

Overview of BRAT



Beaver
Translocation
Workshop
April 2, 2019
Logan, Utah

Wally Macfarlane & Joe Wheaton



@FHC THE FLUVIAL HABITATS CENTER

DAM-BUILDING CAPACITY MODELING

- **Beaver dams**, not beaver themselves, provide the desired impacts to habitat
- While beaver can survive in a wide range of conditions, **where they build dams is more limited**
- Dam building activity varies dramatically according to flow regime & availability of dam building materials



BRAT... A BEAVER DAM CAPACITY MODEL

- Resolves **where** and at **what level** (within a drainage network) **beaver dams** can be built and sustained.
- BRAT (**Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool**) is all about *how many* of these:



- Not how many of these:



<http://brat.riverscapes.xyz>

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Modeling the capacity of riverscapes to support beaver dams

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ABSTRACT

The construction of beaver dams facilitates a suite of hydrologic, hydraulic, geomorphic, and ecological feedbacks that increase stream complexity and channel–floodplain connectivity that benefits aquatic and terrestrial biota. Depending on where beaver build dams within a drainage network, they impact lateral and longitudinal connectivity by introducing roughness elements that fundamentally change the timing, delivery, and storage of water, sediment, nutrients, and organic matter. While the local effects of beaver dams on streams are well understood, broader coverage network models that predict where beaver dams can be built and highlight their impacts on connectivity across diverse drainage networks are lacking. Here we present a capacity model to assess the limits of riverscapes to support dam-building activities by beaver across physiographically diverse landscapes. We estimated dam capacity with freely and nationally-available inputs to evaluate seven lines of evidence: (1) reliable water source, (2) riparian vegetation conducive to foraging and dam building, (3) vegetation within 100 m of edge of stream to support expansion of dam complexes and maintain large colonies, (4) likelihood that channel-spanning dams could be built during low flows, (5) the likelihood that a beaver dam is likely to withstand typical floods, (6) a suitable stream gradient that is neither too low to limit dam density nor too high to preclude the building or persistence of dams, and (7) a suitable river that is not too large to restrict dam building or persistence. Fuzzy inference systems were used to combine these controlling factors in a framework that explicitly also accounts for model uncertainty. The model was run for 40,561 km of streams in Utah, USA, and portions of surrounding states, predicting an overall network capacity of 356,294 dams at an average capacity of 8.8 dams/km. We validated model performance using 2852 observed dams across 1947 km of streams. The model showed excellent agreement with observed dam densities where beaver dams were present. Model performance was spatially coherent and logical, with electricity indices that effectively segregated capacity categories. That is, beaver dams were not found where the model predicted no dams could be supported, beaver avoided segments that were predicted to support rare or occasional densities, and beaver preferentially occupied and built dams in areas predicted to have pervasive dam densities. The resulting spatially explicit reach-scale (250-m long reaches) data identifies where dam-building activity is sustainable, and at what densities dams can occur across a landscape. As such, model outputs can be used to determine where channel–floodplain and wetland connectivity are likely to persist or expand by promoting increases in beaver dam densities.

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1. Introduction

Due to the suite of hydrologic, hydraulic, geomorphic, and ecological feedbacks associated with the dam-building activities of beaver, both *Castor canadensis* in North America and *Castor fiber* in Europe and Asia, are widely recognized as ecosystem engineers (Burchette et al., 2010; Gurnell, 1988; Naiman et al., 1988; Rosell et al., 2005; Warren, 1927). As such, beaver dam building activities affect the lateral, longitudinal, and temporal connectivity of stream channels, floodplains, and adjacent uplands. Beaver dams increase lateral connectivity by linking stream channels, floodplains, and adjacent uplands subsequently by increasing longitudinal discontinuities downstream (Burchette et al., 2010). Beaver dams can enhance vertical connectivity by increasing exchanges between surface and ground water (Majrova et al., 2015). Longitudinally, beaver dams disrupt the delivery of water, sediment, wood and nutrients (Wohl, 2013b), potentially dramatically altering the connectivity of up-estuary sediment sources to downstream sinks and providing greater variation in the residence time in sinks for sediment storage associated with beaver dams. Whereas dam breadth,

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Macfarlane et al. (2016) DOI:
[10.1016/j.geomorph.2015.11.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geomorph.2015.11.019)

THE PRIMARY QUESTIONS WE ASK

1. Is their *enough* **water** present to maintain a pond?
2. Are *enough* and the *right* type of **woody** resources present to support dam building?
3. Can they **build a dam** at *base flows*?
4. Are dams likely to withstand *typical floods*?

