

2026 Status Report on Beaver Restoration Projects

Nature based solutions can have self-sustaining benefit's but they take time, expertise and care to re-ignite once disrupted. The current summary of restoration projects provides a detailed description of goals and progress in Tásmam Koyóm but is less descriptive about the other efforts.

I wanted to offer remarks on Act V of the production. This final section discusses the release of beavers in the Sierras. Rather than repeat my concern about translocating beavers from temperate to alpine zones, I offer this quote from the recent Wildlife Act in the province of British Columbia:

Current Guidelines for beaver¹

3. Biological Adaptation and Winter Survival

Moving a coastal beaver to a harsh winter climate compromises the animal's survival. The translocation would require stringent veterinary screening and specialized care to address these biological realities:

- **Foraging and Food Caches:** Interior beavers survive freezing winters by building massive underwater winter food caches of specific interior hardwoods before the ice forms. A coastal beaver is unaccustomed to these freezing timelines and tree species.
- **Immediate Shelter Needs:** Translocated beavers require immediate, deep-water habitat. Organizations like the Interior Wildlife Rehabilitation Society (IWRS) must install artificial lodges or temporary shelters to protect translocated beavers from immediate predation while they adapt.

In Act V of your report it is not only assumed that displaced beavers from the delta will know effortlessly how to prepare for life in the Sierra uplands, but even more alarmingly that they will require almost no time to do so.

“Given the timing of the release and seasonal constraints with accessing the site, post-release monitoring of the beavers was limited.”

If conditions in Tahoe were too bad for staff to go back and check for beaver sign after the release, might they not also have been too bad for those beavers to build a lodge, create a food cache and find adequate safety? What can possibly explain this late release date?

In their frankly detailed paper on beaver release in 2014 by Petro et al² the authors note that beavers released from August-October tended to stay nearer the release site, and no real differences in predation were reported for Spring and Summer releases by McKinstry & Anderson³, There are differing thoughts about optimal release dates. But no where in any paper has it ever been ever suggested that WINTER releases are ideal. Why hang the public success of such a visible program on such an ill-advised timeline?

A November release in the Sierras is a waste of agency resources, tax-payer dollars and frankly inhumane. Even October is considered late in the year if severe weather is likely and the beavers in question need to make food available for hungry family members all winter long. (This of course assumes that, contrary to the B.C. warnings, they would even know to do so.)

“until the remainder of the family group was captured to be sure the groups were relocated in tact”

Despite the stated goal of relocating complete families, on all but one occasion the releases in this report contain incomplete families with an adult and subadult ostensibly presumed to be the mate. Why? One would assume that with 1012 reported trapping nights over 2 eyars there was ample chance to get a “*complete set*”. Considering the interest in genetic diversity it is important to note that this subadult could just as easily been a child.

Why not start out with a family unit of two known adults, at least one subadult and some kits? In both Sierra cases where a single adult was released the adult wandered off, leaving the kits alone. It is certainly more than possible that in these cases the subadult was *not* the mate, and the adult went wandering in search of their partner or possibly to find another one.

“The adult breeding pair released in 2023 produced at least one litter of kits in 2024”

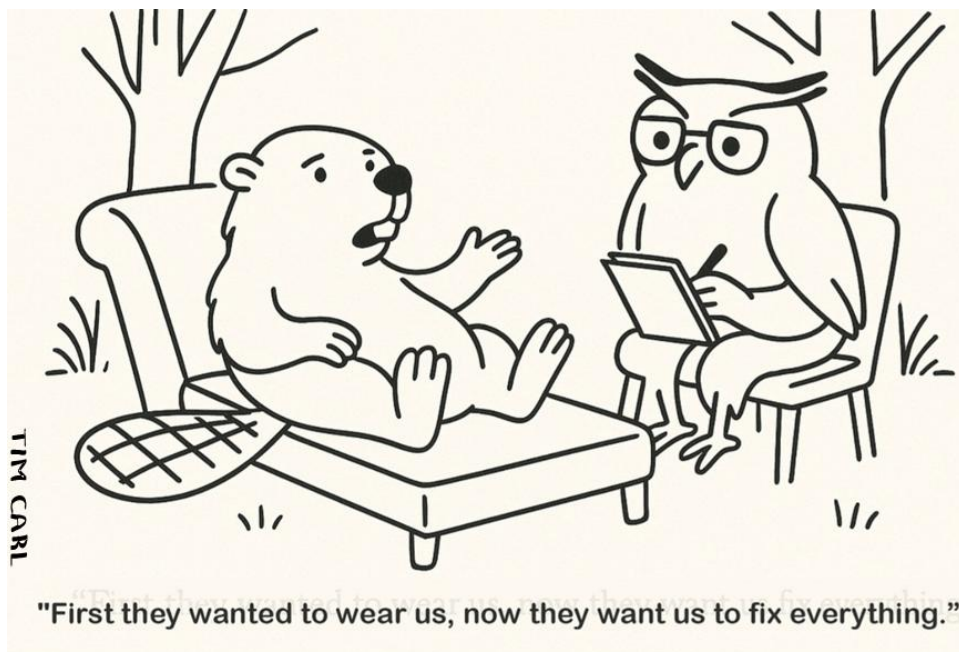
It is impossible to understand how a sentence like this gets included in this report without edit. A female beaver enters estrus once a year. Even in cases of superfecundity with an additional father the birth would be at the same time and all kits would be from the same litter. If CDFW has new evidence to the contrary you should publish it immediately.

