
****BEAVER IN THE UPPER MADISON BEAVER MANAGEMENT AREA OUTSIDE OF WEST YELLOWSTONE, MONTANA**

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Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, trappers harvested most of the beaver in the Hebgen Lake watershed outside of West Yellowstone, Montana. In an attempt to bring back the beaver, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and the Forest Service established the Upper Madison Beaver Management Area (UMBMA) to regulate the number of the licenses made available to trappers. Both agencies wanted beaver on the landscape because of the important role beaver play in watershed ecology. By building dams, beavers raise water levels which improve wetland habitat for birds, fish, moose, and other animal species. My project included surveying one kilometer of good beaver habitat in the major drainages throughout the Hebgen lake watershed while looking for different beaver signs. These signs include recent beaver clippings in the willow, caches (piles of willow where beaver store their winter food supply), slides (folded down grass where beaver enter river), active lodges, and active dams. The objective of my paper was to evaluate the status of the beaver population by looking at the indices of presence to help FWP decide whether reintroductions and/or changes in the trapping season regulations are necessary.