Some nationally-available lines of evidence to address questions:

- NHD – perennial streams (1:24K)
- LANDFIRE - vegetation type (EVT)
- USGS Regional Curves for
 - *Baseflow statistics*
 - Q_2
- USGS NED 10 m DEM – derive reach slope and estimate stream power

CAPACITY MODEL IN A NUTSHELL



- Beaver need water and wood...
- Type and extent of wood/vegetation matters most
- Flow regime act to potentially limit capacity

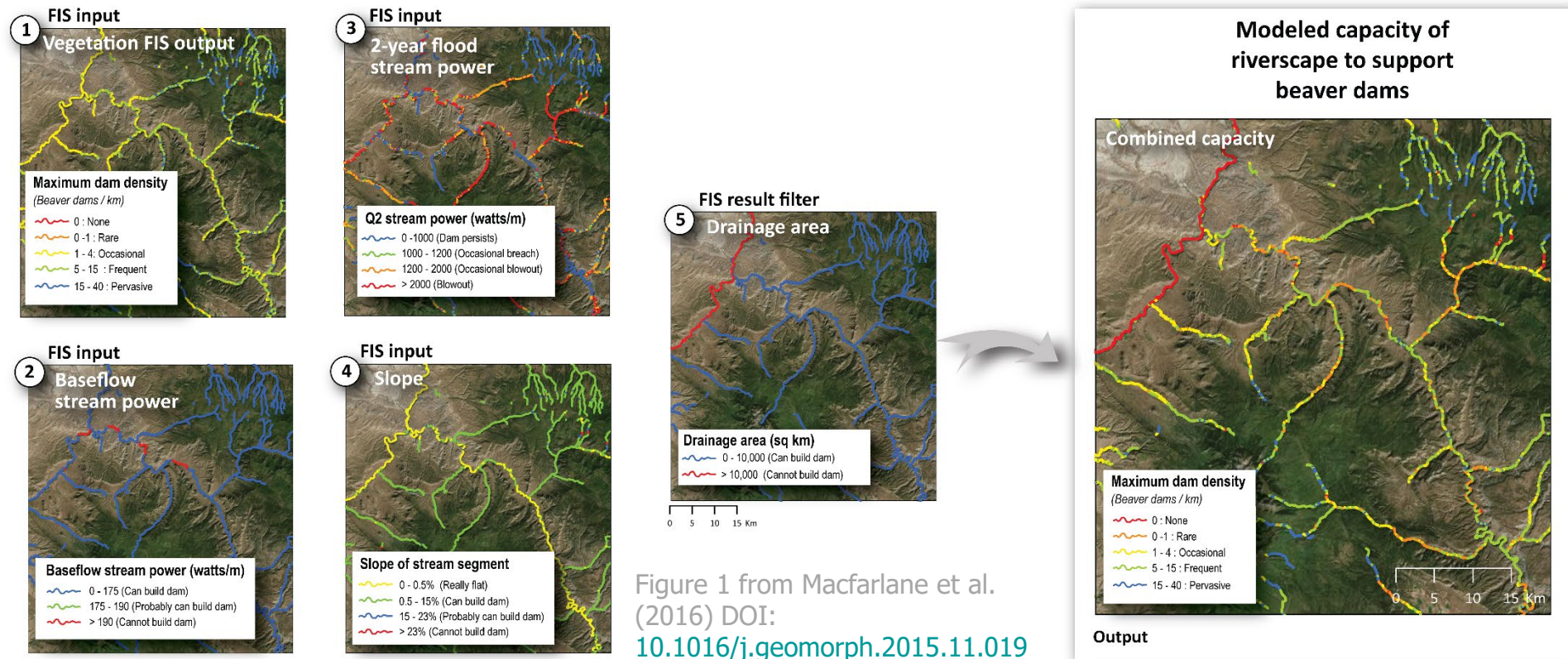


Figure 1 from Macfarlane et al. (2016) DOI: [10.1016/j.geomorph.2015.11.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geomorph.2015.11.019)

HOW MANY & WHERE?

