



# Prescott Peninsula Beaver Survey Results 2021



March 2022

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Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Division of Water Supply Protection  
Office of Watershed Management

The Quabbin Reservoir, Prescott Peninsula beaver survey began in 1952 when beaver were discovered there after being absent from the New England landscape since the mid to late 1800s. Since then, a long-term monitoring effort has continued. It has become an annual tradition that includes DCR-DWSP staff, family members, friends, and volunteers. The annual survey took place in November with twenty-nine participants.

The shoreline portion of the annual beaver survey on the Prescott Peninsula was conducted from a boat on 8 October 2021 by Natural Resource staff. The traditional interior survey routes (i.e., all streams on the Prescott Peninsula) were walked on 14-18 November and surveyed for sign of active beaver colonies. A site was determined to be active if it had some combination of the following key indicators: fresh mud or sticks on lodge, a fresh food cache, a maintained dam, recently chewed feeding sticks, fresh cuttings and feeding trails, or the presence of beaver.

There were 12 active sites documented on the Prescott Peninsula during the 2021 survey; 10 were within interior routes (26% occupation rate) and 2 found along the shoreline. Two active sites were recorded along one of the interior routes. The remaining active routes had one active site. One shoreline site was found on the western side of the peninsula and the second tucked in Prescott Cove on the eastern side of the peninsula. In 2020 there were 14 active beaver sites within the interior routes, and one found along the shoreline. Eight of the same survey routes had active beaver sites in both 2020 and 2021. There was one re-colonized route in 2021 (i.e., not active in 2020 but active in 2021). The 20-year average is 14 (36% occupation rate) for number of active beaver sites within the interior routes. Active beaver lodges along the **peninsula shoreline** have ranged from 0 in 1952 when the surveys began, to a high of 17 in 1974. However, over the years since, the number of active lodges along the shoreline has continued to decline, with an average of 2 active sites for the past 20 years. Locations of active sites are shown in Figure 1. Long-term population trends for beaver on the Prescott Peninsula over the last 50+ years are summarized in Figure 2.

There are 39 defined **interior routes** (ponds, partial or complete drainages, etc.) that have been surveyed for beaver colonies 55 times during 1952-2021. The number of beaver colonies in these routes have ranged from 2 when the surveys began in 1952 to a high of 39 in 1981. Beaver's use of these survey routes ranged from 0 (never had an active beaver colony) to 49 (i.e., number of times, or years, a route had an active beaver colony or colonies). Route R was one of the first areas that had beaver and it continues to be the most active route recorded for 49 out of the 54 years surveyed. Eight (20%) of the survey routes have never been active and the remaining 31 of the 39 routes have had active beaver colonies at least 2 times. The number of times each survey route has been active is summarized in Figure 3. Colony locations continue to be dynamic, with some remaining active and others becoming inactive from year to year. Annual surveys will continue into the future to track these changes.



Figure 1. Active beaver sites on the Prescott Peninsula, Quabbin Reservation, 2021.

