

# *Beavers - Riparian Managers*

Beavers have been building and modifying riparian areas for thousands of years. Historically, most of our stream drainages contained beaver, and, under close examination, show some level of beaver modification today. Beaver "manage" riparian areas with their extensive dams and through their harvest of trees and shrubs. In the short term this management can sometimes conflict with our uses of riparian systems. Over long periods of time stream valleys evolve under beaver management.



*Beavers modify riparian areas with dams that hold water and trap sediment.*



*Beaver modified valleys are fragile and need deep-rooted plants to resist downcutting through accumulated sediment.*



*Beaver modified valleys can produce a diversity of vegetation including large quantities of forage.*



Beaver dams reduce stream gradient (and horsepower) which allows sediment to accumulate. As sediments are trapped and slowly build behind dams the shape of a stream valley can change, often to a wider one, with gentle slopes. Beaver modified valleys represent productive, diverse and valuable portions of the landscape.

*Beavers - another element in the understanding of riparian areas.*



*Even though beaver may be missing from the picture, their influence shows in sediment capture and wider, productive valleys. Each beaver dam can capture tons of sediment – that sediment builds deep soils and productive riparian areas.*