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**POLICY NO. 11.06**

**FEBRUARY 9, 2016**

**TITLE: BEAVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

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**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Westlock County's Beaver Management Program provides beaver management or beaver dam removal on private and public land. Beaver management will be done on a request basis only on private land. Beaver management will be done on Public and County owned land as required.

This policy provides the guidelines to ensure the management of beavers and the removal of beaver dams on private and public land is undertaken in an as efficient and effective manner as possible; giving consideration to human safety, municipal liabilities and the mitigation of non-target animal capture.

**PURPOSE:**

- To protect the County road infrastructure and public safety by removing beavers and dams that are or will cause flooding on County road allowances,
- To provide flood prevention and relief on agricultural lands by removing beaver dams,
- To provide a contract service of beaver management and/or beaver dam removal for other levels of government.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Contractor** means the person or company the County hires to perform the tasks outlined in this policy.

**County** means the municipal corporation of Westlock County.

**County road allowance or road allowance** refers to land that is

- owned and set aside by the Province of Alberta for roads,
- under the direction, control and management of Westlock County, and
- either has or doesn't have a road constructed on it.

## **1. AUTHORIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 1.1.** The County is granted the authorization to remove beaver dams and trap on County controlled lands and public and private lands to which it has access, under the authority of the *Wildlife Act* by way of a Damage Control License from Alberta Environment and Parks, Fish and Wildlife Division.
- 1.2.** The Manager of Agricultural Services / Agricultural Fieldman is responsible for conducting and supervising the Beaver Management Program outlined in this policy.
- 1.3.** The Contractor hired by the County is responsible for securing a Damage Control License when such a license is required by law. The Manager of Agricultural Services / Agricultural Fieldman is responsible for securing any necessary licenses, permits and infrastructure required for the transportation, storage, and the use of explosives.
- 1.4.** The Manager of Agricultural Services / Agricultural Fieldman is responsible for ensuring all beaver management work is conducted according to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans under the *Fisheries Act* (Schedule B), and in compliance with Alberta's *Water Act*. The County has a guiding document for Beaver Control, attached as Schedule A.
- 1.5.** The Contractor is responsible for ensuring his/her safety as well as the public's safety (including property, buildings, infrastructure, et cetera) when conducting beaver management work and has the authority to refuse to carry out any work if conditions are not safe.
- 1.6.** The Contractor is responsible to take into consideration the characteristics of the site and the consequences of the control work.

## **2. BEAVER CONTROL ON MUNICIPAL ROAD ALLOWANCES:**

- 2.1.** The Contractor or designate is authorized to manage beaver and/or remove beaver dams within County road allowances.
- 2.2.** Beaver management work will be carried out on County road allowances as required. The intent is to prevent flooding problems and damage to the road

infrastructure before they occur.

- 2.3. If the beaver and/or dams are located off of the County road allowance, notification must be given to the landowner and written permission to enter upon lands must be obtained from the landowner.
- 2.4. If a landowner will not authorize the County to carry out beaver management work on their land the matter will be referred to Alberta Environment and Parks for investigation under the *Water Act*, the *Wildlife Act*, or any Act of Alberta that bestows powers to the County for the protection of County road infrastructure and public safety.
- 2.5. The Contractor or designate may use explosives to remove blockages to culverts located on County road allowances, provided they first receive permission from the Director of Transportation and Infrastructure, or the Chief Administrative Officer.

### **3. BEAVER MANAGEMENT ON PRIVATE LANDS:**

- 3.1. Beaver management work will be done on a complaint basis in situations affecting private agricultural land.
- 3.2. When manpower or resources are limited, the County has the right to refuse service. Beaver problems affecting County infrastructure will have priority.
- 3.3. The landholder must sign a "Permission to Enter Upon Lands for Problem Wildlife Control Form" (Schedule C) prior to any beaver management work being done.
- 3.4. There will be a service charge applied for beaver control work when it is performed on private land as per section 2 of Schedule A.
- 3.5. A landholder who requests services for beaver management work on land other than theirs (beaver on neighbouring land affecting the landholder's land) will be responsible for the service charges, notifying the landowner and gaining the landowner's permission for entry upon said lands upon where the dam is located.
- 3.6. Trapping to remove beavers will be conducted in a fashion that reduces the risk of non-target animal capture and takes into consideration the safety of the public.

