



REVITALIZING THE REGENERATIVE CAPACITY OF DAMAGED ECOSYSTEMS

NEW MEXICO BEAVER COALITION AGENDA

Meeting Date/Time: November 21, 2024, 10:00am – 11:30am

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84812700829?pwd=hdNYlb2XYRXO8lgwcqoVDCyp8apB4B.1>

The purpose of the New Mexico Beaver Coalition is to bring together a diverse group of state, federal, tribal, non-profit, for-profit organizations, and individuals to share information, coordinate activities, and identify common interests and opportunities to work collaboratively to expand the distribution of beaver across New Mexico.

- I. Meeting Introduction and Review Operating Principles (from The World Café, <https://theworldcafe.com/>) (10 minutes):
 - Create hospitable space;
 - Explore questions that matter;
 - Encourage each person's contribution;
 - Connect diverse people and ideas;
 - Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions;
 - Make collective knowledge visible.
- II. Update: There will be an update on an NMBC initiative to develop updated beaver relocation guidelines to submit to NM Game and Fish for consideration. (5 minutes)
- III. Presentation: Montana Beaver Action Plan - Shelby Weigand, National Wildlife Federation, will talk about the stakeholder process of developing Montana's Beaver Action Plan (attached) and cover highlights of the strategies in the plan. Shelby served on the Beaver Advisory Committee that developed the plan (30 minutes presentation/ 10 minutes Q/A).
- IV. Discuss the Montana Plan and whether developing a similar plan may be helpful for New Mexico. If so, what would be the process for developing a plan? Who would like to be involved? (30 minutes)
- V. Wrap-up and next meeting (5 minutes)



Montana Beaver Working Group: Information Sharing and Lessons Learned

Shelby Weigand
Riparian Connectivity Manager



Montana's Policies
Regarding Beavers

1

Barriers to Beaver
Restoration in
Montana

2

Montana Beaver
Working Group
Today

4

Montana Beaver
Working Group
Newsletter

7

Challenges and
opportunities
moving forward

8

3

Montana Beaver
Conflict Resolution
Program

5

Montana Beaver
Working Group
Action Plan

6

Lessons Learned





4

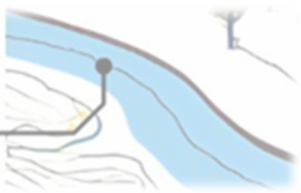
“Connecting people and sharing resources to advance the beaver’s keystone role in watershed health”



WHAT IS THE MT BWG?

- A network of statewide stakeholders from nonprofits, universities, public agencies, consulting firms, and more
- Led/facilitated by the National Wildlife Federation
- A voluntary effort, with no legal mandates or membership dues
- Advocates for beavers through collaborative processes, not lobbying, litigation, etc.
- An adaptable, WORKING project currently crafting a charter to focus its mission and





Montana's Policies Regarding Beavers

- **MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) beaver regulations:**
- Furbearer, with seasonal restrictions but no bag limits or mandatory reporting
- Some areas closed to trapping from past restoration initiatives
- FWP game wardens review/issue nuisance beaver removal permits
- Relocation is possible, but not quick or easy; requires an environmental impact statement
- **FWP much more open to discussing restoration opportunities in past 2-3 years**

2024**WOLF | FURBEARER | TRAPPING****MONTANA FWP | Trapping and Hunting Regulations**