- Existing capacity: 356,294 dams
- 8.3 dams/km

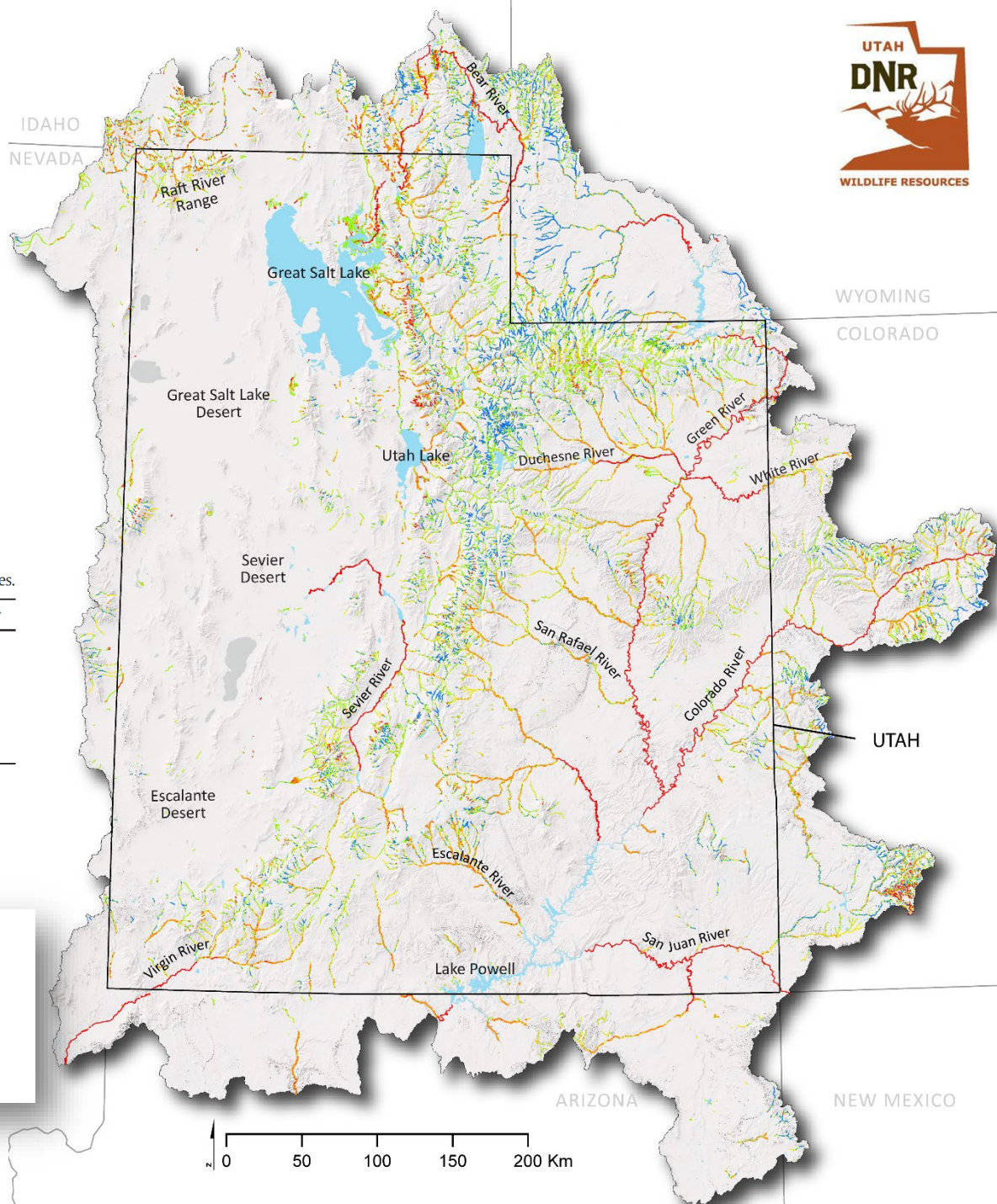
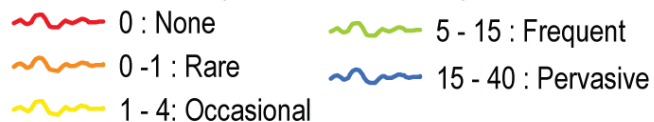


Table 4
Summary of existing beaver dam gross modeled capacity estimates by capacity categories.

Category	Stream length (km)	% of stream network	Estimated dam capacity
Pervasive	6219	15%	147,644
Frequent	18,162	45%	186,184
Occasional	8234	20%	21,544
Rare	3307	8%	922
None	4639	12%	-
Total	40,561		356,294

- Note: Utah is second driest state in US

Maximum Dam Density (Beaver Dams / km)

