

MIDWEST BEAVER NEWS

DECEMBER 2024



A roundup of recent regional, national, and international beaver news curated for you!

Michigan Stakeholders: We Want You!

Are you a beaver believer who lives and/or works in Michigan? We'd like to connect you with other Michigan stakeholders to discuss policy, advocacy, and public education. Please fill out the form below and email midwest.beaver.advocacy@illinoisbeaveralliance.org with any additional questions!

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BeaverCON 2024 Through the Eyes of WildEarth Guardians

WildEarth Guardians Executive Director Hop Hopkins had this to say about BeaverCON 2024: "I had such a great time meeting other conservationists interested in employing nature-based solutions utilizing beaver-related ecological and community restoration strategies. There were presentations, workshops, field outings, and social events - something for everyone and every

learning style. One could see this as single issue advocacy, however, it is an intersectional conservation systems thinking approach to addressing an interconnected set of ecological issues. This is an example of what the “Bigger We” looks like in practice – unlikely allies in the form of organizations, disciplines, and tribal communities converging to collectively realize a future of ecological balance and coexistence with beavers.” Presentations will eventually be available on Beaver Institute’s YouTube channel.



BeaverCON 2024 attendees watching a presentation on beavers and wildfire mitigation by Dr. Emily Fairfax.

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DAMS for Beavers Act to Be Reintroduced

The DAMS for Beaver Act would establish a federal grant program to help states, tribes, agencies, local governments, landowners, conservation organizations, and others invest in effective, nonlethal solutions to reduce property damage caused by beavers. Congresswoman Suzan DelBene (D-WA-01) will once again be leading the House version, and Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) will be leading the Senate version. The DAMS for Beavers Act would establish a five year (\$3M/year) federal grant program for projects that use non-lethal coexistence measures to reduce property damage caused by beavers and

maintain or enhance habitat for beavers and other wildlife. This effort is being supported by the Animal Legal Defense Fund and the Animal Welfare Institute. The DAMS for Beavers Act will be reintroduced early next year for the 119th Congress, and organizers will be looking for organizations to endorse at that time.

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Wisconsin Update

A recent article published on Urban Milwaukee's website described the status quo on beavers in Wisconsin, including:

- A study funded in part by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), which found that beaver restoration upstream would yield a hydrological benefit of 1.7 billion gallons of stormwater storage valued at \$3.3 billion. Stormwater is stored because beaver dams and the wetlands they "engineer" slow down and spread out water. Unfortunately, the MMSD has not implemented any of the recommendations due to funding limitations.
- The long-awaited revised Environmental Assessment of Wisconsin's Beaver Management Plan, which is supposed to be made available any day now. Wisconsin spends half a million dollars per year lethally managing beavers on 15% of its streams. Previous studies that found beaver dams negatively impact trout populations were methodologically flawed, and research currently being conducted may be too trout-centric at the expense of ecosystem function, especially in a state where 66% of its residents get their drinking water from groundwater sources.
- In September, a few dozen conservation professionals gathered to participate in a "beaver dam analog" workshop just outside Beloit, Wisconsin. The opportunity was organized by Mike Engel, a Madison-based biologist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Conservation professionals from different entities and parts of the state worked together to build and document multiple BDAs at Briggs Wetland. Photo courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

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Land Trust Alliance Webinar Series on Beavers

A four-part Land Trust Alliance webinar series, “Beavers-Natural Allies in Water Quality & Restoring Wetlands,” was cosponsored by the Illinois Beaver Alliance and held in November. Over four 75-minute online sessions, researcher and ecohydrologist Dr. Emily Fairfax, ecological restoration expert Scott McGill, BeaverCorps Director Dr. Aaron Hall, and *Beaverland* author Leila Philip covered various methods and considerations for incorporating beavers into land trusts’ restoration activities and conflict management.

The webinar series focused on the geographic area east of the Mississippi River, including the Upper Mississippi River Basin and the Great Lakes. Land trusts are in a unique position to engage multiple stakeholders from various land use settings about the ecological importance of beavers and about coexistence.

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Environmental DNA Reveals Presence of Beavers and Other Species

Environmental DNA or eDNA, which wildlife researchers are using in an increasing number of situations, involves taking environmental samples from soil, water or even air in some cases. Researchers then analyze these samples in the lab using DNA detection methods to determine the presence of the species they are looking for. For example, It can be used to detect the presence of translocated beavers or when conducting a landscape-scale inventory of beaver occupancy in a region. According to Jesse Burgher, a PhD candidate at Washington State University Vancouver, wildlife managers might be able to use the technique to determine how far a beaver is upstream just by using a water sample. But eDNA can also be used to track fish biodiversity at a beaver pond site as well.



A wildlife manager collects a water sample for DNA analysis. Credit: Jonah Piovia-Scott

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United Kingdom Beaver Restoration Projects

Beaver reintroduction continues to gain steam in the United Kingdom as a way to reduce flooding, boost biodiversity, and sequester carbon. Numerous Wildlife Trusts have released beavers in their areas, including The Scottish Beaver Trial; The River Otter Beaver Trial;

The Devon Beaver Project; Derbyshire Wildlife Trust; The Ham Fen Beaver Project, Kent; The Welsh Beaver Project; Cornwall Beaver Project; The Cheshire Beaver Project; Dorset Beaver Project; Cumbria Beaver Group; Sussex Beaver Trial; Essex Wildlife Trust; Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust; Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust; Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust; and the Avon Wildlife Trust. Through these trials, Wildlife Trusts have gained excellent insights and knowledge of beavers in the wider landscape, both of which have been backed by independent scientific evidence.

Several Wildlife Trusts are currently working on introducing beavers to their areas, Northamptonshire.

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