BEAVERS AND THEIR ROLE IN RIPARIAN RESTORATION IN MONTANA

Version 1.0



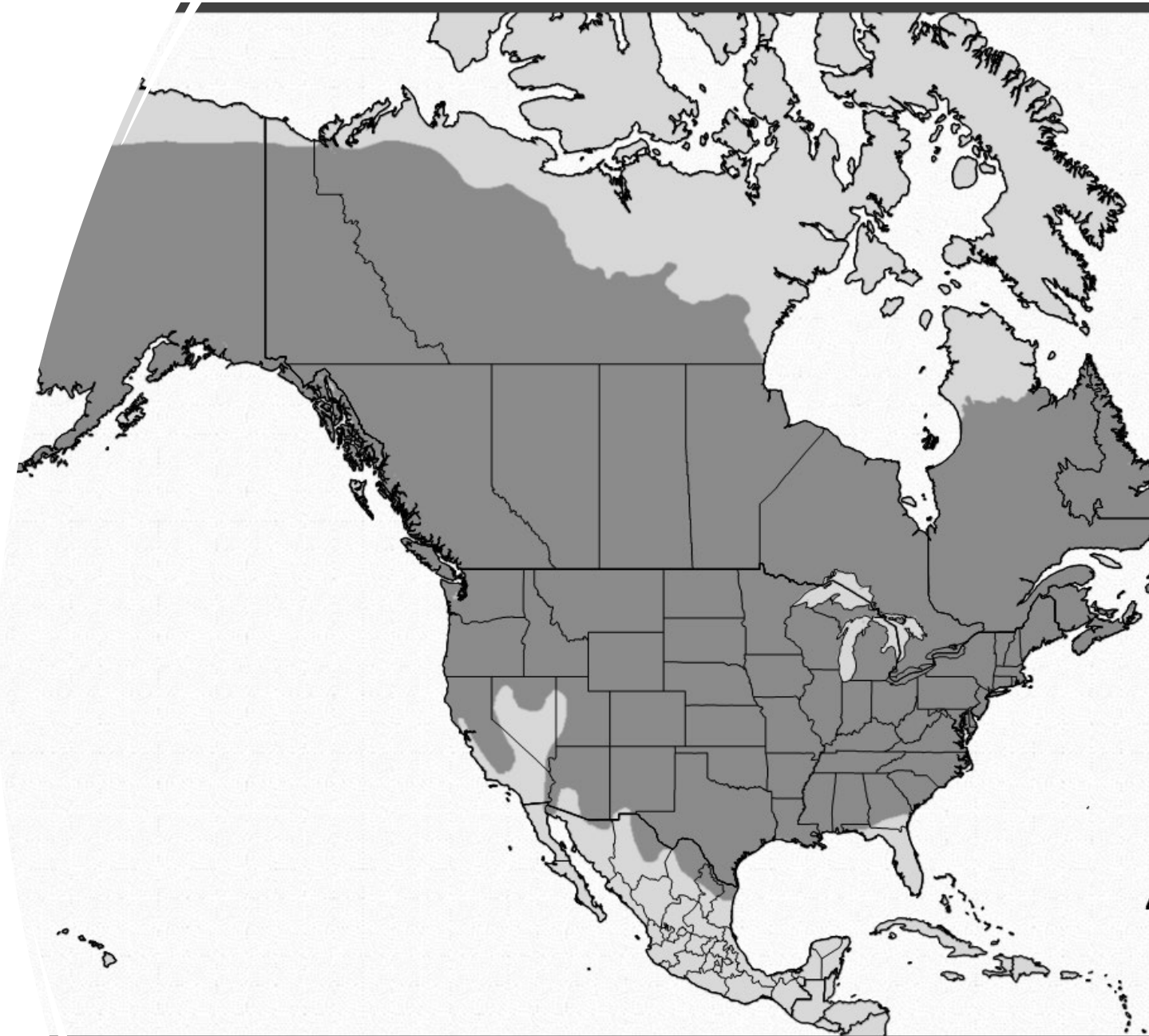
Leave It to Beavers

Under the right conditions, these big, chisel-toothed rodents are transforming Montana's environments (mostly) for the better. BY TOM DICKSON

MONTANA OUTDOORS | MAY-JUNE 2022 | 27

Barriers to Beaver Restoration in Montana

- State policies still emphasize beavers as nuisance
- Federal agencies slow to prioritize beaver restoration in management plans or practices
- Ongoing uncertainty about hydrological and ecological impacts of beaver dams and beaver mimicry
- Limited resources for non-lethal beaver management
- Historic management of streams and forests has limited otherwise suitable habitat
- **MT Beaver Action Plan** addresses each of these specific strategies and steps





1 Montana's Policies Regarding Beavers

2 Barriers to Beaver Restoration in Montana

4 Montana Beaver Working Group Today

7 Montana Beaver Working Group Newsletter

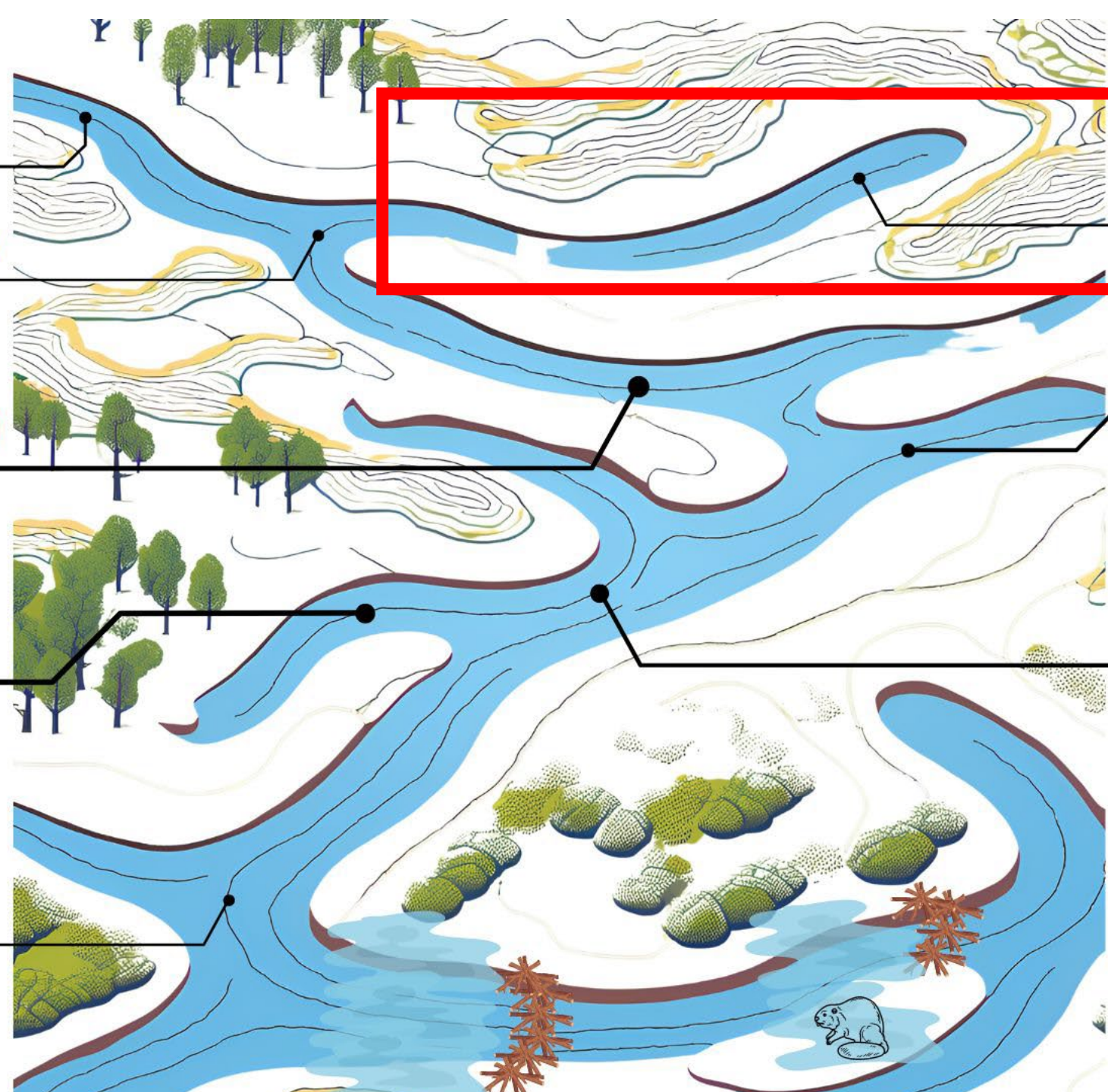
8 Challenges and opportunities moving forward