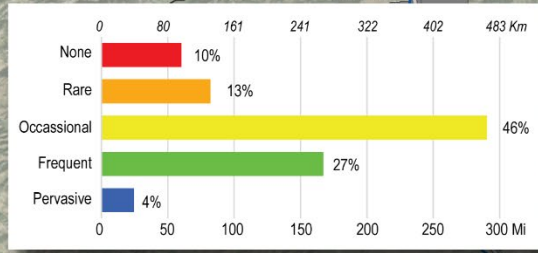


EXISTING CAPACITY

Little Wood

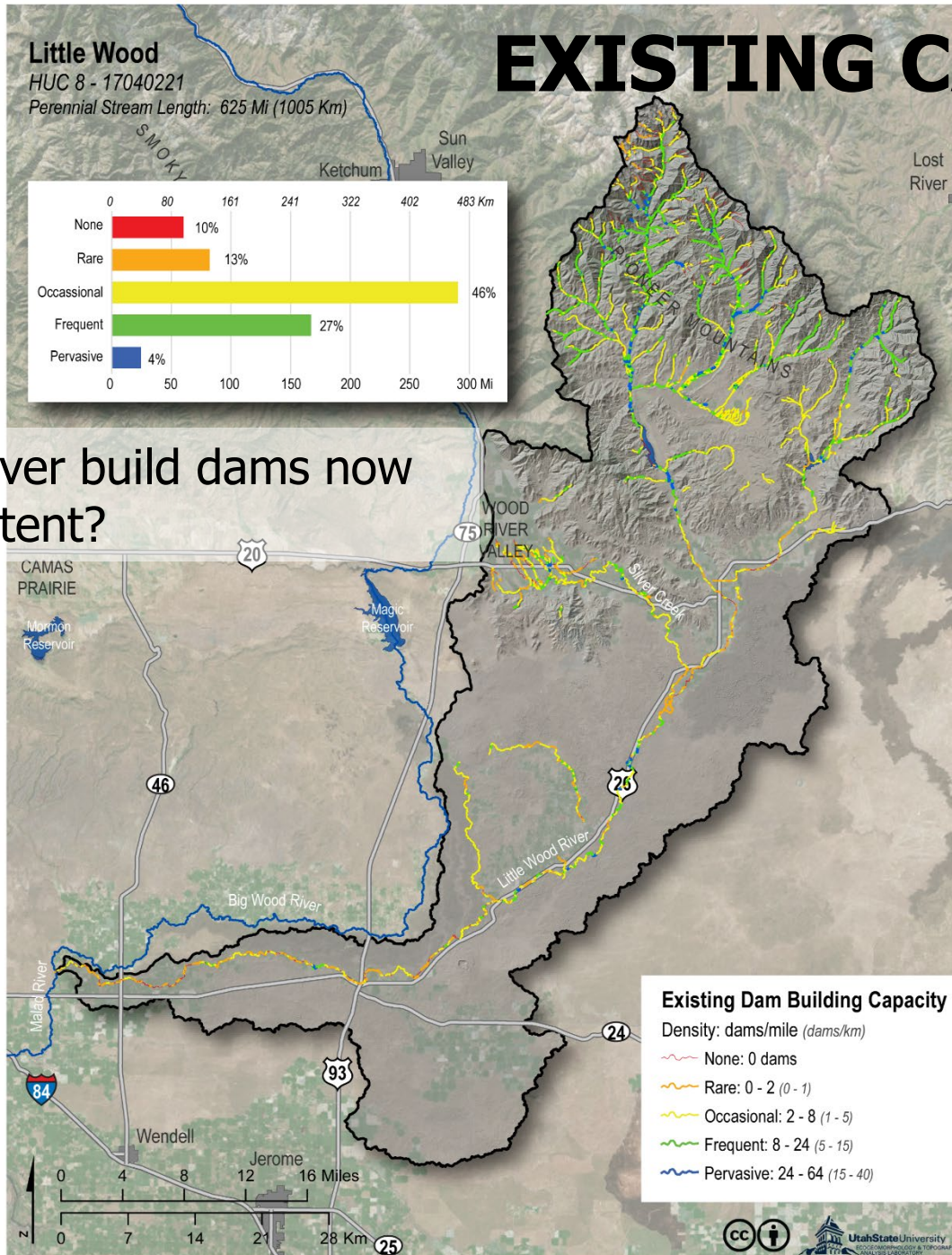
HUC 8 - 17040221

Perennial Stream Length: 625 Mi (1005 Km)



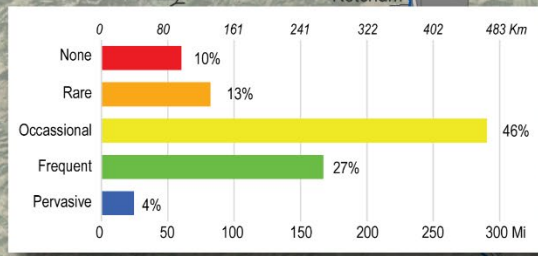
Where can beaver build dams now and to what extent?

