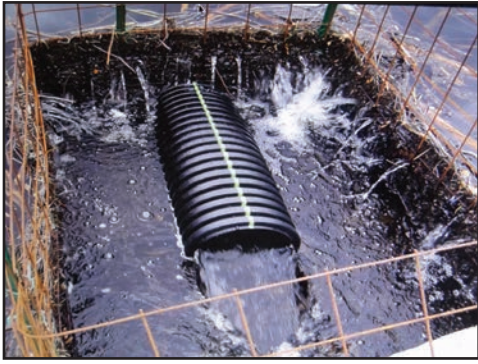


# Beaver ponds “super important for biodiversity”



Courtesy

A screenshot of one of Mike Callahan's “beaver deceiving” flow devices in action.

BY GUS STEEVES  
CORRESPONDENT

REGION — If beavers aren't in a marsh near you, Beaver Institute founder Mike Callahan thinks they probably will be in the near future and is “working to promote coexistence.”

Speaking to a recent Mass. Association of Conservation Commissions “lunch and learn,” he said he still sees there can be conflicts between them and humans, but from an ecological point of view, beavers are critical for a whole host of reasons. Instead of trapping them, he strongly advocates four non-lethal ways of preventing their work from flooding roads and properties.

Beaver ponds are “super important for biodiversity” — “just as important

for our native species as coral reefs and rainforests are for their native species,” he said. They “really help with all those things” we're now seeing as impacts of climate change, by slowing down floods and wildfires, trapping toxins from fires, and serving as “oases of diversity” that promote recovery afterward.

The latter has been a factor in endangered species, too. Callahan noted Oregon is trying to create such ponds to provide places for coho salmon hatcheries. Although some people rip out beaver dams thinking they're impediments to salmon travel, they actually help the species (and others).

In New England, beavers “are pretty much in all the habitats they can be” now. That wasn't true in the 1930s, when the state started reintroduction programs, but since then, the mammals have found their way everywhere. In part, that's because any given pond will only be home to related beavers; strangers will get attacked. Even when it has multiple lodges, there's just one breeding female present, with the others being her kits or mate.

The conflict issues come largely from human development in floodplains clashing with the beavers' innate inclination to try to dam the sound of running water. That's where Callahan's emphasis on flow-control devices comes in; to him, they're the real long-term solution to such conflicts.

There are four types: a flexible pond

leveler for use through existing beaver dams and three for manmade features: a culvert fence, fence/pipe system and diversion dams. To the non-expert, they all look similar and use the same concept — distract the beaver from damming where the actual flow is by making them think its elsewhere, making damming difficult, or preventing them from reaching it. All of them work to keep the beaver pond intact, but prevent it from overflowing to damage nearby property.

The most common sites of problems are culverts. “That looks to beavers like a dam with a hole in it,” he said. “They want to fix it.” The cheapest and easiest method to address that is the fourth one, which local DPWs can build and maintain themselves. Callahan said it encourages the beavers to build their dam outside the culvert by forcing them to carry any material overland to get to the culvert itself. They generally don't like to do that, but “about one out of five times, you'll get a smarter than average beaver” who will.

Callahan said he'll only use trapping as “a last resort,” in about a quarter of his cases. There are some situations where the other methods don't work or don't fit, such as in canals, drainage ditches and places needing high flow. In such places “we're going to be chasing them forever and I had to recommend trapping,” he said.

(The catch with that, though, is that if the place is good for beavers, new ones typically occupy it within a year or two, he noted.)

Often, beaver experts get called to address reservoirs, but Callahan said there's “not great science to trap” in such places. Not only do the beavers return, the claim they're disease threats isn't strong. Yes, he said, beavers can carry Giardia, which can cause treatable gastrointestinal illness in humans. But several other species do, too, including some that fly, like herons. Animals typically get it from humans via flooding septic systems or improperly disposed campsite waste, and about a third of humans carry it without symptoms anyway, he said. Beavers are not a vector for rabies.

Callahan also noted the mosquito-spraying issue, saying beaver ponds are not good mosquito habitat. They're too deep; that fact usually means the insects' larvae have too many predators. Such insects favor shallow spots, including tires, slow streams, and gutters.

“It's a common concern, but from my experience, doesn't need to be,” he said.

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## QCC, Summit Campus offer neurodivergent students pathway to successful future

WORCESTER — Like many college freshmen, when Lauren Young enrolled at Quinsigamond Community College she wasn't sure about her professional goals, but knew she wanted to start a higher education journey. Young is a resident at Summit Campus, a residential community in Worcester for local college students with autism and other related diagnoses and like all residents there, identifies as neurodivergent. Young said the new experience of starting college was anxiety-inducing, but she found QCC to be a supportive environment and has embraced the challenge to become a successful student.