3 Montana Beaver Conflict Resolution Program

5 Montana Beaver Working Group Action Plan

6 Lessons Learned





Conflict Resolution Program

- Tree cutting
- Culvert plugging
- Free standing dam flooding





4

MT Beaver Working Group Activities

- **Newsletter** shares stories, resources, and upcoming events
- **Webinars** highlight emerging research
- **Workshops** and strategy meetings to share lessons learned and refine priorities
- **Field trips**, usually connected with workshops or conflict resolution projects

October 2020

Montana Beaver Working Group

*Connecting and providing resources to people interested in the role of beavers
in watershed and riparian health*

Stories and News

Big Hole Watershed Committee Complements Restoration with Beaver Conflict Mitigation



Ben LaPorte, Elissa Chott, and Vanna Boccadori install a new culvert fence at Mt. Haggin Wildlife Management Area.
Photos by Sarah Bates

WHAT IS THE MT BEAVER ACTION PLAN?

- A guidance document for Montana-based efforts in beaver-related restoration for the next three years
- A mission-based keystone that “offers applied direction to advance work with beavers for resilient, healthy ecosystems.”
- A practical tool with shared goals, strategies, and actions
- A collaborative effort, developed with diverse input and dependent on people held accountable to coordinate, advance, and report on actions
- An adaptable, WORKING project

Restoring Beavers for Montana's Watershed Health
Montana Beaver Action Plan
February 2021 Progress Report
A collaborative initiative of the Montana Beaver Working Group



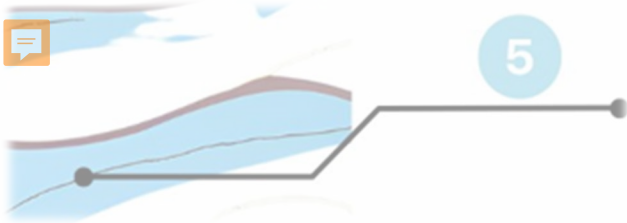
Advancing Efforts to Restore Beavers for the Benefit of Montana Watersheds

2020 Strategy Meeting Report and Action Plan



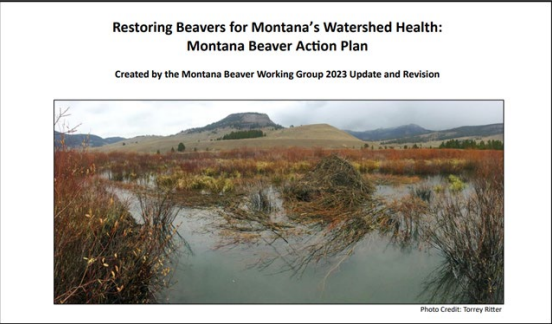
Restoring Beavers for Montana's Watershed Health
2021 Montana Beaver Action Plan

