

CPW Beaver Conservation and Management Strategy

*Parks & Wildlife Commission Meeting
January 14, 2026*



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Photo credit: Mark Beardsley/EcoMetrics

Presentation Overview

- Beaver Strategy development process
- Stakeholder engagement: approach and cross-cutting themes
- Beaver Strategy goal & individual chapter goals
- Chapters 3 - 7: context, strategies, and actions
 - Chapter 3: Population and Habitat Status and Monitoring
 - Chapter 4: Beaver Harvest Management
 - Chapter 5: Beaver Restoration Opportunities
 - Chapter 6: Living with Beaver: Non-lethal conflict resolution
 - Chapter 7: Translocation Policy and Protocol
- Next steps and final reflections



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Beaver Strategy Development Process

- **Phase 1** - CPW internal engagement
 - November 2024 - June 2025
- **Phase 2** - Public scoping, external engagement, and strategy drafting
 - July 2025 - February 2026
- **Phase 3** - Implementation
 - March 2026 and beyond



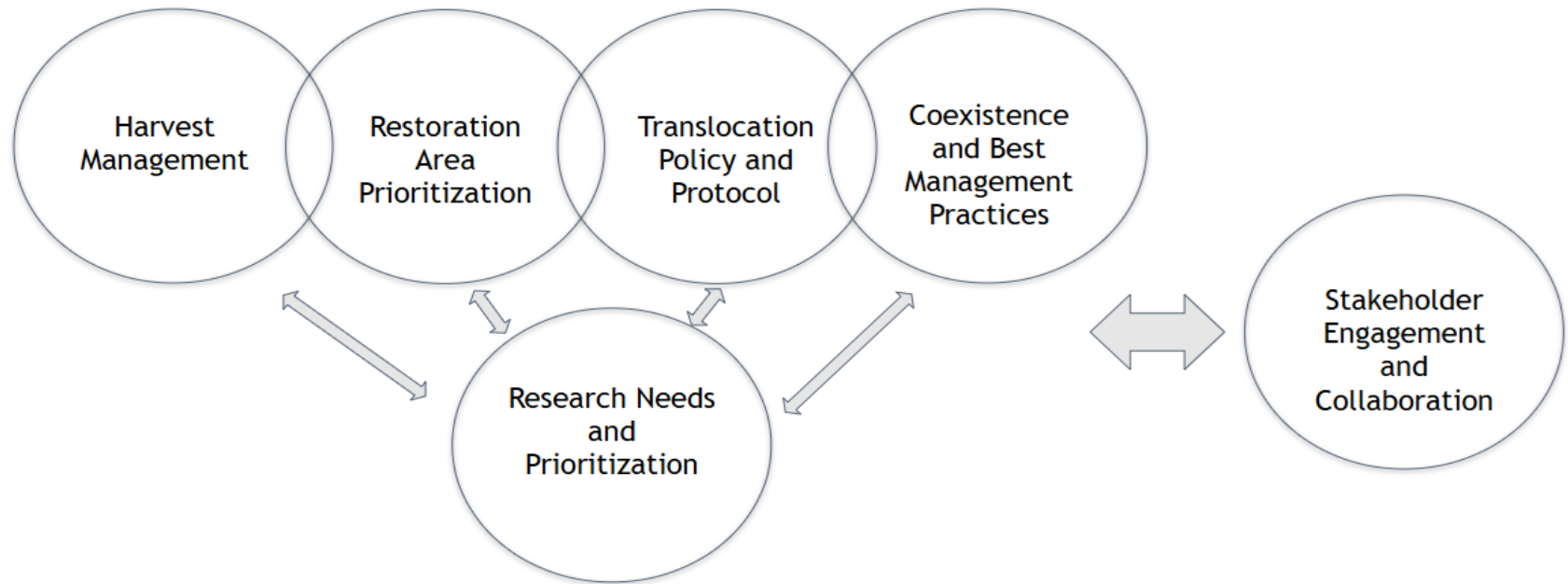
CPW Internal Working Group

- **Goal: Engage staff to understand CPW's priorities in the realm of beaver management**
 - 26 staff members
 - Representation from most branches and regions of CPW
 - 1 AG representative, 1 DNR representative
 - Split among six topical sub-groups who met four times monthly (November 2024 - February 2025)
 - Identified beaver management planning needs and developed a Scope of Work for contractor support in strategy development