According to Summit Campus Director of Residence Life Nikki Koppel, living away from home for the first time, coupled with adjusting to college-level coursework, required the Summit Campus team to develop a strategic and intentional approach to Young's programming. QCC's Student Accessibility Services also provided guidance and facilitation to help Young access QCC's resources, such as its writing and math centers.

“The math and English tutoring helped a lot. In English, I was expecting a B or even a C, but I ended up being surprised with an A,” Young said.

After getting comfortable with college life, Lauren could focus on exploring her academic and professional interests. It became clear that she was a visual and kinesthetic learner, with an affinity for cooking.

“In 2020, my mother started asking me to help with the cooking and I said, ‘Absolutely!’ This created a spark of inspiration,” Young said. “(QCC Professor of Hospitality and Recreation Management) Pat Hutchinson and (QCC HRM Program Food Service Lab Site Supervisor) Matt Sullivan have been really helpful. They are so understanding if I need more time or accommodations. I also loved being in a commercial kitchen for the first time. I worked hard my first year, but now that I'm into something I'm passionate about, the hard work is just part of my routine.”

Encouraged by Summit and her SAS coordinator, Young said she has fully embraced life at QCC. She works out at the college's fitness center and joined the Gaming Club where she can meet with other people who enjoy one of her favorite video games, “Pokemon Violet.” Young also mentioned that the size of the campus is perfect when you don't have a car, and while it was scary at first, she now uses the WRTA bus system to get around.

“Student Accessibility Services at QCC has a history and tradition of partnering with agencies throughout Central Massachusetts, and our relationship with Summit Campus is our newest collaboration. Summit Campus provides an experience for community college students that is unique to this region — a living environment with their peers where they can learn and be challenged. We are fortunate to have Summit Campus close by. I hope the opportunity for students with autism to attend college and be independent, while key support is accessible when needed, will grow across the state. Summit Campus is a huge win for these students, QCC and the city,” said QCC Director of Student Accessibility Services Kristie Proctor.

“Summit is phenomenal and so is QCC,” Young said, adding, “I've seen so much diversity here and everyone is really supportive. If something isn't working for you, you can change it!”

“Lauren is a true Summit Campus and QCC success story. She exemplifies our core belief that with the right supports, individuals can not only achieve their goals but exceed expectations. We are so proud of Lauren,” Koppel added.

Young is on track to receive her certificate this May. She said she would like to continue going to school for more credentials or possibly jump right into employment so she can prepare to live on her own.

For more information on Summit Campus, contact Nikki Koppel at nkoppel@summitacademiesma.com.

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**Friday's Child**

**Hi! My name is Xavier and I love being active!**

Xavier is a charming young boy of Caucasian, African American and Native American descent. People who know him best describe him as very caring and a hard worker who is eager to succeed with a great sense of humor. When you first meet Xavier, there is a good chance he will share a smile and make you laugh. Xavier has many interests including art, electronics, LEGO's or anything having to do with building, SpongeBob and Disney movies.

He also loves spending time outdoors, especially if that means shooting hoops at a local basketball court, swimming, building sandcastles, riding his bike, or playing “Dr. Dodge.” His dream job is to be a construction worker.

Xavier loves learning, especially if it's interactive! He's a very inquisitive child who is very happy to have conversations with others and ask questions about how different things work. Xavier is described as very bright academically.

Legally freed for adoption, Xavier would thrive in a home where he is the only child or the youngest by many years as he responds well to individualized attention and nurturing. Xavier holds great hopes and dreams about growing up in a loving family with similar interests. He has remained very patient and open-minded about the kind of home he will live in one day. Xavier would love to help care for a dog or other pets and have his own bedroom. A family that is willing to maintain connections with Xavier's biological parents and siblings is important to him as well.

<https://www.mareinc.org/waiting-child-profiles#gallery/child/6964>

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As an adoptive parent, you won't have to pay any fees, adoption from foster care is completely free in Massachusetts.

The process to adopt a child from foster care includes training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you. These steps will help match you with a child or sibling group that your family will fit well with.

To learn more about adoption from foster care, call the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) at 617-964-6273 or visit [www.mareinc.org](http://www.mareinc.org). Start the process today and give a waiting child a permanent place to call home.

## Devon Gokey named to Dean's List at Plymouth State University

PLYMOUTH, New Hampshire — Devon Gokey of Uxbridge has been named to the Plymouth State University Dean's List for the Fall 2022 semester. To be named to the Dean's List, a student must achieve a grade point average between 3.5 and 3.69 during the Fall 2022 semester and must have attempted at least 12 credit hours during the semester. Gokey is a Cell and Molecular Biology major at Plymouth State.

About Plymouth State University

Established in 1871, Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and the world beyond by transforming our students through advanced practices where engaged learning produces well-educated undergraduates and by providing graduate education that deepens and advances knowledge and enhances professional development. With distinction, we connect with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment with a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

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