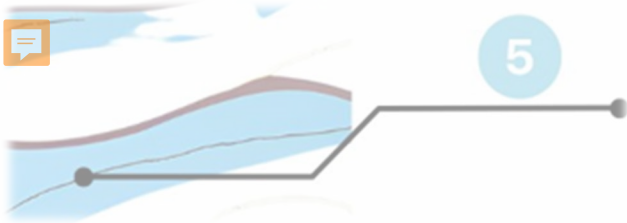




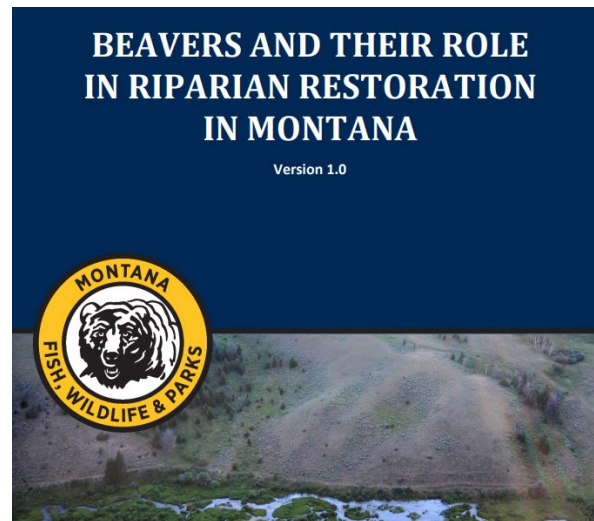
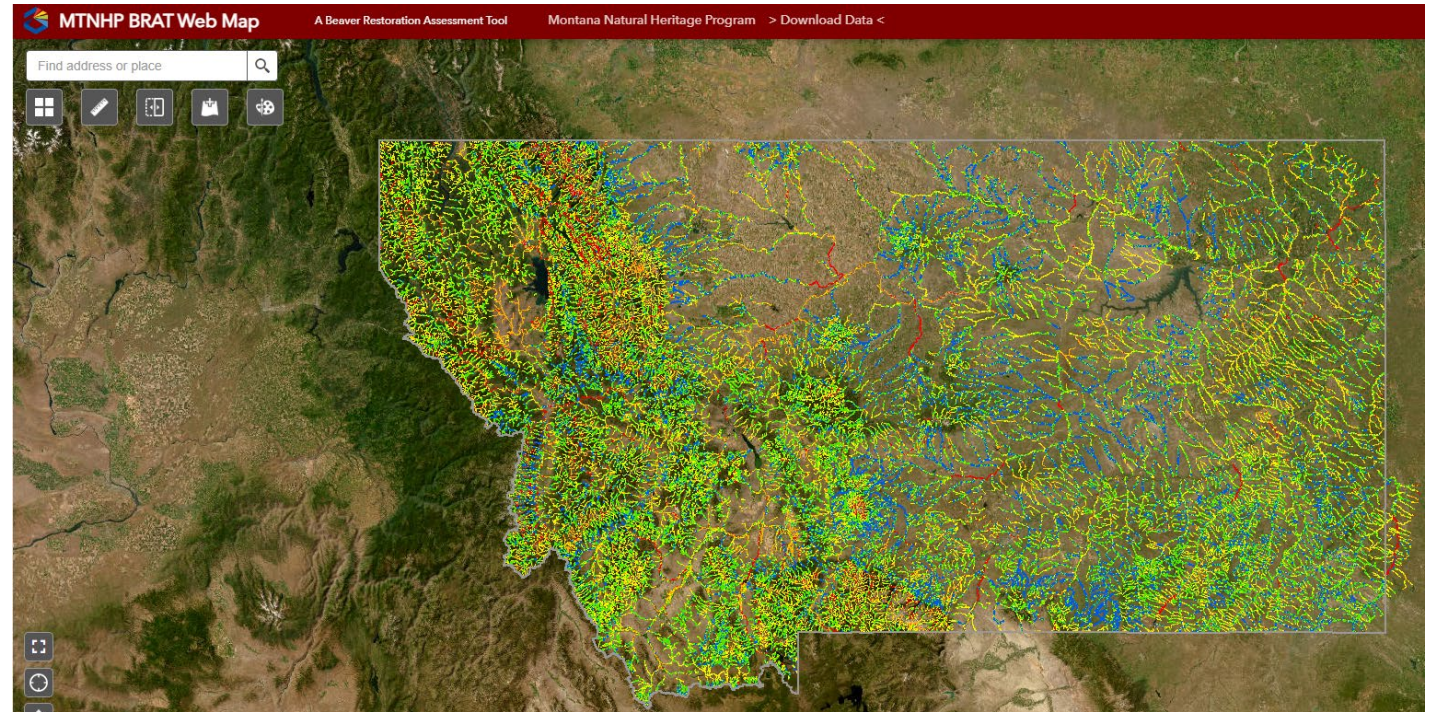
Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan

GOAL 1: Integrate and expand beaver in the design and approach of stream and wetland restoration.		
Strategy 1.1: Identify and prioritize beaver-related restoration opportunities.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Conduct a statewide beaver dam census using remote sensing.	FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Complete white paper that provides a comprehensive overview of the beaver's keystone role in Montana, including impact on Species of Greatest Conservation Need.	MTNHP, FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Work with partners to develop accessible version of the Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool, complemented with additional layers including: a) beaver dam census; b) conflict hotspots; c) on-the-ground survey efforts, d) Riparian Condition Assessment Tool, Wetland Evaluation Tool, e) Lidar, and additional beaver habitat models.	MTNHP, FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Define expected outcomes of beaver restoration based on ecological settings (i.e. literature review, flow chart).	FWP, NWF	Torrey Ritter, FWP





Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan



Appendix E: Beaver Transplantation

Beaver transplants can be an effective technique for re-establishing beavers in areas of their former range. Many states in western North America have well-developed beaver transplant programs and a long history of transplanting beavers to help restore stream systems and alleviate damage complaints. However, the science of transplanting beavers is not well-developed and there is still much to learn about why some beavers settle where they are released and others leave the area entirely. In general, beaver transplants can support the goals of beaver restoration by:

