

Our life with the Beavers

Personal notes on beaver mitigation

John Boak, 7/19/23

Beavers & Aspens

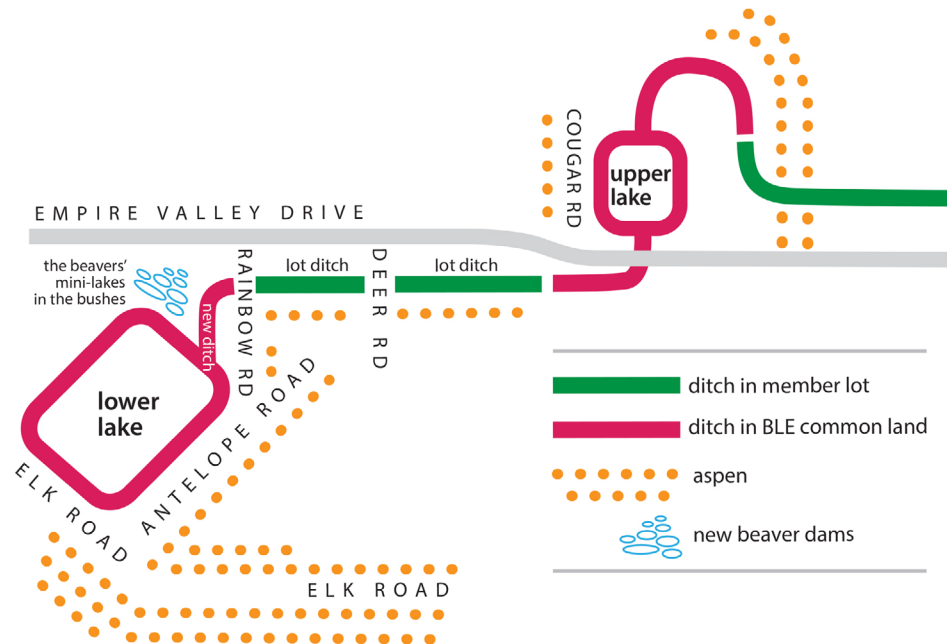
Our cabin is down by the lower lake. When we built here the lakes were empty. The lower lake had only a spring-fed puddle in it. That was it. The beavers had moved back to Empire Creek and had no interest in BLE.

The front of our lot had many small aspen. You could see the stumps of the earlier trees taken by the beavers back when the lakes had been full. Later, when BLE arranged to lease water, some local beavers discovered to their delight that a wonderful resource had been restored just for them. New drag paths appeared, crossing Elk and Antelope roads. Many aspens headed north in their jaws as they developed their new property eagerly.

We lost a few trees. I put up my first fence along Antelope: green welded-wire. It was held up by metal stakes, wood poles and the aspens themselves. It worked. The beavers continued their harvesting south of Antelope, on BLE common land and National Forest.

One year I opened up a stretch of the fence, in a foolish attempt to have the beavers clear our aspens a little bit. They took seventy trees. Experiment cancelled. Fence back up. I added rocks and deadwood along the fence bottom. I have been expanding the fence and testing out beaver-resistant tech ever since.

This document was made to share what I have learned living directly on the beaver/human interface (BHI) at Beaver Lakes. First I will describe the what, where, and why of our beaver-management challenge.



The Development & Its Ditch

Beaver Lakes Estates was created quite a while ago when regulations were less expansive. One of the curious details of our ditch is that it runs not only through our common land but also through some of our members' lots.

The community and our Board will be discussing strategies and tactics to deal with the lively beaver presence at Beaver Lakes right now. Tactics will be debated. Questions of cost will arise. We will have to think about what will work in the long run and what we can do now.

Immediate Action

Those of us who live close to aspens need to take action immediately. That group includes more than owners with lots near the lakes. Where the ditch crosses member lots, the owners will likely want to take action sooner rather than later.

This can be a process of learning for all of us, informing any initiatives implemented by whole community through the Board.

1) The New Ditch

One initiative is the new ditch from Rainbow Road into the lower lake. This project first had to be approved by the Army Corps of Engineers. It was. It will now be moving forward.

The original ditch path, west of Rainbow road, angled west and south into what became a land of tall bushes. In recent years the beavers created a warren of mini lakes behind numerous dams. In the winter the output of these lakes froze over progressively larger areas of land, reducing oxygen input to the lake. This is not good for our fish.

The solution approved by the Board and the Feds, is to reroute the ditch, keeping it closer to Rainbow Road. That will make it easier to manage. It also allows water to be delivered into the old ditch.