CPW Internal Working Group

Working group structure (six sub-groups)



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Core Team Formation

- Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP)
- Keystone Policy Center: core team facilitation and external engagement
- Corday Natural Resources Consulting
- Four CPW staff: Wetlands Program Coordinator, Native Aquatic Species Coordinator, Policy and Engagement Specialist, Carnivore and Furbearer Program Coordinator



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Scoping Phase Engagement Process

- **12 focus groups** with **170 participants** - conducted late July through late August 2025
- **Online comment form** with more than 300 respondents - open late July through late August 2025
- **Technical advisors sessions** - 3 sessions conducted with **38 participants** late July through late August 2025
- **2 cross-sector focus groups** with **43** individuals - September 2025
- **CPW Working Group** focus group - September 2025
- A **Scoping Phase Engagement Report** synthesizing all feedback will be included as an appendix to the draft and final strategy
- **All scoping feedback was considered** in the development of the draft strategy



Scoping Phase Focus Group Sectors

(in order of occurrence)

- Water Users and Managers
- Conservation Funders
- Beaver Advocates
- Sportspersons and Beaver Trappers/Hunters
- Agriculture and Landowners
- Watershed Coalitions
- Local Government
- Wildlife and Conservation
- Nuisance Operators and Wildlife Rehabilitators
- Tribal and Indigenous Interests
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Mixed Sector



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Draft Beaver Strategy

- Posted draft Beaver Strategy and all appendices on CPW Engage for public comment: November 17 – December 17, 2026
- Currently synthesizing all comments for consideration in the final Beaver Strategy
- The final Beaver Strategy release by end of February 2026

Colorado Beaver Conservation and Management Strategy

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Draft for Public Comment - November 2025



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Purpose

“...increase and sustain the prevalence of beaver and beaver-influenced wetlands in suitable habitats for the benefit of Colorado’s stream and wetland ecosystems and the array of wildlife species that utilize them.”

Goal

“Increase beaver populations and beaver-occupied wetland habitats in Colorado until social or ecological carrying capacity is reached.”



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Individual Chapter Goals

(3) Population and Habitat Status and Monitoring: Improve knowledge of beaver wetland habitat and beaver populations in Colorado at multiple scales.

(4) Beaver Harvest Management: Manage beaver populations for continued sustainable avocational harvest.

(5) Beaver Restoration Opportunities: Support a thriving beaver population in Colorado by identifying opportunities and encouraging strategic restoration of ecologically and socially suitable historical, but currently unoccupied, beaver habitats.

(6) Living with Beaver and Nonlethal Conflict Resolution: Promote the widespread adoption of nonlethal solutions to common beaver conflicts when such solutions are appropriate and feasible.

(7) Translocation Policy and Protocol: Optimize translocation as a tool to support restoration objectives by providing a standard permitting process that maximizes translocation success while reducing the risk of disease and Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) spread.



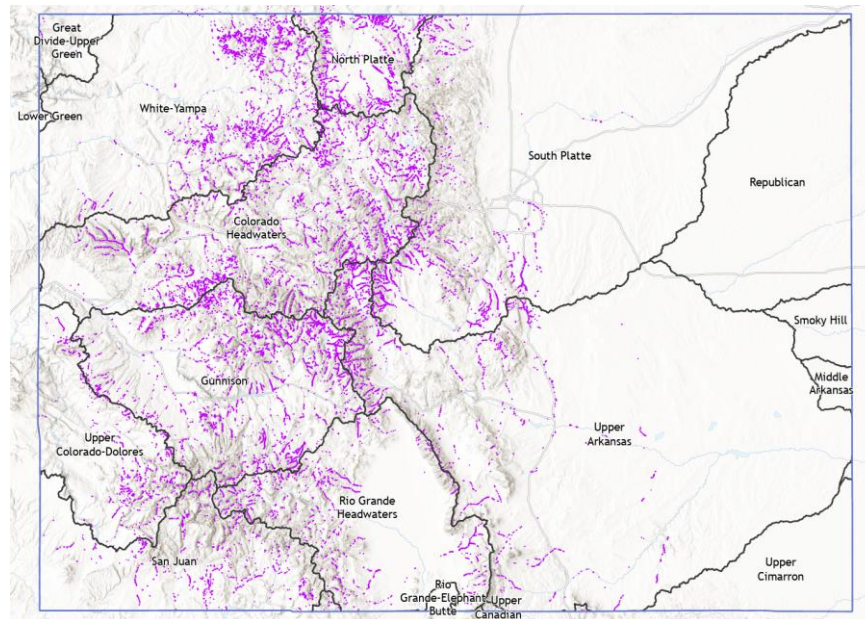
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Chapter 3: Population and Habitat Status and Monitoring

