



Overview

Once numbering in the hundreds of millions across North America, beavers transformed their environment in profound ways, including by creating over [300,000 square miles of wetlands](#). Due to the immense commodification and trapping of beavers following European colonization, beavers were nearly driven to extinction. Today, beavers are slowly returning, [providing much needed benefits](#) including cost effective resilience to wildfires, droughts, and floods, improved water quality and quantity, creation and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities. While beaver dams sometimes conflict with land uses and infrastructure, some states are [addressing these conflicts](#) through planning and solutions that maximize benefits for ecosystems, at-risk wildlife species, and people.

Policy Options

- **Statewide Beaver Management Plans (SBMP):** [Pennsylvania](#) (2011) and [Utah](#) (2017) have established comprehensive SBMP's, [Wisconsin](#) (2015) has a SBMP focused mainly on beaver control, and [Montana](#) (2021) and [Oregon](#) (2023) have Beaver Action Plans. [California](#) enacted legislation in 2024 codifying the need to develop a comprehensive SBMP, and [Colorado](#) is currently developing a comprehensive SBMP.
- **Nuisance Regulations and Beaver Relocation:** Most states have nuisance wildlife regulations that outline processes for responding to wildlife conflicts. In 2012, [Washington](#) amended regulations to authorize, with agreement from property owners, the trapping and relocating of beavers to appropriate areas.
- **Beaver Classifications and Trapping Regulations:** Many states classify beavers as pests and allow for their unlimited trapping. In 2023, [Oregon](#) removed the classification of beavers as a "predatory animal", authorized a permitting and reporting process for beaver trapping, and encouraged non-lethal beaver coexistence strategies.
- **Funding for Non-Lethal Coexistence:** In 2023, [California](#) allocated \$2 million for a grant process to promote beaver coexistence and non-lethal deterrents to beaver damage. [Oregon](#) and [Minnesota](#) recently introduced similar measures.

KEY POINTS

- Beaver policies are [most successful](#) when developed collaboratively with state natural resource, agriculture, and transportation agencies, Tribal Nations, impacted landowners, conservation NGOs, hunters & trappers, and, when necessary, federal agencies.
- Many Indigenous peoples have lived with beavers since time immemorial and continue to uphold reciprocal relationships with beavers including [helping facilitate their recovery](#).
- Many states allow unlimited take during beaver trapping season and conflict removal is allowed all year with no limits. While an important tool, unregulated trapping can make beaver restoration more [challenging](#).



Other Resources

- **US Fish and Wildlife Service:** [The Beaver Restoration Guidebook Version 2.02 \(2023\)](#)
- **The Beaver Institute:** [The Beaver Institute Webpage](#)

