Controlling Beaver Damage

Although beavers provide many positive environmental values, they can also cause property damage. Presently, beavers are abundant in Minnesota. To help landowners and others manage beaver damage, the Minnesota DNR offers the following information and advice:

Methods for Exclusion and Damage Prevention

- In some situations, water levels in the beaver pond may be controlled by special devices such as the Clemson beaver pond leveler. For information and technical assistance, contact your local DNR Area Wildlife Office. The following links to the DNR website will provide additional information. http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/beaver/index.html http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/privatlandsprogram/clemson_beaver_pond_leveler.pdf

- Individual trees in your yard can be protected by placing hardware cloth cylinders at least 30” tall around the base of the tree. Energized fencing can protect larger areas.

- Plant native evergreens such as common juniper (Juniperus communis) that beaver do not like or other shrubs that regrow after some beaver damage (i.e. red osier dogwood, pussy or prairie willow).

- Create a buffer strip of native vegetation suited to your location. Visit the DNR website for additional help with your shoreland management. http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakescaping/index.html

Removal Methods

In many cases, beaver damage cannot be effectively managed unless the offending beavers are removed (killed). Removing a dam without removing the resident beavers generally results in the dam being immediately rebuilt. Live relocation of beavers, or any other protected wild animal, is not legal in the State of Minnesota (Minnesota Statute 97A.501, Subdivision 1; 97A.105, Subdivision 7) without a DNR permit.

- Taking beaver during the open trapping season (typically the last Saturday in October through mid-May) is encouraged.
  - Your local Conservation Officer or Area Wildlife Office may have names of experienced trappers who might be willing to trap beavers for you. Fees, if any, will vary with seasons and individuals.

- If beaver damage is occurring on your land, you as the landowner or occupant, may shoot or trap the animals without a permit or license (Minnesota Statute 97B.655). However, you must contact your local DNR Conservation Officer or Area Wildlife staff within 24 hours after killing the beaver. It is sufficient to leave a message on the officer’s answering machine stating your name, address, telephone number, and the total number of beavers shot or trapped. You must comply with local ordinances which may prohibit trapping or the discharge of firearms. It is not legal for friends or relatives to assist you without a special permit from a DNR Conservation Officer.

- It is prohibited to use poison or artificial lights to take beavers.
To remove beavers from property other than your own, you need permission from the landowner(s), and a permit from your local DNR Conservation Officer. This permit (form NA-012650-02) is free and can be obtained by contacting your Conservation Officer.

The trapper, while conducting removal activities, should carry a copy of the permit.

State, county, or local governmental employees, while on duty as a representative of that government, do not need a permit while doing beaver removal on land under their jurisdiction.

Statute 97B.667 Removal of beaver dams and lodges by road authorities. When a drainage watercourse is impaired by a beaver dam and the water damages, or threatens to damage a public road, the road authority, as defined in section 160.02, subdivision 25, may remove the impairment and any associated beaver lodge within 300 feet of the road.

To remove a dam by explosives, contact the local Sheriff’s office for the names of licensed explosives experts.

Affecting Public Waters

In some cases, lakeshore has been developed in conformance with water levels resulting from a beaver dam controlling the outlet for many years. Before removing a beaver dam in that situation, it is suggested that you contact the DNR Area Hydrologist.