TECHNICAL NOTES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NEVADA SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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Beaver

The attached technical note, issued by Wyoming, is transmitted to you for incorporation into Nevada Technical Notes - Biology series. Please record the Nevada number in your Biology Index.

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State Resource Conservationist

TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WYOMING SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

Biology No. 101 January 1986

Subject: BEAVER*

General

The beaver (Castor canadensis) is a large rodent that inhabits wooded streams and lake shores and is highly valued for its fur.

Food Requirements

The twigs, bark, and cambium of deciduous trees, especially cottonwood (Populus spp.), willow (Salix spp.), and aspen (Populus tremuloides) are eaten by beavers. Aspen is the most palatable species, although willow is eaten in large quantities. The sprouting capacity of willow made it an important food of the beaver in California. Overbrowsed willows recovered vigorously and were used on a sustained basis. Beavers also utilize aquatic vegetation and the tender green shoots of terrestrial plants in the summer. Food supplies are often cut in summer and fall and stored for winter use. In the southwestern U.S., the heaviest use of bank and twigs occurred in the winter. The average dbh of trees cut by beavers is approximately 2 inches (5.1 cm) and trees under 6 inches (15.2 cm) dbh are preferred. A study in Michigan found that an estimated 200 to 300 trees were cut by a beaver during a year. The riparian bank vegetative types supply most of the beaver's food, although some cultivated crops may be consumed.

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*Information taken from Ecoregion M3113 Handbook and Habitat Suitability Index Models, Wildlife Species Narratives (literature searches), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, various dates between 1978-1985.

Special Considerations

Beavers will live in close proximity to man if habitat requirements are met. Damage control procedures, woodlot clearing, trapping, and water pollution reduce beaver populations. Beaver ponds provide excellent habitat for waterfowl and may increase trout production. Beaver action generally increases both plant and animal variety in a forest ecosystem.