

GEHR Watershed Minute #20

Beaver: (204 words)

American Beavers are semi-aquatic rodents native to the Great Egg Harbor Watershed. Beavers have webbed hind-feet, a broad, scaly tail, poor eyesight, keen senses of hearing, smell, and touch, and can weigh over 55 pounds.

Beavers are active at dawn and dusk. They travel by water, and eat willow, birch, and poplar bark, twigs, grasses, and the roots of water plants.

Beavers are best known for their natural trait of building dams in rivers and streams, and building their homes known as beaver lodges in the resulting pond. Beaver dams can be disruptive, causing flooding upstream, and disturbing natural habitats.

On the other hand, dam building is extremely beneficial in restoring wetlands that provide habitat biodiversity and flood control, and cleaning water quality by breaking down toxins and trapping silt. The damage that beavers create is quicker and easier to see than their long term benefits, so they are often trapped and relocated or trapped and killed for their fur.

Beaver were overharvested for fur and meat in the 19th century, but their populations have recovered today thanks to conservation and management. Beaver trapping is currently permitted in the watershed, but the number of permits and bag limits are closely controlled.