

A new West Seattle film

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📷 1 of 2 | NOW: From left, "The Freelance Beaver Detective" Pamela Adams, waterway documentarian Tom Reese and filmmaker Kay D. Ray stand next to Longfellow Creek's northern culvert and trash-catcher "Monstro." (Clay Eals)

By [Clay Eals](#)

Special to The Seattle Times

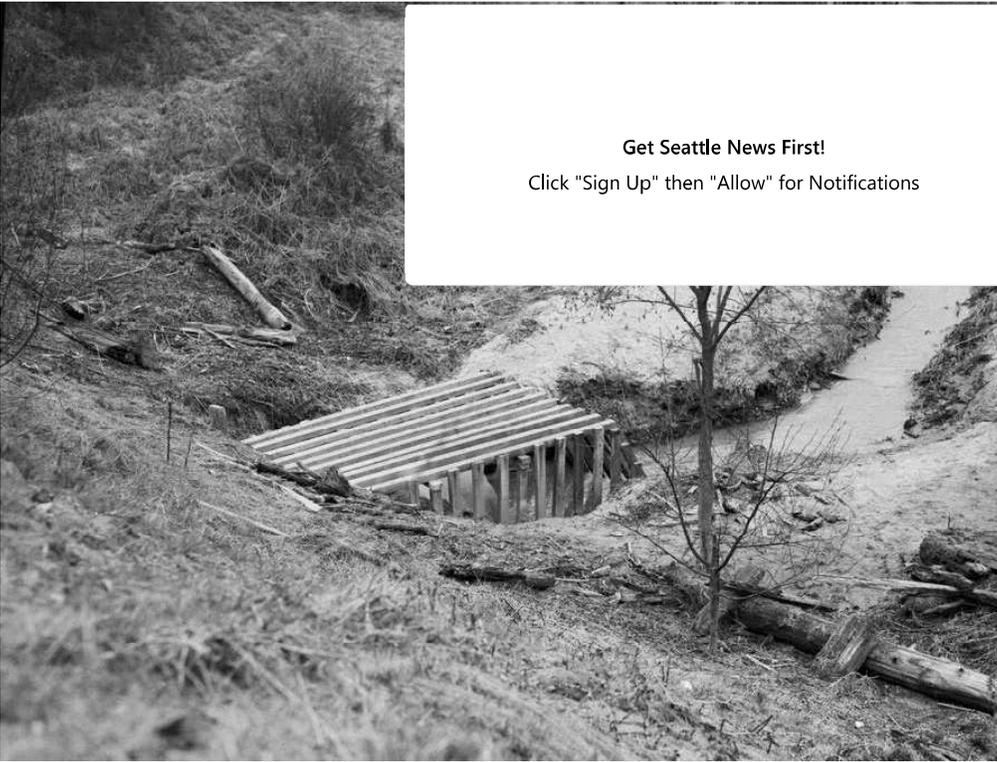
WE'RE DEEP INTO a construction craze, the landscape changing overnight. Of course, this is hardly news anymore. Except this particular furor is fueled by ... beavers.

Yes, beavers, the sizable waterborne rodents that many of us have encountered in copious cartoons, from Mr. Busy in "Lady and the Tramp" to the dam builders in "Curious George." With exaggerated buckteeth and paddle tails as tools of their trade, these amiable avatars sport wide-eyed smiles and hard hats to convey a busy, zesty persona.

But few Seattleites have seen actual beavers. That's because they surface primarily at night. So we aren't aware of their existence here.

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1 of 2 | THEN: Longfellow Creek, looking south from its culvert and trash-catcher north of West Seattle Golf Course, on Feb. 9, 1938. (Seattle Municipal Archives)



NOW: An adult beaver and kit communicate along Longfellow Creek near Yancy Street. "The Freelance Beaver Detective" will be shown Sept. 14 in the global Documentaries Without Borders International Film Festival. For more... (Pamela Adams) [More](#) ✓

Pamela Adams is out to change that. The one-time California fine-arts student and insurance broker moved to Alki three years ago and joined a wide, if unheralded, world of beaver advocates, morphing into what she calls "[The Freelance Beaver Detective](#)."

