

Beaver Management

A Comprehensive Plan for Beaver Management at Lake Barcroft

Our goal is a balanced relationship with Lake Barcroft wildlife that humanely minimizes wildlife conflicts, and protects and conserves our wildlife and forest resources.

Beavers are not new to Lake Barcroft. They have had two lodges on the Lake for many years. They even built a small beaver dam in a cove adjacent to the Beach 5 peninsula many years ago. For more than a decade the beaver population in the lake has remained stable. Beaver activity has been relatively mild on private property for a lake like ours, and is most apparent in the fall, when beavers are caching wood to carry them through the winter. Late spring through late summer, the research indicates 95% of the beaver's diet is submerged aquatic plants. Most waterfront properties have suffered some beaver damage to their trees over the years. Like all beavers, the beavers at Lake Barcroft are strongly territorial and will self-regulate population levels and deter new beavers from establishing new lodges in Lake Barcroft.

Strategy: Exclusion, Prevention and Protection

LBA gives priority to measures designed to exclude beaver from private property and prevent damage to docks and landscaping. The exclusion, prevention and protection strategy, similar to that practiced by the Fairfax County Park Authority, will protect Lake Barcroft forest resources and provide some trees and brush for existing beaver families to repair lodges and feed, while at the same time discouraging young or new beaver colonies in the lake. This strategy contemplates that property owners and the Lake Barcroft Association (LBA) may implement components of the strategy as the need arises, i.e. when beaver activity is noticed on the property. However, property owners who are especially sensitive to wildlife damage are encouraged to take a proactive approach and wrap trees and/or erect an exclusion barrier upon notification of this plan. Although property owners are responsible for maintenance/protection of their property, LBA and Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (WID) will attempt to provide an "early warning" of beaver activity whenever beaver damage is noted on lakefront property. However, the LBA and WID will assume no liability or responsibility for the lack of notification of individual property owners of beaver activity.

- **Waterfront Properties:** All waterfront property owners with important and/or valuable trees or shrubs are strongly encouraged to wrap their plantings to protect them from damage. Closely spaced trees or shrubs may be wrapped as a group. Properties with seawalls that have unprotected drainage ditches, low areas, or adjacent properties without seawalls that provide direct access to the lake, may be vulnerable to beaver damage. In some instances, residents with unprotected drainage swales or low areas may want to consider installing an unobtrusive barrier to prevent access in these areas. Most properties without seawalls have dense brush and tree growth on sloping terrain. To the extent practicable, barriers may be considered across the breadth of the property to exclude the beaver. This barrier or fencing must be approved in advance by the Architectural Review Committee and should appropriately balance the goal of beaver exclusion with the concern for Lakefront aesthetics. Alternatively, trees may be coated with a mixture of paint or varnish (matching tree color) and fine sand. (See separate handout for details and more options on protecting your property: Tips for Protecting Property from Beavers)
- **LBA Support:** The LBA will provide guidance to property owners who wish to construct beaver exclusion barriers on their property or wrap trees for protection. The Lake Barcroft Architectural Review Committee will develop sample specifications to simplify and expedite the review process. LBA Environmental Quality Committee will periodically hold beaver deterrent workshops and educational seminars to help residents protect their properties and trees. Additionally, the United

States' Humane Wildlife Services program can provide wildlife conflict resolution services for a fee to residents experiencing beaver problems. (See separate handout on Beaver and Wildlife Conflict Services).

- **Lodges:** Property owners should not remove or otherwise disturb beaver lodges. Removing lodges will only encourage the beavers to move and build a new lodge, potentially taking down large numbers of trees and other vegetation and can be dangerous. Property owners should contact the LBA when they see evidence of new beaver construction activity. Circumstances where a beaver has obstructed access to a dock or created a hazard will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine a solution that may include removal.
- **Trapping:** Beavers may not be trapped in the water or on LBA common areas. Although trapping of beavers has been carried out on the Lake in years past, this has proved ineffective and is an inhumane method of wildlife conflict resolution. Many of the currently damaged trees on the lake were damaged when trapping was used to eliminate the beaver. Also, the Commonwealth of Virginia requires that all trapped beavers must be killed on the spot or die in the trapping procedure. Steel jaw leg-hold traps are too dangerous to be used in populated areas and the other methods are particularly brutal, leaving the beaver to struggle for hours in a snare, possibly witnessed by children or drawn into the water to drown. Beavers can stay under water for up to 12 minutes struggling to free themselves from the trap until they finally succumb. Accordingly, the LBA discourages trapping of beavers on private property within Lake Barcroft because it is inhumane, ultimately ineffective and contrary to our strategy of taking advantage of the territorial behavior of the existing beavers that will protect the lake from new beaver intrusion. Trapping is potentially dangerous to pets, children and other wildlife while having other unintended negative consequences, including the risk of liability.
- The LBA and WID will confer as to the best way to handle serious beaver/human conflict. In the rare instances of a sick or hazardous animal, LBA will contact appropriate authorities to deal with the animal.

Wildlife is part of our common heritage. All Lake Barcroft residents benefit from common ownership, while at the same time assuming a shared responsibility for the wildlife's well being. The LBA and WID recognize that beavers are a natural component of the environment and they contribute to the quality and diversity of a natural habitat. Beavers provide important ecosystem services, for example from late spring to fall, beavers eat emergent aquatic vegetation and roots of plants such as spatterdock and cattails, which helps protect the lake, and keep aquatic plants in check and from clogging areas of the lake.

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