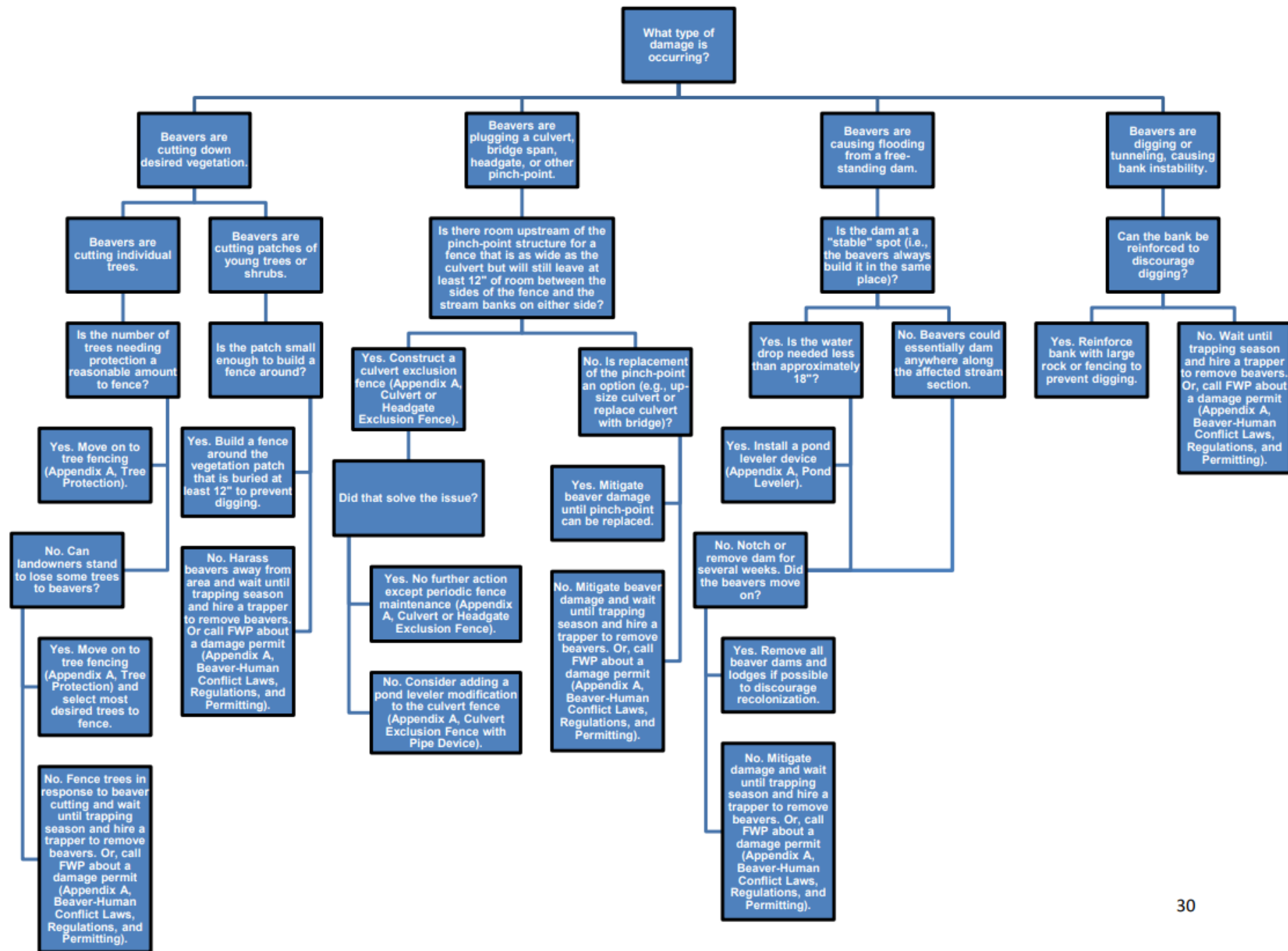
- Re-establishing beavers in areas of their former range that are isolated from potential source colonies and/or are rarely encountered by dispersing beavers.
- Assuring beavers encounter a restoration site in a timely manner, which may be especially important if the restoration area is distant from source populations or if the viability of pre-transplant restoration techniques (e.g., BDAs) are time limited.
- Helping deal with beavers that have come into conflict with people by moving the beavers to an area where their efforts can be beneficial, relieving the conflict issue while promoting restoration where it is needed.

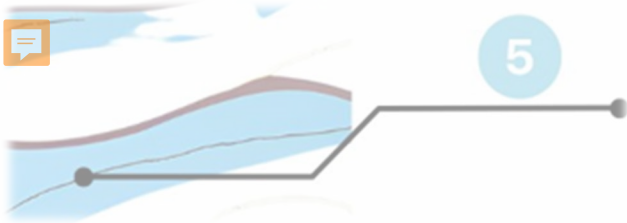
Restoring Beavers for Montana's Watershed Health: Montana Beaver Action Plan

Created by the Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Update and Revision

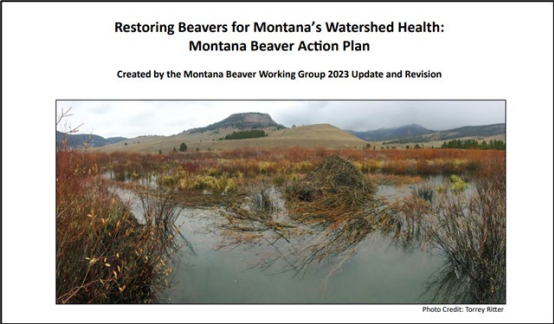


Photo Credit: Torrey Ritter





Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan



GOAL 2: Restore beaver-modified public lands to sustain ecological processes, support biodiversity, and build resilience to drought, wildfires, and flooding.		
Strategy 2.1 Integrate beaver-related restoration and conflict mitigation into agency planning for watershed health.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Develop sample beaver restoration comment letter for BLM RMP revision.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC
Support beavers as “management indicator species” on Lolo National Forest (and identify related opportunities).	NWF, BHWC, FWP	Pedro Marques, BHWC Shelby Weigand, NWF Torrey Ritter, FWP
Urge regional Forest Service management towards programmatic NEPA and consultation processes to streamline LTPBR.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC



Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan

Restoring Beavers for Montana's Watershed Health:
Montana Beaver Action Plan

Created by the Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Update and Revision



Photo Credit: Torrey Ritter

A GUIDE TO ADVOCATING FOR BEAVER RESTORATION IN NATIONAL FOREST PLANS

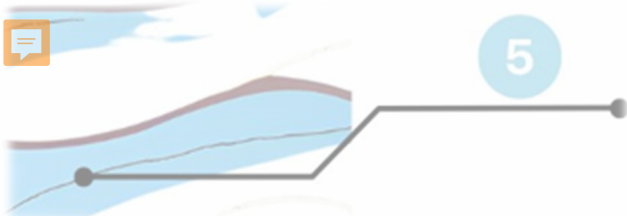
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COMMENT LETTER

[excerpted from full letter submitted in 2019]

BEAVER RESTORATION TO ENSURE WATERSHED AND RIPARIAN HEALTH

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) applauds the Santa Fe National Forest (SF NF) Draft Land Management Plan (the Plan)⁸ for including recognition of beaver restoration as an important part of its watershed and aquatics strategy; however, there are several areas of the planning document that could be improved to more fully comply with the 2012 National Forest Planning Rule's requirements for climate resiliency and ecological integrity, as well as to

The North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) has immense influence over its environment—beavers' extensive instream structures create and enhance habitats for native fish, birds, amphibians, and mammals by contributing to ecological integrity, including connectivity, structure, and function of riparian zones and watersheds—while at the same time mediating the impacts of climate change on mountain snowpack and runoff. As a result of these influences, beavers are referred to as “ecosystems engineers” and considered to be a “keystone species.”¹⁰ After European settlement of North America, beavers were nearly extirpated from their relatively ubiquitous distribution across the continent by the fur trade. While populations have recovered throughout North America, they remain absent in much of their historically occupied territory.¹¹ In the absence of this keystone species.



Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan

Restoring Beavers for Montana's Watershed Health:
Montana Beaver Action Plan

Created by the Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Update and Revision

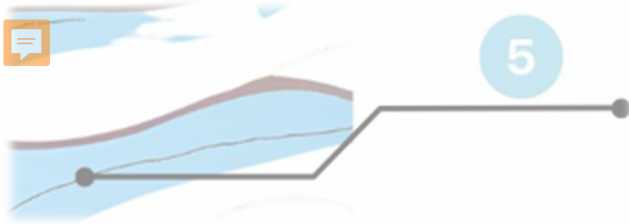


Photo Credit: Torrey Ritter

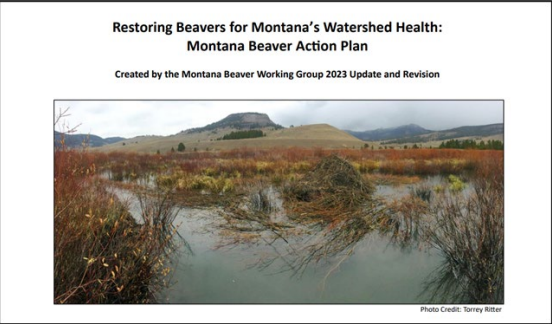
dependent in the Lolo's water-related resources. Riparian ecosystems, including habitat conditions created by beaver, are also key features of the ecosystems in the Lolo, providing water storage for higher summer stream flows and green zones to help with wildfire management. Comprising over half of channel

09 Beaver populations and their distribution are similar to historical levels where feasible. This native keystone species modifies the aquatic and riparian ecosystems, playing a critical ecological role by increasing water holding capacity, expanding the wetted surface area, and increasing the complexity and connectivity of the aquatic and riparian ecosystems, providing resiliency to these ecosystems.

02 To protect the ecosystem services provided by beaver ecosystem engineering, management activities should not remove or otherwise alter beaver dams, except to protect critical infrastructure and public safety, or where necessary to support the management of at-risk species.

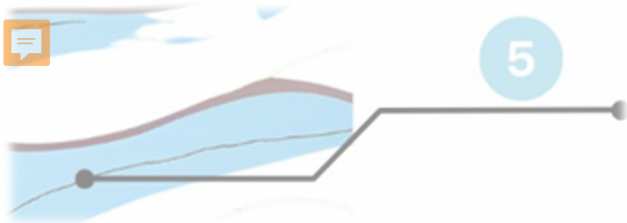


Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan

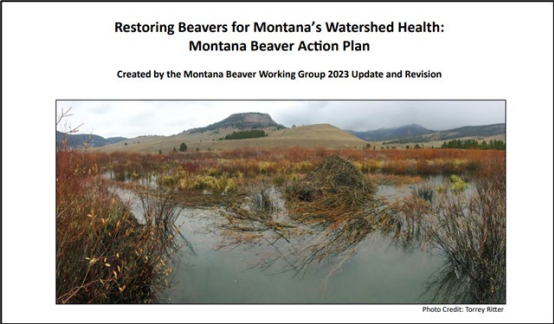


GOAL 3: Provide coordinated education and outreach on the benefits of beavers and beaver-related restoration.		
Strategy 3.1: Create learning opportunities that address watershed-specific goals and motivations for beaver-related restoration.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Create a watershed-based, replicable survey template to gather information on beaver-related restoration at the local level.	NWF	Elissa Chott, NWF
Create a graphic summarizing goals and motivations in different audiences for beaver-related restoration and conflict mitigation.	NWF	Elissa Chott, NWF
Ask local tribes if and how the BWG can support beaver-related restoration in their communities, and provide compensation to tribal community members for the time and resources they spend on BWG efforts.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF





Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Strategic Action Plan



GOAL 4: Streamline legal and policy obstacles to beaver habitat restoration and relocation of beavers to suitable prioritized habitat.		
Strategy 4.1: Streamline the permitting and administrative processes for beaver-related restoration.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Create a NWP 27 beaver-related restoration guidance document for practitioners.	WWF, TNC, MCC	Aaron Clausen, WWF Kelsey Molloy, TNC Autumn Holzgen, MCC
Talk to DNRC about their guidance document for stream and wetland restoration activities and how it is being incorporated into MT drought management planning.	GYC	Sierra Harris, GYC
Use language from Section Memo 1077 to create a letter from the MT BWG and send to MT state agencies and federal entities that indicate processes already working effectively in other states.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC



6

WHAT LESSONS HAS THE MT BWG LEARNED?

- Create pathways for people to participate, and follow through
- Designate and maintain leadership
- Consider outside facilitation for certain events or needs
- Know your place: celebrate local success and highlight transferrable connections
- Find/cultivate allies working within your state wildlife agency
- Always be asking: Who is not at the table?
- Be patient, be persistent, keep it WORKING!





WHAT CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES ARE UNDERWAY FOR THE MT BWG?

How can we...

- Share actionable learning tools in accessible, useful ways?
- Serve the differing needs of beavers and people throughout the state?
- Clarify contentious issues through collaborative, inclusive processes?
- Elevate contributions from MT's Indigenous nations?
- Maintain momentum and focus through change and lapsed time?
- Adapt to external disturbance and uncertainty (climate, politics, etc.)



