

# Trapper's **Book/Video Reviews**

by Stephen Vantassel



**This Month: *The Best Beaver Management Practices: Long-term Solutions to Beaver Dam Flooding* by Mike Callahan. 2010**

Brought by Beaver Solutions. 24.95. 50 Min.

I have been a long fan of beaver pipes or beaver flow devices ever since I became convinced of their effectiveness in the late 1990s. Unfortunately a lot of people within the wildlife damage management community, including fur trappers, see these devices as threats to their way of life. I would argue that there is no necessary reason to think this way. I suggest it is better to

view the pipes as just another tool in the toolbox for doing wildlife management. While the animal-rights protest industry will tout the pipes as "solution" for all beaver problems, the fact is beaver pipes are not effective in stopping beaver damage to trees through direct flooding and cutting. In addition, areas sensitive to flooding, (e.g. Spring thaw) are not appropriate candidates for the water leveling version of the

pipes. So in reality their use is restricted to protecting culverts and at wetlands where the owner does not care about tree damage and can handle some fluctuation in flooding conditions.

Mike Callahan, the owner of Beaver Solutions, hails from the Pioneer Valley area of Massachusetts which lies along the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts. He has been installing beaver flow devices for a number of years. Mr. Callahan does a great job explaining the various ways to use beaver pipes and beaver flow devices to manage beaver damage from flooding. The video is segmented to cover the two primary situations that beaver flow devices are used. The first section explains pond-levellers in which pipes are installed on dams themselves to maintain a certain level of water on the impoundment. The next section discusses how to use fencing and fencing and pipes to protect culverts from being dammed by beaver. Mr. Callahan presents the material carefully, systematically, and with good humor. He clearly has enough self-esteem to even show one of his mistakes. I found his personable video presence and conversational style a key element to the video's quality. As someone who is not handy, I would need to watch the video on a computer and then systematically try to follow the steps. But for those who are comfortable around tools, the directions will be easy to follow.

I have only two criticisms or perhaps cautions about the video. First, it lacks details about evaluating water flowage needs. The last thing you want to do is install a pipe that doesn't properly balance the water flow with the desired water level. Mr. Callahan tells me that the subject is somewhat complicated so he would rather have viewers contact him directly so he can discuss the situation. Second I thought he should've mentioned a couple of safety issues that confront people involved with beaver dams and beaver ponds. For

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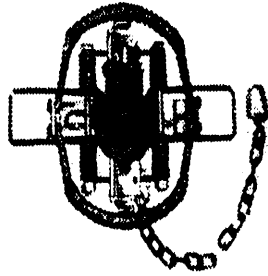
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instance, he made no mention of Giardia risks commonly known as "beaver fever" nor did he explain the danger of breaching dams particularly around culverts. Viewers need to understand that dams in Massachusetts tend to be quite small because the ponds and streams have very shallow banks. In the streams and gullies of the Midwest, however, dams are significantly taller because the walls of the stream had been eroded due to the straightening of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. No matter that the context removal of beaver dams, even to just provide a place for the beaver pipe, involves risk due to the pressure of the water impounded by the dam. Though rare, catastrophic blowouts can occur.

Nevertheless, aside from those issues, I highly recommend this video to wildlife control operators interested in learning more about adding this particular technique to their business model. Mr. Callahan definitely has experience you can rely on as demonstrated by the number of transportation officials who vouched for him in third section of the video. He also provides access to a number of PDFs that you can use that contain information on the use of beaver pipes. I find this to be a nice touch and helps round out the video. Overall the video is very well produced with clear pictures and very clear voiceovers and well-selected background music. It can be quickly viewed as Mr. Callahan provides a just the facts type of presentation. I am confident that landowners, road officials, and wildlife control operators interested in learning the fundamentals of installing pond levelers and culvert fences will find the \$24.95 for this video a well spent investment.

Copies can be obtained directly at his site. <http://www.beaversolutions.com> through Paypal. Credit cards and checks are accepted. DVD costs \$24.95 with shipping is \$5.95 (\$6.95 to Canada). Stephen M Vantassel, CWCP <http://wildlifecontrolconsultant.com>

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