Existing Capacity:
6,139 dams
~ 6 dams/KM

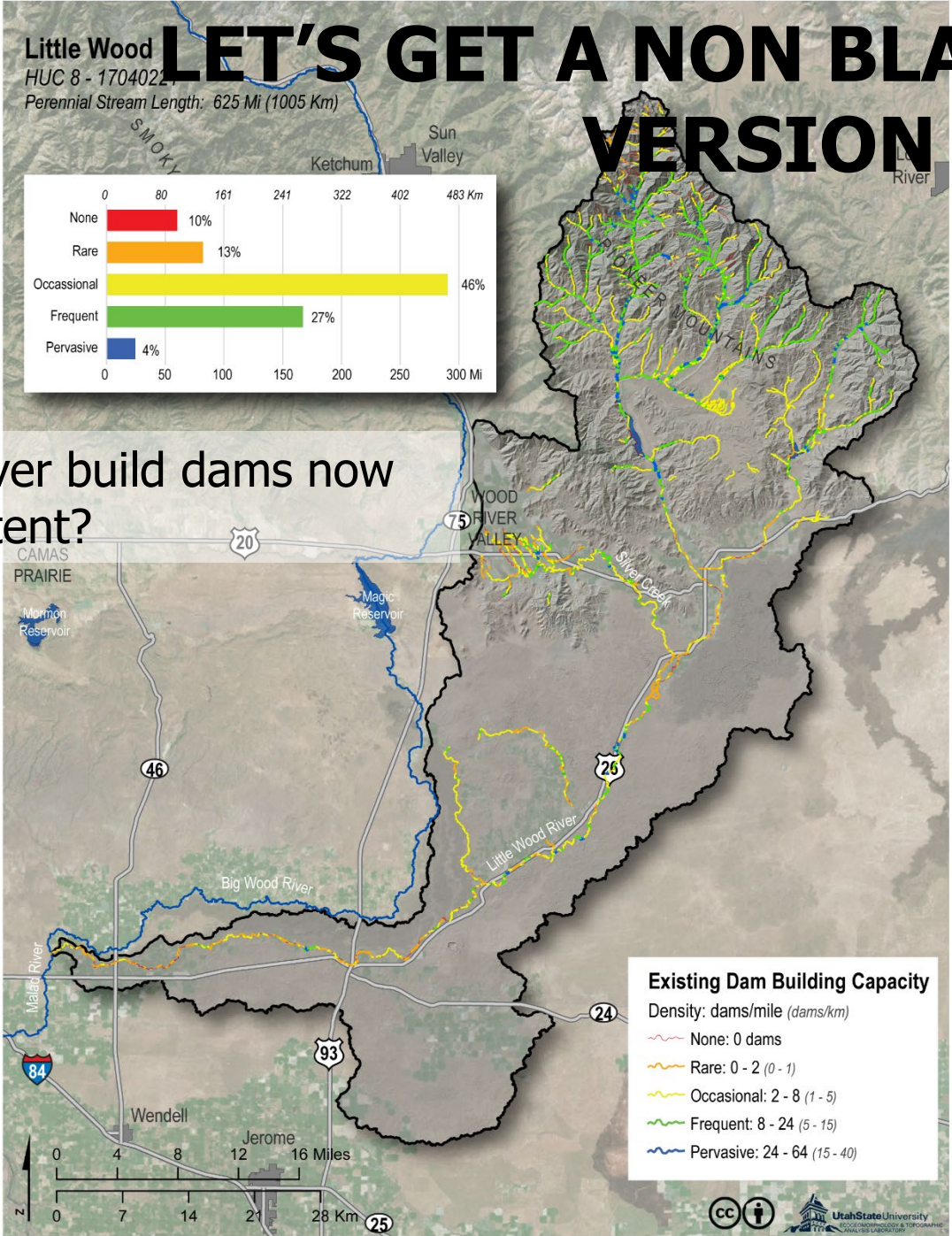


Little Wood
HUC 8 - 1704022
Perennial Stream Length: 625 Mi (1005 Km)

LET'S GET A NON BLACK-BOX VERSION OF THIS



Where can beaver build dams now and to what extent?



CAPACITY... MAX NUMBER OF DAMS

- By answering the basic questions on this form & using the inference system tables we can estimate beaver dam capacity.

BRAT-cIS – BEAVER DAM CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FORM - BASIC



OBSERVATION INFO

Observer Name: _____
Reach ID: _____

Observation Date: _____

LOCATION OF ASSESSMENT REACH

GPS UTM Easting: _____
GPS UTM Northing: _____

Stream Name: _____

LENGTH OF REACH

Length _____ meters OR _____ x bankfull widths

VEGETATION CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

SUITABILITY OF STREAMSIDE VEGETATION

- Unsuitable
 Barely Suitable
 Moderately Suitable
 Suitable
 Preferred

Vegetation within 30 m of water's edge

What vegetation types are abundant?

- Desirable woody (e.g. Aspen, Willow, Cottonwood)
 Other woody (e.g. conifers, sagebrush)
 Grasses Crops Ornamentals Developed

SUITABILITY OF RIPARIAN/UPLAND VEGETATION

- Unsuitable
 Barely Suitable
 Moderately Suitable
 Suitable
 Preferred

Vegetation within 100 m of water's edge

What vegetation types are abundant?

