

ACTIVITIES OF THE FORT DRUM FISH & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: BEAVER MANAGEMENT

Fort Drum's Fish & Wildlife Management Program is responsible for all fish and wildlife resources on the installation. The primary focus is to support and sustain the military mission, but supporting the mission takes many forms. We ensure compliance with state and federal regulations; review proposed actions for potential impacts to fish, wildlife and their habitats; monitor various environmental parameters to maintain healthy ecosystems; promote and manage outdoor recreation; and ensure good stewardship of lands for military training and the public in perpetuity. Beaver management is just one activity of the Fish & Wildlife Management Program.



Beaver in the Training Area.

If the Fish & Wildlife Management Program had only one activity to do, it would be beaver management. The abundance of wetlands, extensive stands of aspen and alder for food, a 20,000 acre Main Impact Area with limited access, and the Indian River and Black Creek serving as travel corridors across the installation, provide ideal conditions for an abundant beaver population on Fort Drum.

While beavers play an integral role in the ecology of Fort Drum and provide important habitat for various species, they can also create problems and adversely impact roads, culverts, and training maneuver areas and ranges. Fort Drum's Fish & Wildlife Management Program oversees all beaver management on Fort Drum and ensures compliance with the NYSDEC Standard Activities Permit which allows most forms of beaver management to occur.



A beaver trapped by APHIS-WS.

Because the beaver is one of the most sought after fur-bearing animals on Fort Drum, the encouragement of beaver trapping during the regular trapping season is the most simple and cost effective strategy to manage beaver populations. Recreational trappers can lower population levels while being able to utilize fur, meat and castor from the beaver, thus minimizing the waste of a resource. Removal of beaver outside the recreational trapping season is complaint-driven.

To facilitate trapping, annual aerial surveys were once conducted in late October (after leaf off) to record areas of beaver activity (noted usually by food caches or fresh cuttings or work on dams or lodges). This was done with the assistance of the 10th Mountain Division Aviation Brigade. Locations of beaver activity were noted and maps with the locations of active sites were made available to interested trappers. A joint use policy also exists to allow trappers access to training areas that are closed for military training dependent on authorization from Range Control.



Installing a water control device.

The Fish & Wildlife Management Program has a volunteer nuisance trapper program whereby volunteers are utilized primarily to trap beavers in nuisance situations in restricted areas. Attempts are made to do most of the trapping during the trapping season, but volunteers are also expected to assist outside the trapping season when necessary. USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services has also been contracted periodically to trap beaver in particularly difficult situations or other special circumstances.



A completed water control device. In Training Area 10B.

Another management strategy utilized is to install beaver tubes or water-control devices in areas of repeated beaver activity and flooding. Much of the actual work is done by various entities depending on the situation including Public Works-Roads and Grounds; Range Branch; USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services; and the Natural Resources Branch.

Trapping Season	# Beaver Harvested
1998-1999	443
1999-2000	714
2000-2001	510
2001-2002	470
2002-2003	133
2003-2004	479
2004-2005	280
2005-2006	335
2006-2007	444
2007-2008	308
2008-2009	482

YEAR	Beaver Killed for Damage Control	Nuisance Sites Cleared
2001	38	13
2002	164	24
2003	68	19
2004	116	34
2005	66	42
2006	137	47
2007	39	28
2008	9	27
2009	98	43

Since 2002, on average, approximately 30 culverts are cleaned, 10 dams are breached or removed, and 98 beavers are trapped and removed at 16 sites every year.

Stay tuned for the next installment about Fort Drum's Fish & Wildlife Management Program!

QUESTIONS? CALL THE FISH & WILDLIFE MGMT PROGRAM AT 772-9636, 772-9303, OR 772-4999.