3.7. The County will not remove any blockages manually or with dynamite, to culverts, bridges or other infrastructure located on private land. The responsibility for removal of such blockages rests with the landholder.

**4. PROCEDURES FOR REMOVAL OF BEAVER DAMS:**

4.1. The County will not remove beaver lodges using dynamite given the limited value of such an exercise.

4.2. The County will remove only the necessary section of the beaver dams as required to facilitate the flow of water. Removal of the entire dam structure could result in severe downstream flooding and an increased risk to people and property from a larger blast zone.

4.3. Where explosives cannot be safely detonated, or the use of explosives will have limited or no effect on breaching the beaver dam, the landholder will be responsible for utilizing alternative methods to remove the dam.

4.4. Removal of blast debris is the responsibility of the landholder.

**5. DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS:**

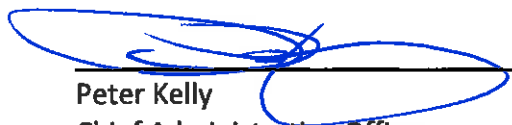
5.1. The Contractor and/or his designate may discharge a firearm in the performance of their duties under this policy.

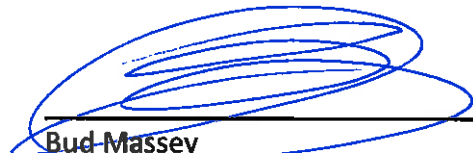
**6. DISPOSAL OF CARCASSES:**

Carcasses will be removed and disposed of in an appropriate manner by the contractor or designate.

MOTION: #57116

DATE: February 9, 2016

  
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Peter Kelly  
Chief Administrative Officer

  
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Bud Massey  
Reeve

## **Guidelines for Beaver Dam Control Schedule A**

1. Removal or breaching of beaver dams should be carried out in a manner that minimizes downstream sediment load. Only a small portion of a dam should be removed at one time to allow the water from the beaver pond to be released slowly. As water levels decrease, the size of the opening may be increased to allow drainage to the desired level in the upstream pond. The water should be drained such that the sediment contained in the bottom of the pond is not released. This may require the removal to be conducted over a period of a few days depending on the size of the dam and the amount of water that needs to be released to alleviate flooding.
2. There will be a service charge of \$60.00 per call for removal of dams using explosives, and a \$30.00 charge to set traps and \$10.00 daily charge to check traps. The County will not perform any hand removal of beaver dams.
3. Areas downstream of the beaver dam should be monitored during removal/breaching activities to determine whether impacts are occurring to the channel and adjacent properties receiving additional water volumes. If damage is occurring, the rate of breaching may be slowed to prevent further damage.
4. If more than one dam is to be removed in a section of stream, dams should be breached and removed in order starting at the downstream dam and working in an upstream direction.
5. Disturbance to aquatic and riparian vegetation should be minimized and any areas disturbed should be stabilized and re-vegetated upon completion of the work.
6. Spoil materials removed from the beaver dam should be deposited in an area separated from the water course by a well-vegetated area and stabilized such that they do not re-enter the water course. Spoil includes any material associated with the beaver dam removed from the channel such as sediment, rocks, vegetation, and woody debris.
7. Fish that become trapped in isolated pools as a result of beaver pond de-watering or stranded in newly flooded areas below the dam may be relocated unharmed to the main channel of the water course.
8. No instream work should occur outside of the footprint of the beaver dam or outside of a road right-of-way where woody debris is being removed.