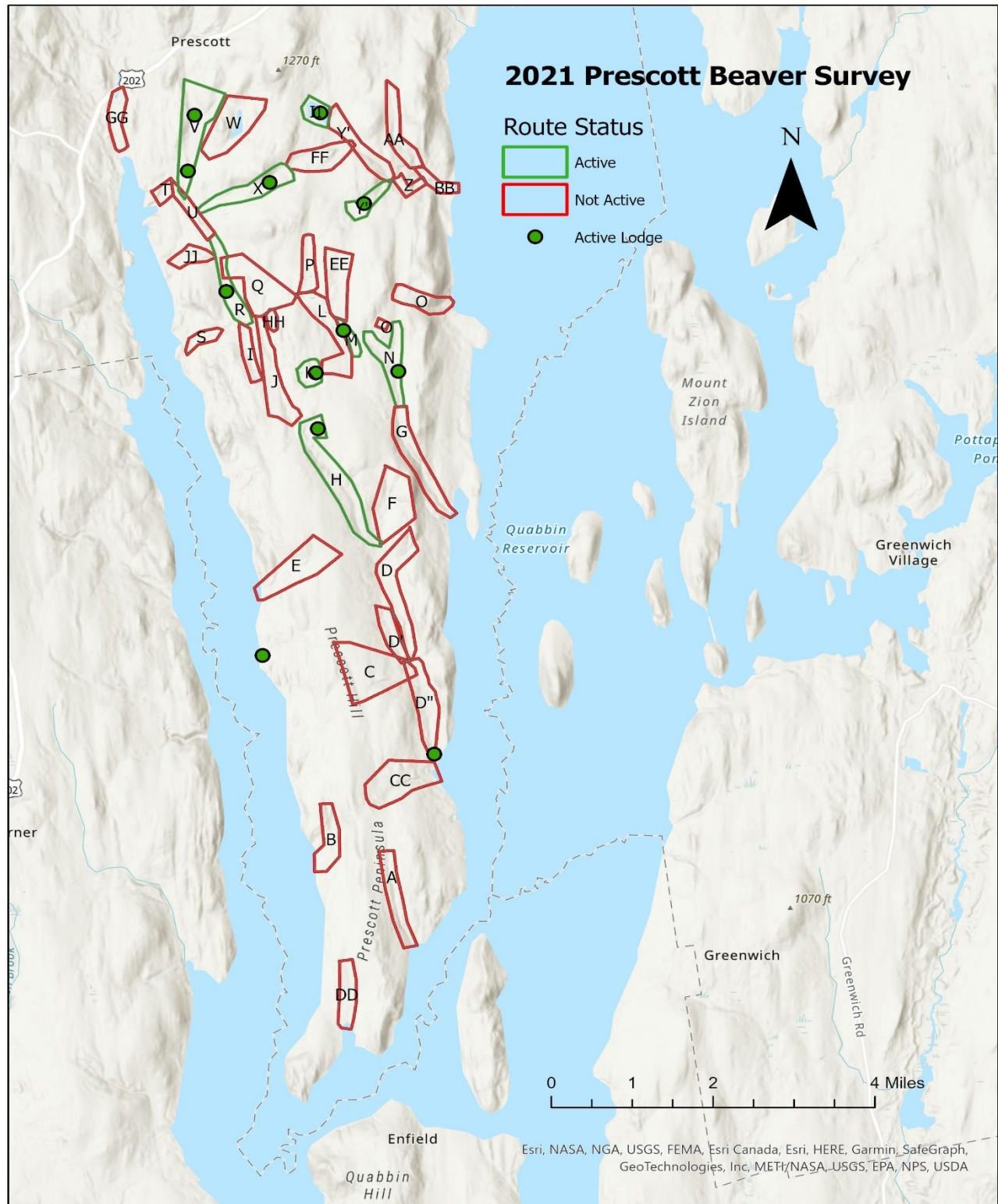


Figure 2. Number of active beaver colonies on the Prescott Peninsula, Quabbin Reservation, 1952-2021.

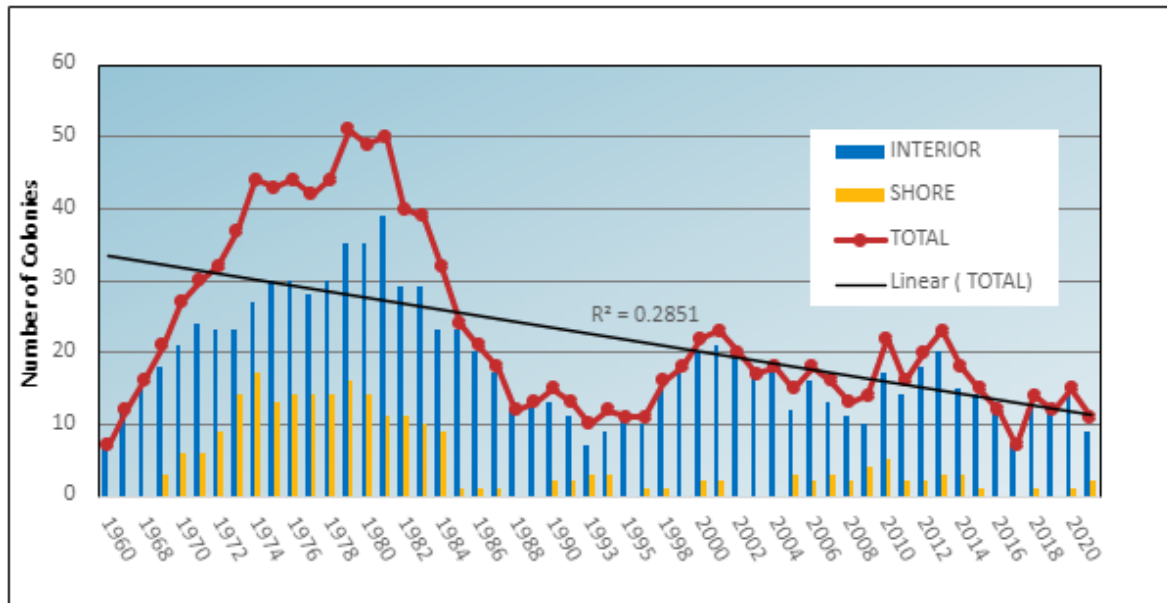


Figure 3. Number of times defined routes have had active beaver colonies on the Prescott Peninsula, Quabbin Reservation, 1952-2021.