In reviewing the publications of Vanessa Petro and Christine E. Sandbach⁴ for this response, I am left wondering **why the implementation of this new policy in California is**

not being conducted in conjunction with a research project from the UC system?

California has many emerging scientists and students who would gladly devote time to data collection. Interest in the subject has grown exponentially in the past decade. Why not do this work in connection with a qualified professor from Davis, Stanford or the Human-Wildlife program at Humbolt Tech? Grad and undergrad students could add skill and manpower to literature review, report writing and data collection that would hasten progress. More richly reliable reporting could result in ultimate publication and widespread attention. Research based analysis of optimal release techniques could improve efficiency, mortality and sight fidelity.

And ultimately improve conditions for the beavers themselves.



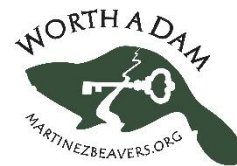
Beaver relocation is the shiny new object on the California restoration horizon. The number of cheerful articles promoting the ecological benefits of beavers has exploded over recent years across the country and in this state specifically. "Over the past two years, the Program has received great interest from landowners and managers who desire to have local conflict beavers relocated rather than lethally taken via depredation permit. However, geographic distribution of human-beaver conflicts reported each year is far greater than the capacity of the Program to address these issues via translocation."

If you want to create fewer demands for relocation, the agency needs to spend less time on its promotion and more time showing actual coexistence solutions. Relocation offers

landowners everything they think they want: the promise of getting rid of beavers without having to feel guilty. A more frank discussion of outcomes is warranted. In most cases moving beavers does not solve the problem (because new ones move in) and as your data is showing, relocation may not keep them around long enough to make any difference to the watershed anyway.

Given the amount of attention this issue is generating and the high cost of strategic failure it is incumbent upon the Department of Fish and Wildlife to do this in a way that offers the best chances of success. The beaver restoration team should make clear that it is worth the expense of time and effort and that it honors the value of the wildlife it deploys.

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McKinstry, Mark C., & Anderson, Stanley H. (2002). Survival, fates, and success of transplanted Beavers, *Castor canadensis*, in Wyoming. *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, 116(1), 60--68. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.363399>

¹ The Province of British Columbia **would generally not allow** a beaver to be translocated from the South Coast to the Interior.

While British Columbia has recently permitted select, tightly controlled beaver relocation pilot projects for watershed restoration, a cross-regional move between drastically different climate zones faces strict regulatory and biological hurdles.

1. The 10-Kilometre Rule & Permitting

Under the B.C. Wildlife Act, it is illegal to relocate wildlife more than **10 kilometres** from its place of origin without an explicit permit from FrontCounter BC. Province-wide beaver management does not exist; instead, the government handles them primarily at a population level for conflict mitigation or commercial furbearing. Historically, B.C. policy mandated that "conflict" beavers moved from urban areas be euthanized rather than translocated to new ecosystems.

2. Genetic and Disease Concerns

B.C. government biologists heavily restrict long-distance wildlife transfers to prevent the spread of diseases, parasites, and foreign genetics between isolated populations. Moving an animal from the mild, damp South Coast to the dry, cold Interior introduces severe biosecurity risks to local Interior beaver populations.

3. Biological Adaptation and Winter Survival

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Current Relocation Frameworks

While long-distance, cross-climate transfers are denied, localized translocations are emerging. The IWRS and the B.C. Wildlife Federation's 10,000 Wetlands Project have successfully navigated the provincial bureaucracy to relocate select orphaned or displaced beavers—such as pairs released into the Nicola Valley watershed. However, these exceptions utilize **local animals** already adapted to the specific regional climate.

² V.M. Petro, J.D. Taylor, D.M. Sanchez,

Evaluating landowner-based beaver relocation as a tool to restore salmon habitat,
Global Ecology and Conservation,
Volume 3,
2015,
Pages 477-486

³ McKinstry, Mark C., & Anderson, Stanley H. (2002). Survival, fates, and success of transplanted Beavers, *Castor canadensis*, in Wyoming. *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, 116(1), 60--68.
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.363399>

⁴ Sandbach, Christine E., "Evaluating Beaver Translocation Methods for Desert River Restoration" (2023). All Graduate Theses and Dissertations, Spring 1920 to Summer 2023. 8870.