- Desirable woody (e.g. Aspen, Willow, Cottonwood)
 Other woody (e.g. conifers, sagebrush)
 Grasses Crops Ornamentals Developed

DAM DENSITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT BASED ON SUITABILITY OF VEGETATION ONLY (USE TABLE 1)

- None (no dams)
 Rare (0-1 dams/km)
 Occasional (1-4 dams/km)
 Frequent (5-15 dams/km)
 Pervasive (15-40 dams/km)

COMBINED CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

CAN BEAVER BUILD A DAM AT BASEFLOWS?

- Probably can build dam
 Can build dam
 Can build dam (saw evidence of recent dams)
 Could build dam at one time (saw evidence of relic dams)
 Cannot build dam (streampower really high)

IF BEAVERS BUILD A DAM, CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DAM(S) IN A TYPICAL FLOOD (E.G. MEAN ANNUAL FLOOD)?

- Blowout Occasional Blowout
 Occasional Breach Dam Persists

HOW DOES THE REACH SLOPE IMPACT THEIR ABILITY OR NEED TO BUILD DAMS?

- So steep they cannot build a dam (e.g. > 20% slope)
 Probably can build dam
 Can build dam (inferred)
 Can build dam (evidence or current or past dams)
 Really flat (can build dam, but might not need as many as one dam might back up water > 0.5 km)

COMBINED DAM DENSITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT BASED ON ALL (USE TABLE 2)

- None (no dams)
 Rare (0-1 dams/km)
 Occasional (1-4 dams/km)
 Frequent (5-15 dams/km)
 Pervasive (15-40 dams/km)

Maximum Dam Density (dams/km)

0 - None 0 - 1 Rare 1 - 4 Occasional 5 - 15 Frequent 16 - 40 Pervasive

Let's go out in the field & "run" BRAT



•BRAT is a powerful planning tool that helps determine where and at what level dam-building activity might be sustainable for stream and riparian restoration.

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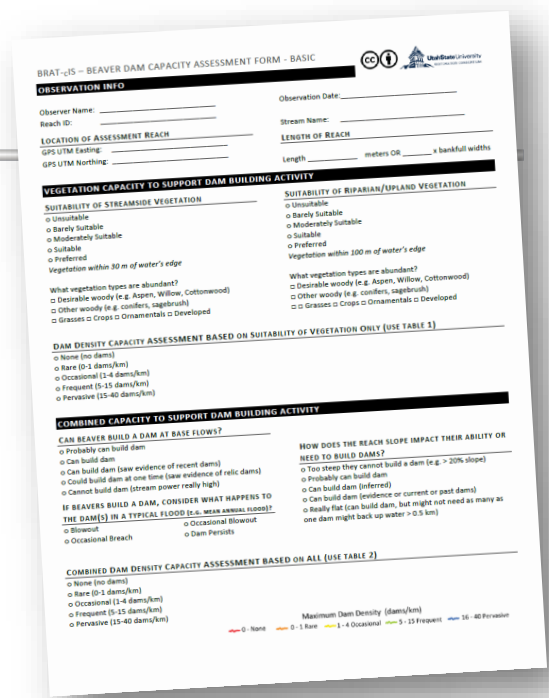
Utah State University
ECOLOGICAL TECHNOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHIC
ANALYSIS LABORATORY

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Who?
Where?
When?



BRAT-cIS – BEAVER DAM CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FORM - BASIC



OBSERVATION INFO

Observer Name: _____

Observation Date: _____

Reach ID: _____

Stream Name: _____

LOCATION OF ASSESSMENT REACH

GPS UTM Easting: _____

LENGTH OF REACH

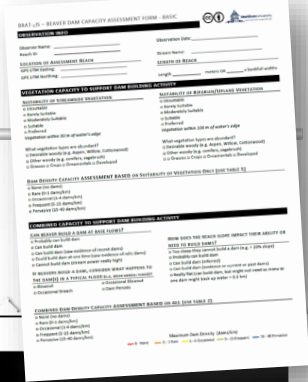
GPS UTM Northing: _____

Length _____ meters OR _____ x bankfull widths



BRAT - cIS

The veg questions... - dam building materials



VEGETATION CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

SUITABILITY OF STREAMSIDE VEGETATION

- Unsuitable
- Barely Suitable
- Moderately Suitable
- Suitable
- Preferred

Vegetation within 30 m of water's edge

What vegetation types are abundant?

- Desirable woody (e.g. Aspen, Willow, Cottonwood)
- Other woody (e.g. conifers, sagebrush)
- Grasses Crops Ornamentals Developed

SUITABILITY OF RIPARIAN/UPLAND VEGETATION

- Unsuitable
- Barely Suitable
- Moderately Suitable
- Suitable
- Preferred

Vegetation within 100 m of water's edge

What vegetation types are abundant?

