

# Life with the Beaver, Wetlands and Climate Change

## Raising Awareness and Influencing Policies on Best Beaver Management Practices

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About 150 to 250 years ago, the Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) was completely extirpated from Slovenia and Croatia. After reintroduction, beavers are still recolonizing historical habitats in both countries. More than two centuries of absence were enough for the beaver to disappear from the public perception.

### Environmental problem targeted

Beavers returning are often considered as a **pest** to local inhabitants and also to different stakeholders (foresters, farmers, landowners); there is a **lack of knowledge** on the biology and ecology of the species. Europeans still do not understand the **threats to aquatic ecosystems** and the **loss of biodiversity** (Eurobarometer).

**Conflicts** with the beaver arise with the beaver raising population. **Fallen trees, feeding on crops, local flooding** due to beaver dams or clogged culverts are frequently reported as **beaver damage**; **Claims for damages** in SI are raising, from only 2 cases in 2009 to 44 cases in 2018.

Between **50 and 90 % of wetlands have been destroyed** in Europe in the last century. The most important **ecosystem services** of wetlands are closely related also to **climate changes** we are facing: **water purification and retention, prevention or reduction of floods and erosion, CO<sub>2</sub> uptake** etc.

**Ecosystem services** provided by wetlands need to be reconsidered and **assessed** also in terms of **economic values**. Results will be used as an important **tool** in the process of accepting policies and decision making related to water, forests, agriculture, climate change and biodiversity at local, national and even EU level.



Beaver is promoted as a key species of fresh water habitats.



Educational toolbox for schools enables learning with the use of all senses.



Beaver workshops for children are held in their local environment.



Informational boards in beaver's habitat with basic facts about the species.

### Project objectives are to:

- achieve higher level of **knowledge** of key **stakeholders** about the beaver and about benefits (ecosystem services of wetlands);
- introduce the beaver to the broaden public and to **improve** the **attitude** and **acceptance** of the beaver;
- **promote wetlands** managed and created by the beaver also in the context of **climate change mitigation** and to **assess** the current and potential **beaver range**;
- **redefine** all **ecosystem services of wetlands** and their economic values for future **policy making** (freshwater and forest management, agriculture, biodiversity and climate change);
- **present** and **demonstrate best practice beaver management techniques** to target groups and stakeholders;
- **strengthen cross-border cooperation** between SI and HR for best practice solutions exchange and **synchronized population management** of the beaver.
- **promote co-habitation** with beavers in countryside offering new opportunities for **sustainable tourism** and **rural development**.



Beaver deceiver "BOBROBRAN" installation on a smaller stream.



Mitigation measure "BOBROBRAN" protecting farmland of 14 different landowners.



Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) - monitoring of mitigation measures proves the use of beaver dams by many species.

### General information about the project

**Total budget:** 913,861 €  
**EU contribution:** 491,647 € (53.80 %)  
**Co-financer contribution:** 124,893 € (13.67 %)  
**Beneficiaries contribution:** 297,321 € (32.53 %)

**Start date:** 1. 9. 2020

**End date:** 31. 8. 2024

**Project acronym:** LIFE BEAVER

**Project reference:** LIFE19 GIE/SI/001111

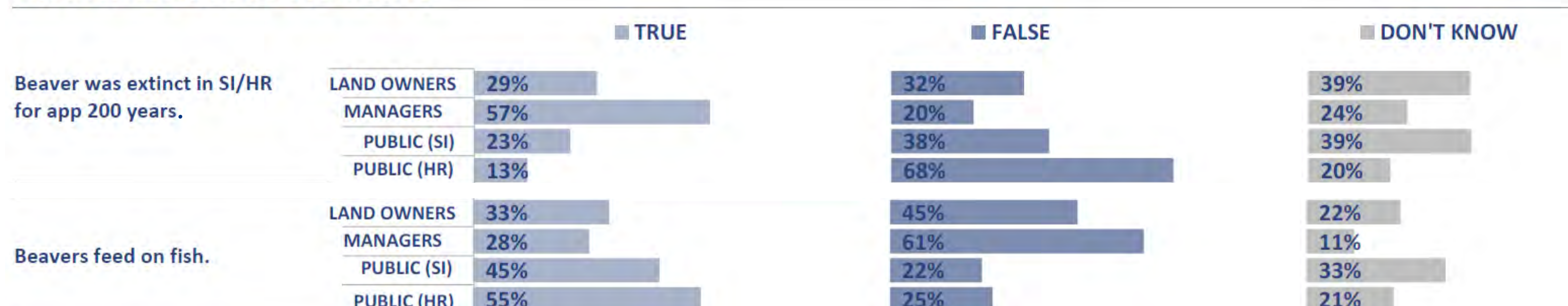
**Website:** <https://life-beaver.eu>

Survey among **general public, land owners and managers in Natura 2000/protected areas** showed interesting results on knowledge and attitude to beavers.

The **attitude** towards the **benefits** and/or **damages** caused by beavers among the general public and managers did not differ significantly. Landowners are evidently less fond of the beavers.

The results are confirming that it is a **necessity** to carry out **lectures** and **workshops** for all target groups.

### Awareness about the beaver



### Agreeing with the statements

	Public (SI) (n=515)	Public (HR) (n=502)	Managers (n=292)	Landowners (n=120)
I would be very happy to see a beaver in nature.	90%	90%	89%	61%
Beavers are an important part of the natural ecosystem.	86%	90%	93%	69%
Beavers have a right to exist, regardless of the damage caused.	80%	89%	83%	57%
People should tolerate beaver activities.	71%	73%	85%	50%
I will probably never see a beaver, but it is important to me that the species exists.	69%	58%	65%	42%
No beaver should be killed.	63%	75%	38%	41%
The beaver population needs to be actively managed.	57%	64%	75%	68%
Beaver causes damage to landowners.	36%	38%	57%	67%
When beaver dams fail, they cause flooding downstream.	25%	27%	14%	19%
Beavers degrade the habitat for certain animal groups, especially for fish.	13%	20%	7%	17%
Beavers can contaminate drinking water, which can cause disease in humans.	11%	8%	5%	11%
Beavers cause damage to roads and bridges.	11%	12%	8%	23%
Beavers are a nuisance.	9%	6%	9%	30%
Beavers cause more harm than good.	9%	11%	10%	26%
I'm afraid of beavers.	7%	8%	1%	7%