

# **MONTGOMERY VILLAGE FOUNDATION BEAVER CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

## **Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of this policy is to effectively minimize and resolve conflicts between beavers and people on or adjacent to parkland, so as to promote peaceful coexistence, and to standardize conflict resolution techniques with beavers, based upon applicable laws and regulations, approved Foundation natural resource plans and objectives, accepted ecological principles, wildlife techniques, and appropriate animal welfare concerns.

### Objectives:

1. Promote understanding and tolerance of beavers and their activities.
2. Provide educational materials on techniques for preventing or minimizing beaver damage and conflicts.
3. Establish beaver impact mitigation procedures to safeguard private property, public infrastructure, and parkland.

## **Background:**

Beavers are aquatic mammals that can be found almost anywhere there is a year-round supply of water. During the warm months of the year, these herbivores feed primarily on water plants, leaves, and other green vegetation. During the colder months, when these foods are unavailable, they feed mostly on the inner bark of trees. In the fall large numbers of trees may be felled and the branches dragged into the water and anchored near the entrance to their lodge as a winter food supply. The lodge usually begins as a burrow on the bank of a stream, pond, or lake. The entrance to the den is under water and leads to a chamber above the water level. As dams are built and water levels rise, sticks and mud are added to the lodge site to increase the height of the dwelling and may result in the typical cone-shaped lodge. A typical lodge will be home to four to eight beavers- a breeding pair, their offspring from the current year and those from the previous year. In early spring beavers that are approaching two years of age are forced from the colony to search for unoccupied habitat, find a mate, and establish a new colony.

Beavers can be among the most beneficial of the area's wildlife. Stimulated by the sound of running water they construct dams to create ponds and wetlands. These areas provide habitat for a tremendous array of plants and animals; help control flooding by detaining stormwater runoff; enhance ground water recharge; and improve water quality by trapping sediment, nutrients, and pollutants. In removing tree cover, beaver activity can promote new vegetative growth that provides a variety of successional stage habitats.

However, beavers have the capacity to negatively impact the environment. Beaver activity can cause removal of and damage to trees on private property, tree cutting on park property in high use areas, flooding of parkland adjacent to private homes and the threat of flooding to private property. Other problems include flooding of sanitary sewers, clogged storm drains, and stormwater management facilities.

Benefits and detriments of beaver activities often occur simultaneously at a single location. Because of varying degrees of tolerance levels among people to beaver activity, there are disagreements among people on how best to “deal” with beaver conflicts. Therein lies the natural resources conflict resolution challenge and the necessity to establish conflict resolution guidelines.

### **BEAVER CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY:**

Definition:

Beaver conflict resolution consists of all actions undertaken by Montgomery Village Foundation (MVF) Recreation and Parks Department staff in coordination with the MVF Committee on the Environment (COE) with the approval of the Board of Directors for the express purpose of mitigating impacts of beaver activity whether those actions are initiated by staff, COE or Board or are in response to public inquiries.

Conflict Resolution Coordination and Decisions:

In consultation with the MVF Committee on the Environment (COE), MVF Recreation and Parks Department staff will review and coordinate conflict resolution actions with regard to beavers on MVF property.

Conflict Resolution:

The primary approach to conflict resolution is exclusion, which includes fencing of individual trees or property lines, and water leveling devices that maintain acceptable water levels without disturbing beaver activities. No harassment or any lethal means will be permitted under this policy.

## **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES:**

All public inquires about beaver activity originating from MVF property, and indicating a potential problem, will be investigated in the field by MVF Recreation and Parks Department staff, and report thereof given to the COE and the Board of Directors. Where potential beaver conflicts are identified, beaver activity will be evaluated for the existence of, or potential for 1) impact to private property; 2) impact to public infrastructure, including park resources, facilities and services; or 3) impact to public health and safety. The significance of these impacts will determine the type of management action taken, but all actions will follow established impact mitigation procedures.

Complainants, and landowners adjacent to the complainant's property, will be informed of Montgomery Village Foundation's beaver policies and procedures. An informative brochure that features beaver natural history and the MVF beaver conflict resolution policies and procedures will be provided upon request or available on the MVF website. Residents will also be made aware of volunteer help available.

### **Impact to MVF Property**

1. In the case of impact to MVF property, MVF Recreation and Parks Department staff will take management actions to protect park resources, facilities, and services. Residents will be provided with educational materials and encouraged to accommodate the beavers and tolerate some minor inconveniences. It is important to note that damage to trees on Foundation property, in the absence of other impacts, does not necessarily constitute reason for conflict resolution action. Some tree cutting and damage must be accepted in order to support beavers. In order to determine overall impacts to natural resources, a field investigation will be conducted by MVF Recreation and Parks staff. If staff determines that the level of impact warrants action, then staff will implement exclusionary techniques, such as fencing to deter feeding activity on trees. Water leveling devices may also be employed at dammed areas to maintain acceptable water levels without disturbing beaver activities. Reports of all such damage complaints and actions will be made to the COE and Board on a timely basis.

### **Impact to Private Property**

1. In the case of impact to private property, the property owner will be provided with educational materials and encouraged to accommodate the beavers and tolerate some minor inconvenience. Where practical, residents must implement specified exclusion measures, and should consider that sturdy fencing is the only foolproof means of exclusion. Individual trees are best wrapped with hardware cloth or welded wire fencing forming a cylinder standing six inches away from the trunk and at least 3-ft high in a manner approved by the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

2. In situations where exclusion measures are not feasible on private property or prove ineffective, as in the case of flooding, MVF Recreation and Parks Department may carry out exclusionary measures on MVF property as described above.
3. Reports of all such damage complaints and actions will be made to the COE and Board on a timely basis.

Approved by MVF Board of Directors – July 26, 2001