- Desirable woody (e.g. Aspen, Willow, Cottonwood)
- Other woody (e.g. conifers, sagebrush)
- Grasses Crops Ornamentals Developed

DAM DENSITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT BASED ON SUITABILITY OF VEGETATION ONLY (USE TABLE 1)

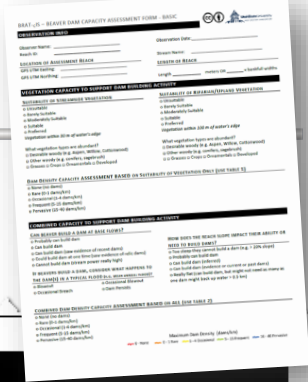
- None (no dams)
- Rare (0-1 dams/km)
- Occasional (1-4 dams/km)
- Frequent (5-15 dams/km)
- Pervasive (15-40 dams/km)

COMBINED CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

CAN BEAVER BUILD A DAM AT BASE FLOWS?

BRAT - cIS

The inference system... look up table on back!



VEGETATION CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

SUITABILITY OF STREAMSIDE VEGETATION

- Unsuitable
- Barely Suitable
- Moderately Suitable
- Suitable
- Preferred

Vegetation within 30 m of water's edge

- What vegetation types are abundant?
- Desirable woody (e.g. Aspen, Willow, Cottonwood)
 - Other woody (e.g. conifers, sagebrush)
 - Grasses Crops Ornamentals Developed

DAM DENSITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT BASE

- None (no dams)
- Rare (0-1 dams/km)
- Occasional (1-4 dams/km)
- Frequent (5-15 dams/km)
- Pervasive (15-40 dams/km)

SUITABILITY OF RIPARIAN/UPLAND VEGETATION

- Unsuitable

INFERENCE SYSTEM OF CAPACITY BASED ON VEGETATION ONLY:

Table 1. Rule table for two input inference system that models the capacity of the reach to support dam building activity (in dam density) using the suitability of streamside vegetation and suitability of riparian/upland vegetation as inputs.

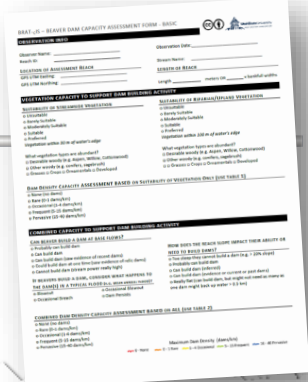
Rules	Inputs	Output
	Suitability of streamside vegetation & Suitability of riparian/upland vegetation	Dam density capacity
1	If Unsuitable & Unsuitable	None
2	If Unsuitable & Barely suitable	Rare
3	If Unsuitable & Moderately suitable	Rare
4	If Unsuitable & Suitable	Occasional
5	If Unsuitable & Preferred	Occasional
6	If Barely suitable & Unsuitable	Rare
7	If Barely suitable & Barely suitable	Rare
8	If Barely suitable & Moderately suitable	Occasional
9	If Barely suitable & Suitable	Occasional
10	If Barely suitable & Preferred	Rare
11	If Moderately suitable & Unsuitable	Occasional
12	If Moderately suitable & Barely suitable	Occasional
13	If Moderately suitable & Moderately suitable	Frequent
14	If Moderately suitable & Suitable	Frequent
15	If Moderately suitable & Preferred	Occasional
16	If Suitable & Unsuitable	Occasional
17	If Suitable & Barely suitable	Frequent
18	If Suitable & Moderately suitable	Frequent
19	If Suitable & Suitable	Pervasive
20	If Suitable & Preferred	Occasional
21	If Preferred & Unsuitable	Frequent
22	If Preferred & Barely suitable	Pervasive
23	If Preferred & Moderately suitable	Pervasive
24	If Preferred & Suitable	Pervasive
25	If Preferred & Preferred	Pervasive

COMBINED CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

CAN BEAVER BUILD A DAM AT BASE FLOWS?

BRAT - cIS

Does hydrology (manifested as local hydraulics) limit this capacity?



COMBINED CAPACITY TO SUPPORT DAM BUILDING ACTIVITY

CAN BEAVER BUILD A DAM AT BASE FLOWS?

- Probably can build dam
- Can build dam
- Can build dam (saw evidence of recent dams)
- Could build dam at one time (saw evidence of relic dams)
- Cannot build dam (stream power really high)

IF BEAVERS BUILD A DAM, CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENS TO THE DAM(S) IN A TYPICAL FLOOD (E.G. MEAN ANNUAL FLOOD)?

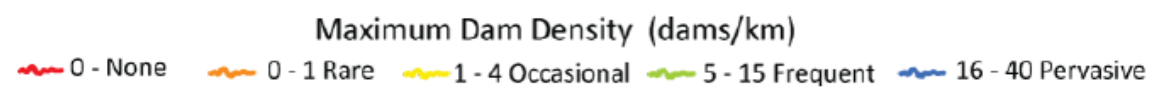
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Blowout | <input type="radio"/> Occasional Blowout |
| <input type="radio"/> Occasional Breach | <input type="radio"/> Dam Persists |

HOW DOES THE REACH SLOPE IMPACT THEIR ABILITY OR NEED TO BUILD DAMS?