Photo: Alicia Yellow Owl

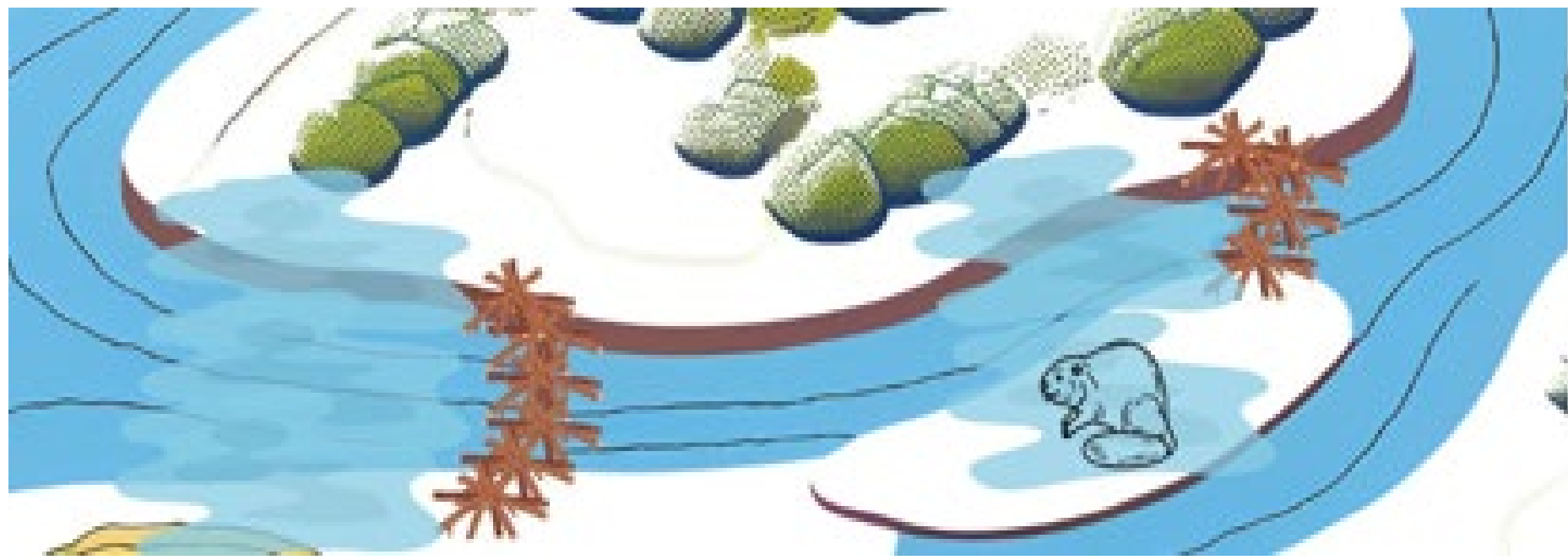




Photo: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

Shelby Weigand, Riparian Connectivity Manager
weigands@nwf.org



**NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

Restoring Beavers for Montana's Watershed Health: Montana Beaver Action Plan

Created by the Montana Beaver Working Group 2023 Update and Revision



Photo Credit: Torrey Ritter

Executive Summary

The Montana Beaver Action Plan offers applied direction to advance work with beavers for resilient, healthy watersheds. The Plan's overall goals, guiding strategies, and specific actions are developed through collaborative, ongoing conversation among members of the Montana Beaver Working Group. The Montana Beaver Working Group is made up of a wide diversity of stakeholders from across Montana who are working on various aspects of policy, science, education, and management.

In March 2023, over 30 participants gathered in Butte, MT to revise the Montana Beaver Action Plan. Participants engaged in immersive work over two days to update the Plan thanks to generous support from the Broad Reach Fund as well as a dedicated planning team including the National Wildlife Federation, Clark Fork Coalition, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, World Wildlife Fund, Bureau of Land Management, and restoration ecologist Amy Chadwick. Karen Filipovich facilitated the meeting and worked with breakout groups to shape language and commitments for specific goals, strategies, and actions. The meeting was marked by increased effort to simplify, consolidate, and activate the Plan's vision for the next three years.

The 2023 revision and update of the Montana Beaver Action Plan reflects the contributions of participants at the March 2023 meeting, as well as additional information gathered in a pre-meeting survey. The items offered here do not represent the positions of the participants' employers or affiliated organizations, but rather capture the key ideas developed by individuals in the 2020, 2021, and 2023 workshops, meetings, and follow-up communications.



Photo Credit: Torrey Ritter

GOAL 1: Integrate and expand beaver in the design and approach of stream and wetland restoration.		
Strategy 1.1: Identify and prioritize beaver-related restoration opportunities.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Conduct a statewide beaver dam census using remote sensing.	FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Complete white paper that provides a comprehensive overview of the beaver's keystone role in Montana, including impact on Species of Greatest Conservation Need.	MTNHP, FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Work with partners to develop accessible version of the Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool, complemented with additional layers including: a) beaver dam census; b) conflict hotspots; c) on-the-ground survey efforts, d) Riparian Condition Assessment Tool, Wetland Evaluation Tool, e) Lidar, and additional beaver habitat models.	MTNHP, FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Define expected outcomes of beaver restoration based on ecological settings (i.e. literature review, flow chart).	FWP, NWF	Torrey Ritter, FWP

Strategy 1.2: Seek consensus-based outcomes that address fish and wildlife managers' concerns with beaver-related restoration.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Hold joint meetings in Spring 2024 with fisheries and wildlife biologists to flesh out concerns, monitoring standards, and common language.	FWP, NWF	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Collaborate with research and monitoring partners to develop core questions, answer them with rigorous science methods, and share the results.	UM, MSU, NWF	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Continue expansion of Montana Beaver Conflict Resolution Program from FWP Region 2 (2019) to Region 3 (2024) and Region 4 (2024).	NWF, FWP	Shelby Weigand, NWF