That's also the title of Fauntleroy filmmaker Kay D. Ray's new 56-minute documentary that, besides Adams, features other beaver promoters and city officials, along with waterway chronicler and former Seattle Times photographer Tom Reese. The documentary will be shown Sept. 14 in the global Documentaries Without Borders International Film Festival.

Adams' passion to track beavers for
Stretching 4½ miles, according to t
and beneath Westwood Village mal
Elliott Bay.

Despite myriad human barriers, Ad
and lodges, creating ponds that fos
hunted to near extinction for their 1

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Seattle's Longfellow Creek.
s south to north, from Roxhill Park
nd the West Seattle Bridge, in

ently chew trees and build dams
ries past when beavers were

“The beavers are actually water keepers,” Adams says in the film. “They’re doing what they can, what they’ve always done for thousands of years, and they are part of our ecosystem. In this place that we have urbanized, we’ve channelized, we’ve paved over, they’re doing the natural process.”

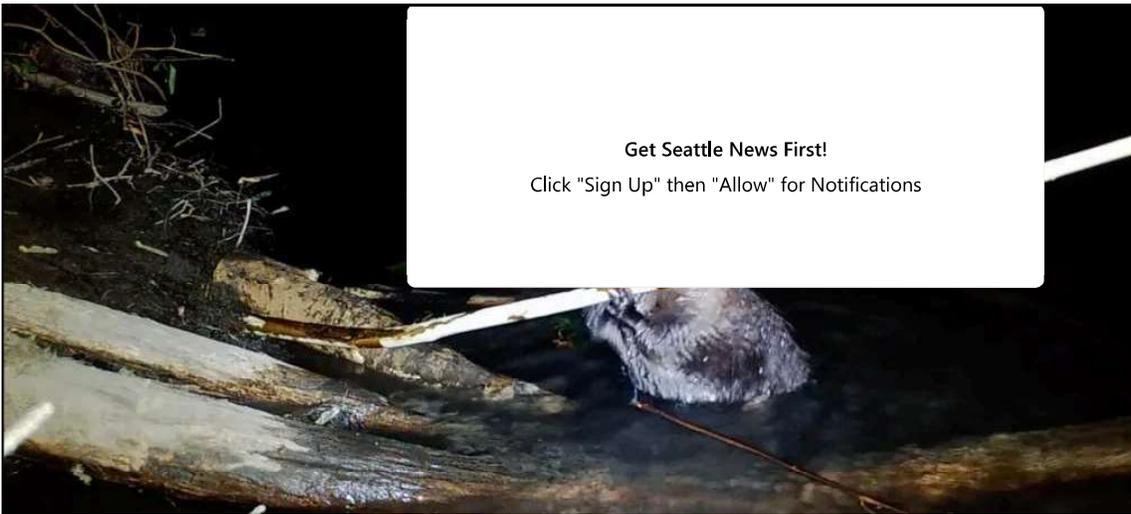


1 of 2 | NOW: In this scene from "The Freelance Beaver Detective" documentary, Adams cuts wire to protect a homeowner's tree along Longfellow Creek. (Courtesy Kay D. Ray)

A key example: Just north of West Seattle Golf Course, the creek's culminating culvert and a trash-catcher that Reese nicknamed "Monstro" (for the vicious whale in "Pinocchio") have existed for at least 87 years.

Adams' advocacy does require compromise. She works with Seattle Public Utilities to keep ponds from flooding footbridges and other property. She also buys and installs wire fencing to protect homeowners' trees.

But it's hard not to be captivated by the film's industrious critters. In scores of sequences, many recorded with night-vision cameras, the real beavers are more compelling than any cartoon.



NOW: A beaver chews on a branch along Longfellow Creek in "The Freelance Beaver Detective." (Courtesy Kay D. Ray)

Clay Eals: is a contributing writer for *Now & Then*. Check out his and Jean Sherrard's blog at pauldorpat.com to learn how to schedule the two for presentations on local history. They share their 360-degree video at the YouTube channel *Now & Then 360*.

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