

BEAVERS IN THE MEADOWS: INFORMATION SHEET

1. Our Native Growth Protection Area (aka Wetland) is not a “natural habitat”
 - a. It is man-made. Prior to our development it was farmland – without any wetlands.
 - b. It was developed from the farmland into today’s Native Growth Protection Area as part of the development.
 - c. The beavers were not here first (i.e., before the development). They have migrated into the area since the beginning of development which included the creation of rainwater catch basins to assist with the local water supply.
 - d. Reference: Site Engineer for the developer, Meadows LLC.

2. Revised Code of Washington (RCW) section 77.36.030 [Note the “quotes”]
 - a. Allows trapping and removal of wildlife that damages property per item 2.b.
 - b. “Subject to limitations and conditions established by the commission, the owner, the owner's immediate family member, the owner's documented employee, or a tenant of real property may trap, consistent with RCW 77.15.194, or kill wildlife that is threatening human safety or causing property damage on that property, without the licenses required under RCW 77.32.010 or authorization from the director under RCW 77.12.240.”
 - c. The beaver(s) have only recently arrived on our property but are already causing damage: to several well-established trees and numerous shrubs and bushes with branches suitable for a beaver dam/lodge. There are lot more and worse possibilities (see discussion below).

3. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) [Note the “quotes”]
 - a. See: WDFW / Species & Habitats / Species in Washington / [Beavers](#)
 - b. “The owner, the owner’s immediate family, an employee, or a tenant of property may trap or kill a beaver on that property if the beaver is threatening human safety or causing property damage (RCW 77.36.030). In such cases, no special trapping permit is necessary for the use of live traps. However, a special trapping permit is required for the use of all traps other than live traps (RCW 77.15.192, 77.15.194; WAC 220-417-040).”
 - c. “Beaver relocation may be an option pursuant to RCW 77.32.585. With a permit, beavers may be relocated where beaver damage mitigation efforts have failed or are infeasible, where beavers are posing a public health and safety risk, or other irresolvable factors exist.”
 - d. “Lethal control may become necessary when all efforts to dissuade problem beavers fail.” [Note: we do not intend to use this option but, for the record, it is available.]
 - e. “Alternatively, you can hire a private individual who works directly with property owners on a fee basis to resolve problem beaver situations. See "Legal Status" below and Hiring a Wildlife Control Operator for additional information. Note: State wildlife offices do not provide animal removal services”.
 - f. Our efforts to date have, in fact, used a Wildlife Control Operator from Whatcom Wildlife Management who was recommended by WDFW. We will continue to use them or similarly authorized agents to assist with beaver control when required.

4. Existing and Potential Dangers Posed by Beavers
 - a. Downed trees

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- b. Dams that can cause localized floods and swamps.
- c. Blocking culverts that provide the rainwater outflow system for our ponds – potentially causing the water to overflow and erode or collapse the levees that contain the ponds.
- d. Conflict with dogs. Another reason to keep your dog on a leash.
- e. Beavers carry tularemia, giardiasis, parasites, and rabies. They can be infected through bites, body fluids, or infected water. An infected beaver can then transmit these diseases back into the water or to other vectors (such as biting insects) who can in turn infect humans, pets, and more beavers. And so on ...
- f. Note the role of infected water. Another reason for people and pets to stay on the path and out of the water.
- g. Home invasion. Yes, it has already happened here – a beaver exploring a garage. Perhaps sheltering from the weather.
- h. Over-population. In 1946 Argentina imported a mere 50 beavers from Canada to bolster its fur trade. Since then, they've swelled to a colony of more than 200,000 and have spread to Chile, felling endless trees in their wake. That's on a national scale. Imagine the ease and speed it could take on a neighborhood scale. We only have a few beavers now, but ...

5. Cost of Beaver Management

- a. ATSI (our Native Growth/Wetland contractor) Exclusion Plan
 - i. Initial one-time cost: \$50,000.
 - ii. Recurring cost to maintain exclusion effectiveness: \$2,000-3,000 per year.
 - iii. Impact on dues or special assessment: we might be able to afford the recurring cost, but we do not have the funds for the initial exclusion work – so a “special” assessment might be necessary. The cost issue would, however, be thoroughly vetted.
- b. The Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management ([ICWDM](#)) states that “it often is cost-prohibitive to exclude beavers from ponds, lakes, or impoundments.”
- c. The results of a study by Virginia Department of Transportation Study, published in 2008:
 - i. Average cost per site of beaver prevention/exclusion: \$10,707 per year.
 - ii. Average cost per site of population control (removal): \$994 per year.
 - iii. No information available about the initial costs of the sites in their survey.
 - iv. Comment. While the VDOT study sites are probably larger than ours, the fact remains that exclusion is much more costly than removal (in this case 10X).

6. Cost of Removing a Beaver

- a. Recent experience with Whatcom Wildlife Management: \$375 for two beaver removal attempts that failed when the beaver left – either because the water level receded too far or the removal attempts scared it away, at least temporarily. Future rates for this option are expected to be the about same.

7. Insurance Coverage

- a. The Meadows HOA insurance does not cover any type of damage from wildlife.

THE CONCLUSIONS

1. There are essentially two options:
 - a. Coexist with the beavers and either suffer the damage or exercise preventive measures.
 - b. Have the beavers removed from our site.
2. The "pros" for coexistence:
 - a. They are living creatures that undoubtedly don't want to be managed by humans.
 - b. Beavers and beaver activities are interesting, educational, and often cute.
 - c. They enhance our wetland sensory and intellectual experience.
3. The "pros" for removal
 - a. The price of coexistence is high. It is expensive to
 - i. Prevent damage from the beavers that are allowed to inhabit our site.
 - ii. Repair beaver damage that is not prevented.
 - b. The price of removal is low.
 - c. They are carriers of disease and are potentially dangerous for humans (especially children) and pets.
 - d. They are a potential threat to our homes due to damage to our rainwater outflow system stemming from their dams and culvert obstruction -- the possible result of which is the degradation of levees, local floods, and swamps.
 - e. Removal is not synonymous with euthanization. There are relocation options, which are left to and decided by the Wildlife Control Operator.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. For the time being: wait and see. Be vigilant but take no action.
2. If the beavers return and resume their destructive and dangerous behavior, then have them removed by an approved Wildlife Control Operator.
3. The Board recognizes and understands the anxiety involved with such action, but in researching this issue and interviewing professionals familiar with beavers taking up residence in communities, we believe that removal would be the best option when and if the beavers return and resume their destructive and potentially dangerous behavior.