- Population goals are occupancy based, not abundance based
 - But population estimates needed for harvest caps (Chapter 4)
- Colorado beaver population through time
 - 1941: ~48,000 - 50,000
 - 1965: ~60,000
 - Present estimate: 43,000 - 64,000
 - Bias likely low: dam-building only
- Need for better information



Colorado Beaver Activity Mapper (COBAM):
Beaver Ponds, 2013 -2021



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Chapter 3: Population and Habitat Status and Monitoring

Goal: Improve knowledge of beaver wetland habitat and beaver populations in Colorado at multiple scales.

Strategy 1: Estimate spatial extent of beaver wetlands & population size at statewide & watershed scales

Strategy 2: Estimate beaver occupancy – statewide & HUC10 scales



Chapter 4: Harvest Management

Current Beaver Management



- Managed as furbearer species
- Regulated, licensed season for avocational harvest
- Impact of Amendment 14



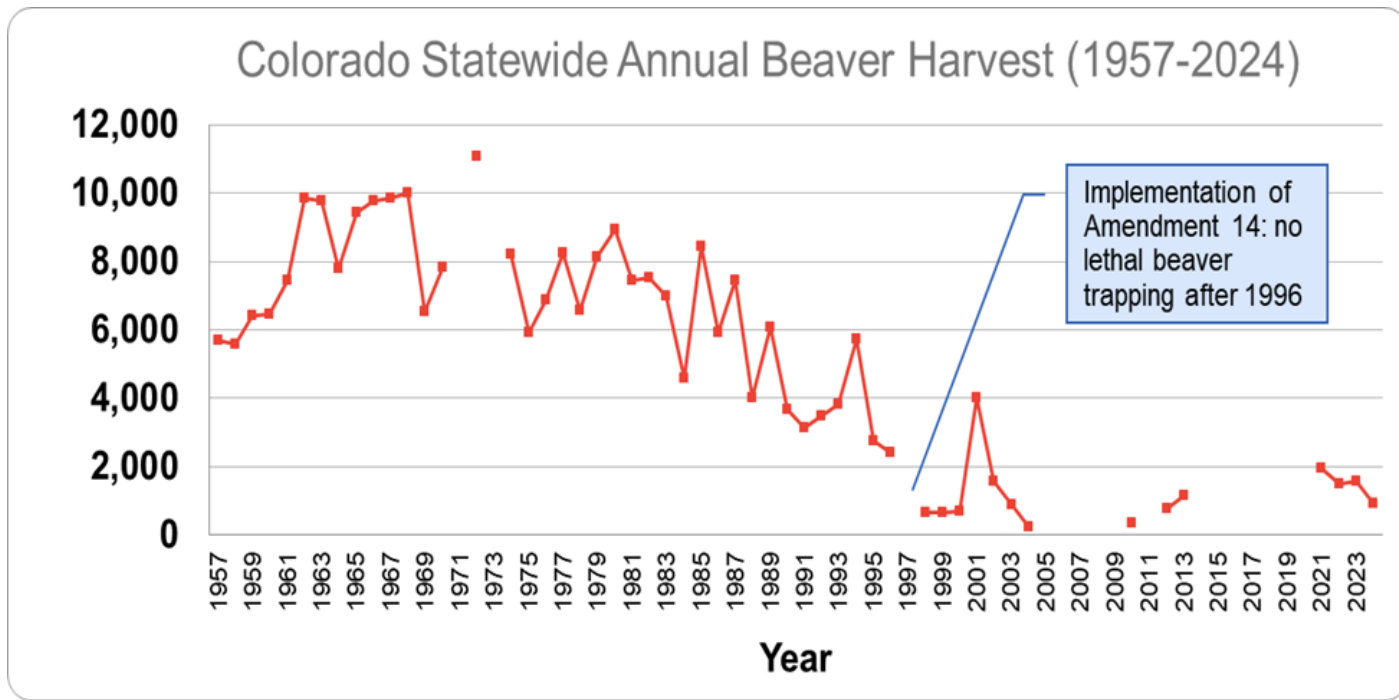
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Chapter 4: Harvest Management