9. Appropriate precautions should be taken to ensure that deleterious substances do not enter any water course.
- a. There should be no instream use of tracked or wheeled equipment or excavation of the streambanks. Equipment should be operated in dry weather conditions from the banks or road.
  - b. The cleaning, fueling and servicing of equipment should be conducted in an area from which spills or wash water will not enter fish habitat.
  - c. Equipment operating near any water course should be properly maintained in sound mechanical condition and free of any fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluid or coolant leaks.
  - d. Any spilled materials should be cleaned up as soon as possible and disposed of in an environmentally safe manner. Spilled material should not be left where it may enter any water course.
  - e. If these measures are insufficient for effective control, it is the responsibility of the proponent to implement alternative measures as required for effective deleterious substance control.
10. Where explosives are used, the following measures should also be employed:
- a. No more than 1 kilogram of explosive should be detonated at any one time. If more than 1 kilogram is required to achieve an effective breach, subsequent charges should be detonated separately allowing sufficient time between charges to ensure breaching occurs slowly and downstream sedimentation, debris load and scour to the streambed is minimized.
  - b. Charges should be set into the upstream side of the dam at a location above the natural streambed so that the detonation of the explosives does not alter the profile of the streambed.

Providing that the criteria in these guidelines are followed, and the aforementioned mitigation measures are implemented, the proposed works will not likely result either in a harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat, no in the killing of fish by means other than fishing. As such, authorization under subsection 35(2) or section 32 of the *Fisheries Act* will not be necessary. Any harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat occurring as a result of failing to implement the prescribed mitigation measures may result in contravention of the *Fisheries Act*.

**Regional Beaver Dam Removal Plan  
Schedule B**

The plan outlines the use of explosives or mechanical devices for the removal of beaver dams that are causing flooding or damage on private or municipal properties. The plan covers most dam removals; however, there may still be situations when we will contact the Federal Government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans for a site-specific assessment on Class C watercourses.

Legal land descriptions of Westlock County:

TWP 57-64 RGE 23-27 W4, 1-2 W5

Named Class C watercourses in Westlock County as stated in the Code of Practice Map from Alberta Environment and Parks, available on their website [aep.alberta.ca](http://aep.alberta.ca).

French Creek	Bolloque Creek	Wabash Creek	Red Water River
Shoal Creek	Dapp Creek	Wiesel Creek	Tawatinaw River
Cedar Creek	Bear Creek	Smela Ditch	

And any tributary within 2 kilometres of a designated Class C watercourse.

Beaver dams will be breached when the dam is causing flooding of private land or when road infrastructure is in danger of being damaged. The breaching of the dam will be done slowly so as not to disturb or have a downstream effect.

Beaver dams will be removed by three means:

1. Explosives will be used in situations where equipment is not able to get close enough to be used to breach the dam. Where ever possible charges will not be used within 30 metres of a spawning bed.
2. Equipment such as backhoes, rubber wheeled grad-all, or a track hoe will be used where ever possible to breach the dam.
3. Manual methods will be used in situations where there is a danger of damaging power lines, gas lines, or where other means are not feasible.

Explosives will be used if it is the only feasible means of removing or breaching the dam causing damage.

Up to 1 kilogram charges of explosives will be used.

The charges will be placed 30 centimetres above the bed when practical, the charges will be placed in the centre of the dam on the upstream side to cause a breach in the dam material and not disturb the profile of the streambed.

If more than one dam is to be removed on the watercourse, the down stream dams shall be removed first.

Small portions of the dam will be removed at a time to prevent the disturbance of the downstream sediment.

Dams on Class C watercourses will not be breached during the spawning period of April 16 to June 30.

Upstream disturbance will be done prior to detonation of the explosive.

Downstream inspection will take place to investigate any fish-bearing habitat prior to detonation.

Downstream effects will be monitored during the breach of the dam.

If any fish are trapped downstream or stranded by the breaching they will be relocated into the main stream of the watercourse.

Residents will be encouraged to leave dams which are not causing flooding.

Prior to the blasting of any dam on a Classic C watercourse during the restricted activity period, Westlock County will contact the regional Department of Fisheries and Oceans office and make them aware of the location and the time of the blasting. If it is a Class D, unmapped or un-coded watercourse Westlock County does not need to contact Department of Fisheries and Oceans; however, Westlock County will consult with Department of Fisheries and Oceans on how to proceed.