Managers of wildlife aim to find a balance between people and beavers. Some individuals find beaver activity to be beneficial, while others view it as destructive. The creation of wetlands from beaver activity provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. However, some only see the tree destruction that occurs.

The M-NCPPC recognizes the importance of beavers and their activity in parks, but also strives to protect private property. When beaver damage occurs on private property adjacent to parkland, landowners are provided with recommendations on how to prevent that damage. In the event of flooding on private property, steps are taken to confine it to park property. On park property beaver management is restricted to park personnel. Tree cutting on park property does occur as a result of beaver activity; but is tolerated if there is no danger to roadways, power lines, and private property.

Parks serve to provide habitat to a diverse wildlife population, including beavers. Like all creatures, beavers need space to build their homes and thrive. People and beavers can live together and share the resources parks provide. The footprint of people and the paw print of beavers both have a place within our parklands.
Beavers are semi-aquatic mammals that spend much of their time in water. Their semi-aquatic nature allows them to swim and navigate through water effectively, using their webbed feet and flat tails as paddles. They are well-adapted to living in wetland environments, where they construct dams and lodges to maintain water levels and create their living space. Beavers are also skilled swimmers, able to remain underwater for extended periods to search for food or avoid predators.

**Habitat**

Beavers are a keystone species living throughout North America. In a stream valley setting, beavers construct dams resulting in flooding. These flooded areas become wetlands, which are host to large amounts of biodiversity including fish, turtles, frogs, birds, and waterfowl. Wetlands raise the water table, helping promote aquatic and streamside plant growth. They also serve to reduce erosion and sediment loads, as well as, improve water quality as toxic substances like pesticides are broken down and filtered out.

**Lifecycle and Reproduction**

Beavers are monogamous creatures who only mate with one partner and breed annually. The life span of a beaver is between 5-10 years, with some living up to 20 years. In the event one mate dies, the other may find another partner. Beavers normally live in family units consisting of an adult pair and two years of offspring. Typically when they reach age two beavers leave their parents in search of a place to build their own lodge and start a family. Bachelor beavers, either male or female, are not common and live alone.

Sexual maturity for beavers occurs before age three. However, breeding does not begin until a suitable mate and a good area to build a home is located. Breeding season is January through February. Beavers use oil producing glands to mark their territory and signal to potential mates they are welcome to share the area. Gestation lasts about four months and litters usually are between two and six young, called kits. They are born with a full fur coat, open eyes, and underwater swimming usually happens within a few hours of birth.

**Diet**

Beavers are vegetarians that eat the cambium layer, or inner bark, of trees, such as aspen, willow, cottonwood, dogwood, and many other tree and shrub varieties. When in season, they also eat water lily tubers, clover, corn, wheat, oats, and various meadow and wetland plants.

Although a beaver’s habits have many positive effects, conflicts between human and beaver land uses can arise. When dam construction causes backyard tree damage and flooding, beaver habitat creation can become a nuisance. Before beginning beaver control action, it is best to assess the problem thoroughly. Are beavers truly causing damage or creating a hardship? Is the beaver’s activity creating a safety concern or just an aesthetic concern?

**Trickle Leveler**

A trickle leveler, or drain pipe, is a perforated pipe that is put through a dam allowing water levels to stabilize. The beavers can continue to maintain their dam while flooding into roads and yards is prevented.

**Tree Damage Prevention**

Sturdy fencing at least three feet high made of wire mesh can prevent beavers from destroying backyard trees. The fence should be placed 8-10 inches from the tree and supported by metal rods to avoid damage.