

## **Beaver Management Plan Holliston Conservation Commission**

### Introduction

In the past, beaver were trapped to the point where they were nearly extinct in Massachusetts. It is only in recent years that this animal has begun to return. Because of the density of human development in this area and the propensity of beaver for altering their environment, it is inevitable that there will be conflicts between us. The Holliston Conservation Commission, working with the Board of Health has already issued several emergency permits for beaver management due to threats to public safety. It is the purpose of this management plan to reduce or eliminate the need to deal with beaver conflicts on an emergency basis.

### Background

Current DEP Guidelines for beaver management mainly deal with emergency situations. If there is a threat to public health or safety, anyone can apply to the Board of Health for an emergency permit to alleviate the immediate threat. If the work involves activities under Conservation Commission jurisdiction, such as dam breaching or the installation of pond levelers, an emergency permit must also be obtained from the Conservation Commission. While the Conservation Commission should not second guess the Board of Health, it is the Commission's responsibility to determine the exact nature of the threat and determine the best solution to alleviate the threat while protecting the wetland resource area as much as possible.

An emergency permit is valid for 10 days with the option to extend for two (2) further 10 day periods. Trapping using non-lethal box or cage-type traps does not require a permit during the trapping season (currently November 1 through April 15) and requires only a permit from the Board of Health during the off season. Any alternations beyond those necessary to alleviate the immediate threat require the filing of a Notice of Intent. Any non-emergency or long-term management proposals are subject to the approval of the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and the Conservation Commission (if work alters a wetland resource area).

### Policy

The Conservation Commission is responsible for the protection of wetlands and wildlife under both the Wetlands Protection Act and Holliston Bylaw Article XXX. As such, the Commission requires the use of non-lethal methods of beaver control except where such methods are proven to be ineffective. A database will be kept showing areas of known beaver conflicts and the methods of control proven effective. As this database grows, the Conservation Commission hopes to be able to create a three-tiered management overlay: areas with no action required (Category 1), areas where non-lethal methods are effective (Category 2), and no-tolerance areas (Category 3).

Areas where the topography is such that a beaver dam could never threaten public health or safety, or areas where a beaver dam has clearly been abandoned before creating a threat to public health or safety should be considered Category 1 areas. An example of such an area would be the beaver dam north of Fiske St on Bogastow Brook. In a case where there is no potential threat to public safety, but there is a threat or potential threat to a rare or endangered species, the Conservation Commission may consider the location a Category 2 or Category 3.

Areas where the topography is such that there is or could be a threat to public health and safety, but where a pond leveler or similar device could be effective would be considered a Category 2. The dam just south of Fisher St on Hopping Brook would qualify as a Category 2.

Areas where the topography is such that there is or could be a threat to public health but where non-lethal control methods are ineffective or where the presence of beavers poses a threat to public health regardless of water level, such as in a public water supply, would be considered Category 3. Two examples of this would be the area near the Avery Dennison facility on Chicken Brook where the hydrologic head at the dam was too small for a pond leveler to be effective and the area between Fisk and Central Streets on Bogastow Brook where the impoundment reached within 200 feet of a Town Well, creating the potential for contamination by *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardii*.

In the case of a Category 3 location, the Commission will authorize the trapping of beavers and the permanent breaching of a dam on a non-emergency basis so long as certain conditions are met. Any dam breaching must be done incrementally to avoid downstream flooding and excessive erosion. Trappers must use non-lethal box or cage-type traps and beaver must be killed humanely i.e. with a bullet. The Conservation Commission may also require habitat management as a long term solution in a Category 3 area. Habitat management includes, but is not limited to: fencing trees, planting vegetation that is not a preferred species, and removing vegetation that is highly desirable to beavers. It is considered the property owner's responsibility to maintain such management practices except in situations where the Town has specifically accepted responsibility for beaver management.

This management plan does not supersede Article XXX regulations or GL c. 131, s. 80A. All determinations and actions by the Town must comply with the requirements set out in the above laws. Several guidance documents are available online at: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/laws/policies.htm> under the Wetlands Guidance section.