Historic Harvest Levels



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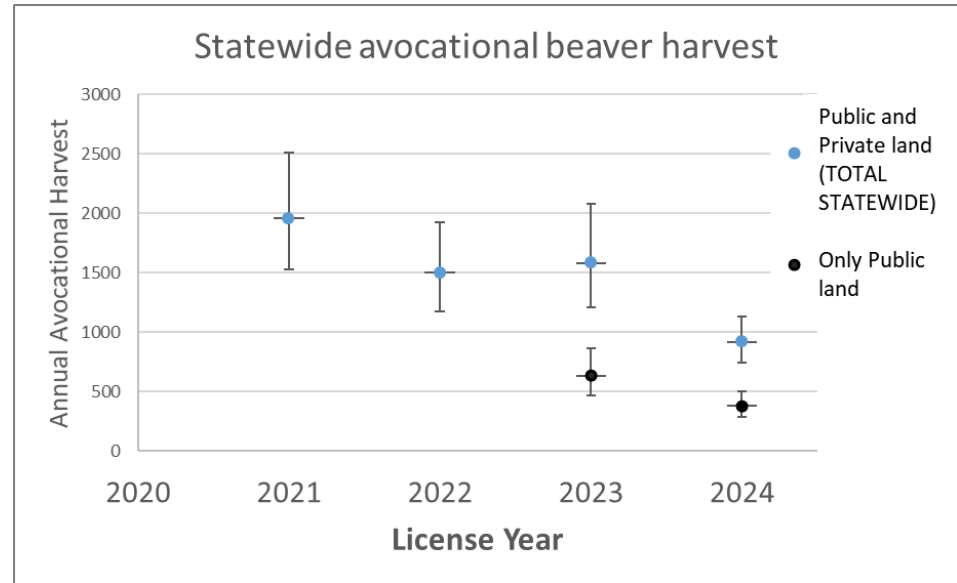
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Chapter 4: Harvest Management

Harvest and Mortality Information

- Current avocational harvest at statewide scale is at most 2-4%
- CDA has jurisdiction over individual conflict beaver on private land
- Other sources of human mortality



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Chapter 4: Harvest Management

Goal: Manage beaver populations for continued sustainable avocational harvest

Strategy 1: Develop sustainable harvest caps at major watershed scale

Strategy 2: Gain spatial resolution on harvest data



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Chapter 4: Harvest Management

Goal: Manage beaver populations for continued sustainable avocational harvest

Strategy 3: Evaluate harvest levels in beaver restoration opportunity watersheds (BROWs)

Strategy 4: Evaluate survival and sources of mortality in 2-3 pilot HUC10s



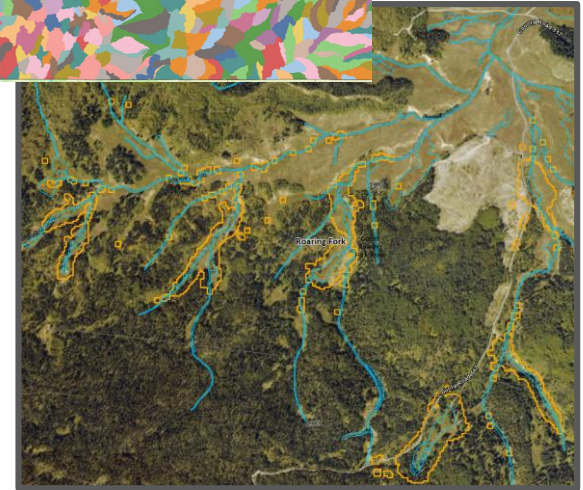
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Chapter 5: Beaver Restoration Opportunities

- Restoration includes strategically targeting stream restoration to entice colonization by beaver and/or beaver translocation
- Utilize COBAM: Currently occupied, potentially suitable (historic NWI and modeled)
- BROWs- Beaver Restoration Opportunity Watersheds (HUC10) - greatest opportunity for restoration
 - Considers ratio of occupied vs. potential suitable habitat
 - Additional factors: land use, infrastructure, etc.



