



**Subject: Public Safety Notice Regarding the Potential Impacts of
Beaver Activity on or Near Man-Made Dams**

Dear Dam Owner:

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Office of Dam Safety (ODS) is contacting you to share information regarding the potential impacts of beaver activity on or near man-made dams. Beavers and other rodents can impact the structural integrity and performance of man-made dams. Management of beaver activity is an essential component of ensuring the structural integrity and safe operations of a man-made dam and to limit potential liability.

Beavers are naturally attracted to running water and will often try to plug spillways, intake structures, outlet works, channels, etc. with their cuttings, mud, rocks, and debris. Beaver activity on or near man-made dams can result in elevated water levels both upstream and downstream of man-made dams. The elevated water levels can cause significant issues such as increased pressure on a man-made dam, sudden uncontrolled releases of water from behind a beaver dam, erosion of embankments, or reduced discharge capacity, etc., all of which may lead to failure of a man-made dam.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has compiled several resources that contain information relative to the impact of beaver activity on man-made dams:

- FEMA 145 Dam Safety an Owners Guidance Manual (available for download on the ODS website at the following link: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fema-145-dam-safety-an-owners-guidance-manual/download>)
- FEMA 473 Impacts of Animals on Earthen Dams (available for download at the following link: <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema-473.pdf>)
- FEMA L-264 Dam Owner's Guide to Animal Impacts on Earthen Dams (available for download at the following link: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema-l264_dam_owners_guide_animal_impacts_earthen_dams.pdf)

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife has also compiled several resources regarding beaver related issues. Those resources are available at the following link: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-about-beavers>. Please note that located at the bottom of this webpage is a section titled "Additional Resources" that may prove helpful, including a resource titled "A Citizen's Guide to Addressing Beaver Conflicts".

Routinely removing beaver cuttings and other debris is one way to try and mitigate beaver activity, but beavers can rebuild their obstructions in a very short span of time, even overnight. Trapping beavers may be done by the owner during the appropriate season, but beavers can migrate up and down a stream or river system and proliferate wherever habitat appears suitable. Installation of various beaver management devices may be an alternative to trapping. Continual observation is required on the part of a man-made dam owner to limit beaver activity on or near man-made dams.



Before engaging in any beaver management activities, you must contact your local Board of Health and/or Conservation Commission to obtain any required permits. You are reminded that as a property owner, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all local, state, and/or federal regulations that may pertain to your property, including, but not limited to, securing any necessary permits. You may also wish to engage the services of a beaver management specialist.

As a dam owner, you are responsible for maintaining and operating your dam in a manner that is protective of public safety. Per 302 CMR 10.13 (1), you are reminded that a dam "owner shall be responsible and liable for damage to property of others or injury to persons, including but not limited to, loss of life resulting from the operation, failure of or mis-operation of a dam."

You are reminded that it is the obligation of the dam owner to contact and notify all applicable local, state, and federal permitting agencies prior to conducting any work at a dam including manipulation of water levels.

Thank you for your attention to this important public safety concern and for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William C. Salomaa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" being the most prominent part.

William C. Salomaa, Director
Office of Dam Safety