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Beaver management in Germany.

How to deal with an eco-engineer in completely used land

Around 1900, the beavers were almost extinct in Germany: only a small population of 100 to 200 animals had survived human hunting in the Elbe-Mulde floodplain. Protection of the species and numerous reintroduction programs brought back the species. For 2019, the population estimate is 40.000, still growing and expanding.

Beginning in Bavaria, in the mid 1980s, the animal caused the first problems with human ideas, how to use the land. They fed on crops, cut trees in the garden and parks, burrowed under fields and roads, and dammed creeks and flooded the surroundings.

We then began to develop a beaver management system with the goal to solve and avoid the problems and allow the species to spread in the watersheds. That it happened in Bavaria was simply due to the fact, that Bavaria was the first state in Germany, which had beavers in bigger numbers on private property. The beavers in the rest of Germany did the same, but in the West, they were still mainly in floodplains, and in East Germany nobody cared, all was state property anyway.

Beaver management is now based on 4 pillars:

- consulting people on beavers, conflicts and solutions
- preventive measures, from protection of trees to buying areas
- damage compensation
- removing beavers



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Not all pillars are implemented in other Federal States, e.g. removing is only done, if there are enough animals.

Besides authorities, legally responsible for permits and funding, most States occupy one or more beaver managers for the organization of the management and for the training of the most important people on the job: the beaver volunteers.

These volunteers, engaged by nature conservation agencies are doing most of the job in the field: surveying the animals, estimating damage compensation, consulting about solutions for problems, and helping with trapping, if necessary.

They all work on creating acceptance for the beaver, and getting land along the creeks. Then, if the people are sufficiently managed, the beaver takes over. Doing his job for habitat creation, for biodiversity, for cleaning and storing water and lowering floodings – a job for the benefit of all of us.