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Chapter 5: Beaver Restoration Opportunities

Goal: Support a thriving beaver population in Colorado by identifying opportunities and encouraging strategic restoration of ecologically and socially suitable historical, but currently unoccupied, beaver habitats.

Strategy 1: Identify greatest opportunities for beaver restoration

Strategy 2: Increase occupation of unoccupied suitable habitat

Strategy 3: Create & maintain beaver-focused tools & resources



Chapter 6: Living with Beaver- Non-lethal Solutions to Conflict Resolution

Context & Trends

- Beavers are frequently involved in human-beaver conflicts at the interface of aquatic systems and human infrastructure.
- Human-beaver conflicts are a significant source of beaver mortality
- “Living with beaver” approaches have improved substantially in the past decade and are an emphasis of the Beaver Strategy



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(Photos courtesy of the Beaver Institute)

Chapter 6: Living with Beaver- Non-lethal Solutions to Conflict Resolution

Context & Trends (Stakeholder Feedback)

- Desired **emphasis on coexistence**
- Private landowners should **continue to have the ability to lethally manage beaver**
- **Beavers aren't a fit everywhere**
- **Financial assistance or incentives**
- **Technical assistance** should be available to support landowners
- **Training** is essential for effective installations that support increased acceptance and use
- **Maintenance of coexistence devices** is important for their continued utility and acceptance
- **Both the messaging and messenger are important** for developing education & outreach
- Opportunities for **local partnerships**



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Chapter 6: Living with Beaver- Non-lethal Solutions to Conflict Resolution

Goal: Promote the widespread adoption of nonlethal solutions to common beaver conflicts when such solutions are appropriate and feasible.

Strategy 1: Increase education about the value of beaver and available nonlethal solutions

Strategy 2: Collaborate with partners on comprehensive outreach that reaches diverse key audiences

Strategy 3: Expand statewide capacity of CPW and partners for coexistence through formal training and by supporting volunteer networks

Strategy 4: Support the establishment of cost-share programs for landowners



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Chapter 7: Translocation Policy and Protocol

Context & Trends

- Translocation- human assisted movement of individuals beyond their home range
- A potential outcome in stepwise conflict resolution
- Used carefully and strategically to support beaver restoration objectives
 - Survival and success of beaver translocations are variable
 - Concerns about unintended spread of ANS and pathogens that can harm other wildlife



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Chapter 7: Translocation Policy and Protocol

Context & Trends

- Continued relevance as a tool for beaver management in Colorado
- Insights from translocation programs elsewhere in west
- Increasing interest in coordinated efforts from partners
- Need for standardized permitting
- Concerns around disease spread, specifically aquatic pathogens
- Need for holding facilities



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Chapter 7: Translocation Policy and Protocol

Challenges & Opportunities

- Hundreds of human-beaver conflicts each year in CO
- Timing is a challenge, most beaver conflicts occur in spring and fall, but beaver translocation most successful in summer months
- Remote sensing tools can help prioritize release sites to benefit restoration objectives
- Risk of spreading pathogens is not well understood, but topic is ripe for collaborative research
- Need for holding facilities for quarantine and whole colony capture
- Well adept nuisance operators already at work in Colorado



Chapter 7: Translocation Policy and Protocol

Goal and Strategies

Goal: Optimize translocation as a tool to support restoration objectives by providing a standardized permitting process that maximizes translocation success while reducing the risk of disease and ANS spread

Strategy 1: Develop a standardized permitting process that is streamlined, with a focus on efficiently pairing beaver conflicts with available release sites

Strategy 2: Develop translocation procedures that maximize beaver wellbeing and translocation success, while minimizing risk of pathogen spread and unintended negative consequences to other wildlife and habitat management objectives



STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

- *Feb 28, 2026 Final Strategy Published*
 - *Update CPW Engage page*
 - *Update stakeholders*
 - *Press release*
 - *Funding & Capacity Timeline*



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