

# Beavers and the Environment

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Suppose your front teeth kept growing. By the time you became a teenager, they might be longer than your chin!

Beavers' teeth keep growing, but they don't have

to worry. That's because beavers wear their teeth down when they chew on trees. In fact, that's how beavers cut down trees—with their teeth!

Beavers use the trees they cut down to build dams in streams. The dams stop the water from flowing and form a pool. It may seem that beavers destroy the environment, but that's not so. Instead, beavers help many forest plants and animals by giving them homes.

The pool that forms behind a dam makes a great home for beavers. It also makes a great home for fish. That's because the water in the pools moves slowly. Baby salmon living in slow-moving water do not have to fight water currents. Instead, they can use their energy to grow bigger and stronger. Slow-moving water also allows more plants to grow in or around the water. These plants

serve as protection and food for baby salmon.

Slow-moving rivers or pools also filter the river. In a slow-moving river, debris, such as dead animals or plants, sinks and decomposes. Debris also gets caught in the plants growing in and around the water. So, by the time the river reaches the ocean or lake, debris has been filtered from the water.

Beaver dams also protect riverbanks from erosion. Fast-moving water tears soil away and washes it downstream. Slow-moving rivers don't erode as much soil from riverbanks.

Beaver dams can cause trouble, though. Dams can create floods that harm trees, homes, and farms. However, scientists often work with people and either change or remove dams that cause too much harm. Learning to live with beavers may require some work, but when people and animals work together, both can have a place to live and grow.



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