Strategy 1.3 Develop beaver-related restoration networking opportunities for public land managers to seek funding, forge partnerships, and advance restoration.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Develop list of researchers working on beaver topics and specific interests including monitoring. Include locations of research and brief summaries of their research questions.	TU, NWF	Christine Brissette, TU Rob Rich, NWF
Convene a Montana-based meeting of leading beaver researchers and restoration experts in the American West to focus on prioritization, monitoring, and project mapping/sharing.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF
Create subgroup(s) to secure funding, develop structure, and create content for web-based dashboard, which will consolidate beaver-related restoration project information: a) Library of MT-relevant learning resources, with internal BWG access to edit; b) Interactive map of projects and actions on beaver-related restoration; c) Events calendar with volunteer and learning opportunities; d) Statistics/metrics page showing collective impact of beaver-related restoration; e) archived BWG newsletters.; f) show the “before and after” successes of projects (e.g., documentations of drone flights, riparian expansion, sediment movement, etc.); g) file/resource sharing procedures to facilitate contributions.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF

Support interagency coordination meetings on complementary projects to promote synergy among efforts in the Montana Beaver Working Group and various stakeholders.	NWF, MWCC, FWP, BLM, USFWS, USFS	Shelby Weigand, NWF
Convene the Montana BWG twice each year.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF
Develop BWG charter and mission statement with language indicating the Group's intent to be open to, and inclusive of, all individuals, groups, and communities with a shared interest in beaver-related restoration in Montana.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF

GOAL 2: Restore beaver-modified public lands to sustain ecological processes, support biodiversity, and build resilience to drought, wildfires, and flooding.		
Strategy 2.1 Integrate beaver-related restoration and conflict mitigation into agency planning for watershed health.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Develop sample beaver restoration comment letter for BLM RMP revision.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC
Support beavers as “management indicator species” on Lolo National Forest (and identify related opportunities).	NWF, BHWC, FWP	Pedro Marques, BHWC Shelby Weigand, NWF Torrey Ritter, FWP
Urge regional Forest Service management towards programmatic NEPA and consultation processes to streamline LTPBR.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC
Develop model language for Schedule A to streamline restoration projects near US Forest Service Roads and infrastructure.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC
Support Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem efforts in data collection and feedback tied to beaver-related restoration in critical watersheds affected by wildfire.	GYC	Sierra Harris, GYC

GOAL 3: Provide coordinated education and outreach on the benefits of beavers and beaver-related restoration.		
Strategy 3.1: Create learning opportunities that address watershed-specific goals and motivations for beaver-related restoration.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Create a watershed-based, replicable survey template to gather information on beaver-related restoration at the local level.	NWF	Elissa Chott, NWF
Create a graphic summarizing goals and motivations in different audiences for beaver-related restoration and conflict mitigation.	NWF	Elissa Chott, NWF
Ask local tribes if and how the BWG can support beaver-related restoration in their communities, and provide compensation to tribal community members for the time and resources they spend on BWG efforts.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF

Strategy 3.2: Develop beaver-related restoration resources and stories with consistent, adaptable messaging for target audiences.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Develop three BWG “general public” handouts with room for changeable logos, contact information, etc., depending on the distributor: a) Nonlethal solutions to beaver conflicts (Elissa Chott); b) LTPBR (Autumn Holzgen); c) Land stewardship strategies to complement/encourage beaver-related restoration (Clancy Jandreau, Rob Rich).	NWF, MFP, BC	Elissa Chott, NWF
Create resources that train managers to encourage beaver-related restoration and conflict management in plans and decision-making.	NWF	Elissa Chott, NWF
Create resources that train educators to incorporate beaver-related restoration and conflict management in existing learning curricula.	NWF	Elissa Chott, NWF
Encourage BWG member photo and story contributions in BWG newsletter content.	NWF	Shelby Weigand, NWF Rob Rich, NWF

GOAL 4: Streamline legal and policy obstacles to beaver habitat restoration and relocation of beavers to suitable prioritized habitat.		
Strategy 4.1: Streamline the permitting and administrative processes for beaver-related restoration.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Create a NWP 27 beaver-related restoration guidance document for practitioners.	WWF, TNC, MCC	Aaron Clausen, WWF Kelsey Molloy, TNC Autumn Holzgen, MCC
Talk to DNRC about their guidance document for stream and wetland restoration activities and how it is being incorporated into MT drought management planning.	GYC	Sierra Harris, GYC
Use language from Section Memo 1077 to create a letter from the MT BWG and send to MT state agencies and federal entities that indicate processes already working effectively in other states.	BHWC	Pedro Marques, BHWC

Strategy 4.2: Streamline processes to enable beaver relocation options.		
Action	Partners	Contact
Keep BWG updated on progress of FWP's Environmental Assessment for beaver transplants in the Upper Clark Fork River Basin.	FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP
Incorporate knowledge and experiences from other states into FWP's future policies and guidance for beaver transplants.	FWP	Torrey Ritter, FWP

Appendix

Contact List

Shelby Weigand, National Wildlife Federation – weigands@nwf.org

Torrey Ritter, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks - torrey.ritter@mt.gov

Will McDowell, Clark Fork Coalition - will@clarkfork.org

Christine Brissette, Trout Unlimited - cbrissette@tu.org

Rob Rich, Independent Contractor for National Wildlife Federation - rlrich3@gmail.com

Pedro Marques, Big Hole Watershed Committee - pmarques@bhwc.org

Sierra Harris, Greater Yellowstone Coalition - sharris@greateryellowstone.org

Elissa Chott, National Wildlife Federation - chotte@nwf.org

Aaron Clausen, World Wildlife Fund - Aaron.Clausen@wwfus.org

Kelsey Molloy, The Nature Conservancy - kelsey.molloy@tnc.org

Autumn Holzgen, Montana Conservation Corps - autumn@mtcorps.org