2) Beaver Barriers

We can protect our own trees. Using fences, tree-wraps, and other tactics we can keep beavers from taking down our own trees. These tactics have a number

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of benefits. The first is timely action. We do not have to wait for the Board and the community to decide what to spend, or how to organize members for action. We can just protect our trees.

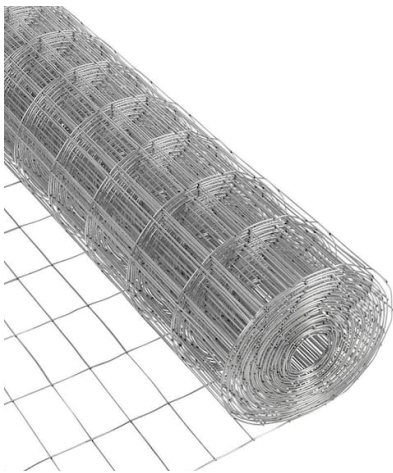
The second benefit is that we can all learn what works. This learning will conserve resources for both individuals and the community.

The third benefit is that sharing our learning helps strengthen the community and its decision-making processes. That helps us in general. But on this specific issue, beaver management, it relieves us of having to find the perfect solution.

3) Fencing

WELDED WIRE FENCE

This is the most obvious solution to excluding beavers. I have had good luck with welded-wire fence. It comes in a variety of heights and lengths.

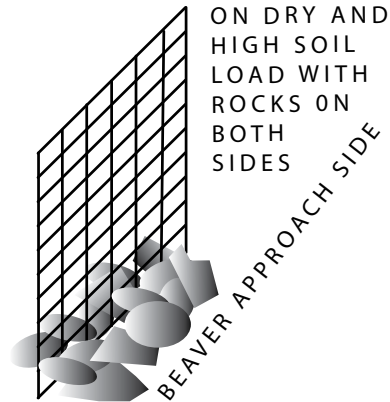


I drive stakes into the ground and then tie the fence on with wire. I have used zip-ties. They are fast. But the sun makes them break.

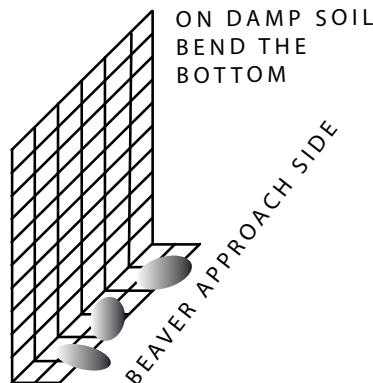
I have used various and miscellaneous stakes. If they are the good metal ones, but are too short, I attach skinny pine with screws. I also use old wooden tool handles, and abandoned ski poles.

BEAVERS UNDER THE FENCE

Do you have to dig the fencing into the ground? Lots of articles discuss the benefits of digging, because beavers can dig. That is what they do in the wetlands to make dams hold water. But my experience along the aspen-rich but dry land above Elk and Antelope roads is that the beavers do not dig under my fences.



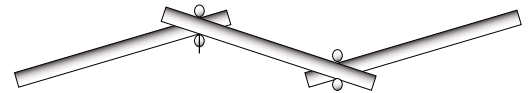
I do place lots of rocks along the ground on both sides of the fences. I also add dead wood fragments too, if my supply of rocks is low.



One guide to these issues suggested that you can make an L-shaped fold on the bottom of your fence wire, placing the folded part inwards toward the side of the fence that you know is the approach side for the beavers. Sounds good to me.

ODD-MATERIALS FENCING

One day while beaver fencing, I ran out of welded wire fence. But I had a surfeit of long pine timber that had been cut down while our cabin was being built. I made a zig-zag low fence of stacked pines, using a bunch of both metal and wooden stakes placed in pairs at the x-shaped stacking



intersection, to keep the logs from tumbling down as deer cross the fence. This fence is not pretty, and it is not tall, but it went together fast from random materials. Beavers haven't crossed it.

SINGLE TREE WRAP

You can protect individual trees with welded-wire fence. Make a wire mesh cylinder that is 2 feet tall or more. Give this wire tube a diameter bigger than the tree's trunk to allow for the tree growth.

PAINT-ON PROTECTION

Paint and sand is another method I have seen in beaver management guides. Add 1 cup of fine sand to a quart of latex paint. Do not do this to trees six feet high or less. I have no experience with this technique.

4) Resources

[Beaver Management Tools Literature Review and Guidance](#)

King County, Washington. This PDF is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of beaver management.

5) Our Covenants on Fences

Article 7.6 Architectural Review

All fences, walls or other barriers shall require approval by the ACC. No fence, wall, hedge, barrier or other improvements shall be erected or maintained along, on or within the areas reserved for easements and rights of way.