- Too steep they cannot build a dam (e.g. > 20% slope)
- Probably can build dam
- Can build dam (inferred)
- Can build dam (evidence or current or past dams)
- Really flat (can build dam, but might not need as many as one dam might back up water > 0.5 km)

COMBINED DAM DENSITY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT BASED ON ALL (USE TABLE 2)

- None (no dams)
- Rare (0-1 dams/km)
- Occasional (1-4 dams/km)
- Frequent (5-15 dams/km)
- Pervasive (15-40 dams/km)



BRAT - CIS

COMBINED INFERENCE SYSTEM:

Table 2. Rule table for four input inference system that models the capacity of the reach to support dam building activity (in dam density) using the vegetation dam density capacity (output of Table 1 model), the two-year flood stream power, baseflow stream power and reach slope.

Rules	Inputs	Output
	Vegetation dam density capacity & 2-year flood stream power & Baseflow stream power & Reach slope	Dam density capacity
1 <i>if</i> None	& -	, then None
2 <i>if</i> -	& Cannot build dam	, then None
3 <i>if</i> -	& -	, then None
4 <i>if</i> Rare	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Rare
5 <i>if</i> Rare	& Dam persists & Probably can build dam	, then Rare
6 <i>if</i> Rare	& Occasional breach & Can build dam	, then Rare
7 <i>if</i> Rare	& Occasional breach & Probably can build dam	, then Rare
8 <i>if</i> Rare	& Occasional blowout & Can build dam	, then Rare
9 <i>if</i> Rare	& Occasional blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Rare
10 <i>if</i> Rare	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then None
11 <i>if</i> Rare	& Blowout & Probably can build dam	, then None
12 <i>if</i> Occasional	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Occasional
13 <i>if</i> Occasional	& Dam persists & Probably can build dam	, then Occasional
14 <i>if</i> Occasional	& Occasional breach & Can build dam	, then Occasional
15 <i>if</i> Occasional	& Occasional breach & Probably can build dam	, then Occasional
16 <i>if</i> Occasional	& Occasional blowout & Can build dam	, then Occasional
17 <i>if</i> Occasional	& Occasional blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Occasional
18 <i>if</i> Occasional	& -	, then Occasional
19 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
20 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
21 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
22 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
23 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
24 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
25 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
26 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
27 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
28 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
29 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
30 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
31 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
32 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
33 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
34 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
35 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
36 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
37 <i>if</i> Frequent	& -	, then Frequent
38 <i>if</i> Frequent	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Rare
39 <i>if</i> Frequent	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Rare
40 <i>if</i> Frequent	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Rare
41 <i>if</i> Frequent	& Blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Rare
42 <i>if</i> Frequent	& Blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Rare
43 <i>if</i> Frequent	& Blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Rare
44 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Frequent
45 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Pervasive
46 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Frequent
47 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Dam persists & Probably can build dam	, then Frequent
48 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Pervasive
49 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Dam persists & Probably can build dam	, then Frequent
50 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional breach & Can build dam	, then Frequent
51 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional breach & Can build dam	, then Pervasive
52 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional breach & Probably can build dam	, then Frequent
53 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional breach & Really flat	, then Frequent
54 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional breach & Can build dam	, then Pervasive
55 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional breach & Probably can build dam	, then Frequent
56 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional blowout & Can build dam	, then Frequent
57 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional blowout & Can build dam	, then Pervasive
58 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional blowout & Can build dam	, then Frequent
59 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Occasional
60 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional blowout & Can build dam	, then Frequent
61 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Occasional blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Occasional
62 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Occasional
63 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Occasional
64 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Rare
65 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Occasional
66 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Blowout & Can build dam	, then Occasional
67 <i>if</i> Pervasive	& Blowout & Probably can build dam	, then Rare

Uglier table... but simple to apply

Rules	Inputs	Output
	Vegetation dam density capacity & 2-year flood stream power & Baseflow stream power & Reach slope	Dam density capacity
1 <i>if</i> None	& -	, then None
2 <i>if</i> -	& Cannot build dam	, then None
3 <i>if</i> -	& -	, then None
4 <i>if</i> Rare	& Dam persists & Can build dam	, then Rare
5 <i>if</i> Rare	& Dam persists & Probably can build dam	, then Rare

Maximum Dam Density (dams/km)

— 0 - None
 — 0 - 1 Rare
 — 1 - 4 Occasional
 — 5 - 15 Frequent
 — 16 - 40 Pervasive

