows, aspen and cottonwoods. For example, for each willow stem that is cut, three or four will appear in the spring. (See "Tree Cutting" below for ways to protect trees).

After almost being extirpated from North America by trapping by the early 1900s, beavers are currently recolonizing some former territory. Only a small percent of the beavers that populated the continent prior to European settlement exist today. Because of the species' benefits in creating vital wetlands, and because removal is rarely a lasting solution, working with beavers gives the best results. Because of their great benefits, beavers are also being restored to Europe.

## Preventing Road Flooding

Beavers probably see culverts beneath roads as a hole in an otherwise fine dam. So they plug the hole and flooded roads result. Semi-circular fences of sturdy, large diameter wire mesh around road culverts (see the drawing above) can prevent road flooding by protecting culverts from being plugged. These are called pre-dams, or diversion dams (because they divert the beaver's attention from the culvert). When road beds are high enough and the water level upstream does not matter, this may be sufficient.



## Pipe & Cage Systems

More often, one or more drain pipes are added through the fencing to control the water level . The beavers will then dam against the fence while water continues to flow freely. These systems may require seasonal maintenance that normally takes much less time than previously spent by road crews unclogging culverts. These cost effective systems are currently used in New England and elsewhere in North America, where they save taxpayers' money and also save vital wetlands.

Large diameter corrugated plastic pipes, PVC drain pipes, or rectangular wooden pipes with wire mesh bottoms (New Hampshire pipes) are set in pre-dams or directly in beaver dams to control flooding. Pipe inlets can be protected with triangular or round cages of large diameter mesh fencing. Be sure to check with your state wildlife agency to obtain any required permit and obtain permission from landowners, before installing a device.

["Control of beaver flooding at restoration projects"](#) reviews many types of water level control devices, shows photos and suggests other sources of information. A 12-page booklet "How to Control Beaver Flooding" and the video "Outwitting Maine's Busy Beaver" are both available from our [catalog](#).

## Beaver Deceiver:



A typical Beaver Deceiver is a trapezoidal fence that is narrow at the culvert and widens upstream. The one shown is 15 ft. x 15 ft. x 15 ft., but sizes and shapes vary, according to the site. Skip Lisle of Vermont, who beaver-proofed 130,000 acres of Penobscot Indian lands in Maine, invented this device. It is made with cedar posts and heavy gauge wire fencing with 6 inch squares (this often comes in 5 ft. x 10 ft. sheets or rolls). These devices can be works of art that take Skip anywhere from a few hours to two days to install.

At busy roads, leave about 10" between one of the roadside posts and the culvert to allow wildlife to pass through. This size passageway helps to avoid traffic accidents, but is too small for beavers to bring in large branches. At sites with muddy stream bottoms and especially active beavers, adding a floor, is recommended to deter burrowing.

Part of the secret to the Deceiver's success is that water flows from the inside of the trapezoid's sides out and the beaver cannot dam the fence on the sides. At a website on nonlethal beaver control by the King County, WA Natural Resources and Parks Dept., you can find step by step directions for the installation of a [Beaver Deceiver](#).

Skip Lisle also installs pipe and cage systems, and he can be contacted at Beavers Deceivers, Inc. (802.843.1017).

Skip Hilliker, a beaver consultant for the Fund for Animals in Connecticut, often uses flow devices to successfully solve beaver/human conflicts and he can be contacted via the Fund's field office at 203.393.1050. [Beaver Solutions](#) in Massachusetts has installed hundreds of effective devices as well.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [Partners for Wildlife](#) program may supply funding and /or materials for a beaver water level control device if an organized entity applies. Ready-made devices to protect culverts, or use in dams, are available from [Beaver Proof Add On](#), and [Beaver Stop](#).

[BeaverPower!](#), which sells beaver-related merchandise, promotes alternative energy and plans to install minihydrogenerators in beaver dams with flow devices to encourage coexistence.

## **Beaver Baffler:**

Where roads are of such low elevation that it is impossible to have a wetland without road flooding, inexpensive beaver bafflers can be the solution. A baffler consists of 5-foot-long concentric cylinders of 4 to 5" welded wire with the inner tube of a size to fit inside the road culvert. Connect each 5-foot-long



section end to end to make the desirable length (10 to 20-feet-long) to fit your situation.

Covering the inside cylinder with 1 by 2" mesh welded wire (garden variety) fencing prevents beaver from stuffing it with debris.

Beavers will pack mud and sticks below the baffler, but will only do this for a few feet. Maintenance with a

potato hook may be needed periodically depending upon seasonal flooding and local beaver activity. (Our 12-page booklet "How to Control Beaver Flooding" gives more details: [catalog](#)) Be sure to fence off the outlet to the culvert to prevent beaver from entering from downstream.

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