

Living with Beavers

General information

The beaver is the largest native rodent in Florida, typically weighing 30-50 pounds. Beavers are semi-aquatic mammals that spend most of their time in or near water. They are excellent engineers that build lodges and bank dens to live in as well as dams to block flowing water. They can be found through much of the Panhandle and northern peninsula of Florida. Beavers are a beneficial part of the ecosystem due to their wetland building activities. However, these activities can sometimes lead to problems when beavers attempt to construct wetlands in areas where it can cause conflict with people.

A beaver's front teeth constantly grow, so they must continually chew to maintain proper tooth length. Beavers consume a wide range of vegetation, especially aquatic and woody vegetation. During the winter when aquatic vegetation dies off, beavers eat the bark from many species of hardwood trees. This damage often kills the tree. Beavers also gnaw down trees to use as building materials to construct their dams and lodges.

What can be done to prevent problems with beavers?

- Beaver dam removal provides immediate relief from flooding and can be the simplest and cheapest way of dealing with a beaver problem. However, beavers often quickly rebuild a dam as soon as it is damaged.
- When removing a dam is infeasible or unsuccessful, installing a **water level control structure** through the dam can allow for the control of water flow without removing the dam. This technique also reduces the likelihood of the beaver continuously blocking water flow. For technical assistance, contact a wildlife assistance biologist at a **regional FWC office** near you.
- If a beaver dam is blocking a culvert or similar structure, installing a barrier several feet away from the culvert can be the most effective solution. This prevents the beavers from accessing the culvert to dam it. Please contact a wildlife assistance biologist at a **regional FWC office** near you for technical assistance.
- Protect valuable trees and vegetation from beaver damage by installing a fence around them or wrapping tree trunks loosely with 3-5 feet of hardware cloth or multiple wraps of chicken wire. This prevents the beavers from chewing on the trees and other plants.
- Lethal control should be considered a last resort.



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Legal status

The beaver is a native species with a year-round hunting and trapping season in Florida. Beaver hunting and trapping regulations can be found on the FWC website at: MyFWC.com/hunting. A beaver can be taken as a nuisance animal if it causes or is about to cause property damage, presents a threat to public safety, or causes an annoyance in, under, or upon a building, per **Florida Rule 68A-9.010**.



Legal options to take nuisance beaver

Beavers are beneficial because they build wetland habitat that is important to many Florida wildlife species. It is best to prevent problems with beavers by destroying dams, installing water control devices, and installing protective barriers around plants. Removing individual beavers does not prevent more beavers from quickly moving into or using the same areas in the future. However, if a beaver is becoming a nuisance, it can be trapped or taken using legal and humane methods.

- Nuisance beavers can be shot on private property during daylight hours with landowner permission. However, it is important to check with the local police department or sheriff's office for local firearm ordinances before discharging a firearm.

- Cage traps and snares can be used to capture nuisance beavers without a permit as long as they are checked in intervals of less than 24 hours. Remember: snares are not species-specific traps and the trapper is responsible for any animal caught in a snare.
- Steel traps can only be used with an FWC issued Steel Trap Permit. These permits are normally issued for situations where there is significant livestock loss or property damage and other alternative options have been tried or are not feasible. Applicants need to apply at the appropriate FWC regional office for this permit.

Please note: All traps must be checked at least once every 24 hours. Captured non-target species are required to be released on site. All live-captured nuisance beavers must be euthanized, released on-site, or released on a property within the same county of capture that is 40 acres or larger with written permission from the landowner.

If you have further questions or need more help, call your regional Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission office:

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Regional Offices

