

bibkey: 595438  
Marilyn C.

## MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM

*This form must be attached to all documents sent to the regional director's office for signature. Sections A and B should be filled out by the PROJECT ORIGINATOR.*

**A. PARK NAME** MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK      **Project Number** 03-07

**Project Type (Circle):**    Cyclic, Cultural Cyclic, Repair/Rehab, Park ONPS, NRPP, CRPP, PRAM, FLHP, Line Item, Fee Demo, Concession Reimbursable, Other (specify) ADC

**Project Title** Restoration and supplementation of beaver population in the Mancos Canyon corridor.

**Project Location** Mancos River

**Project Originator/Coordinator** Marilyn Colyer

**Contract #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contractor Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION/LOCATION** [*Attach maps, photos, notes of site visits, agency consultation, relevant data or reports, the categorical exclusion form (if relevant) etc. to this form to begin the statutory compliance file.*]

### HISTORIC BEAVER POPULATION:

In 1983 two beaver dams were observed across the Mancos River in the park. These beavers also had several burrows well back into the riverbanks. An increased diversity of fauna was also observed here—including great blue herons, increased fishes, bear signs, raccoons, and aquatic invertebrates. Since that time, the natural resource staff has observed beaver dams, bank dens, occasional cut trees, slides, and shoreline tracks at several locations on the river in the park. We have also recorded beaver dams, over the past fifteen years, in adjacent lands within several miles.

During the past two years, since the Bircher Fire in 2000, the river has received high flooding and heavy deposits of ash and silt. The silt has filled in most of the pools along the river. The continual fluctuations of river conditions have apparently eliminated the historic beaver population. We have not observed beaver signs in the Mancos River, within the park, for the past two years.

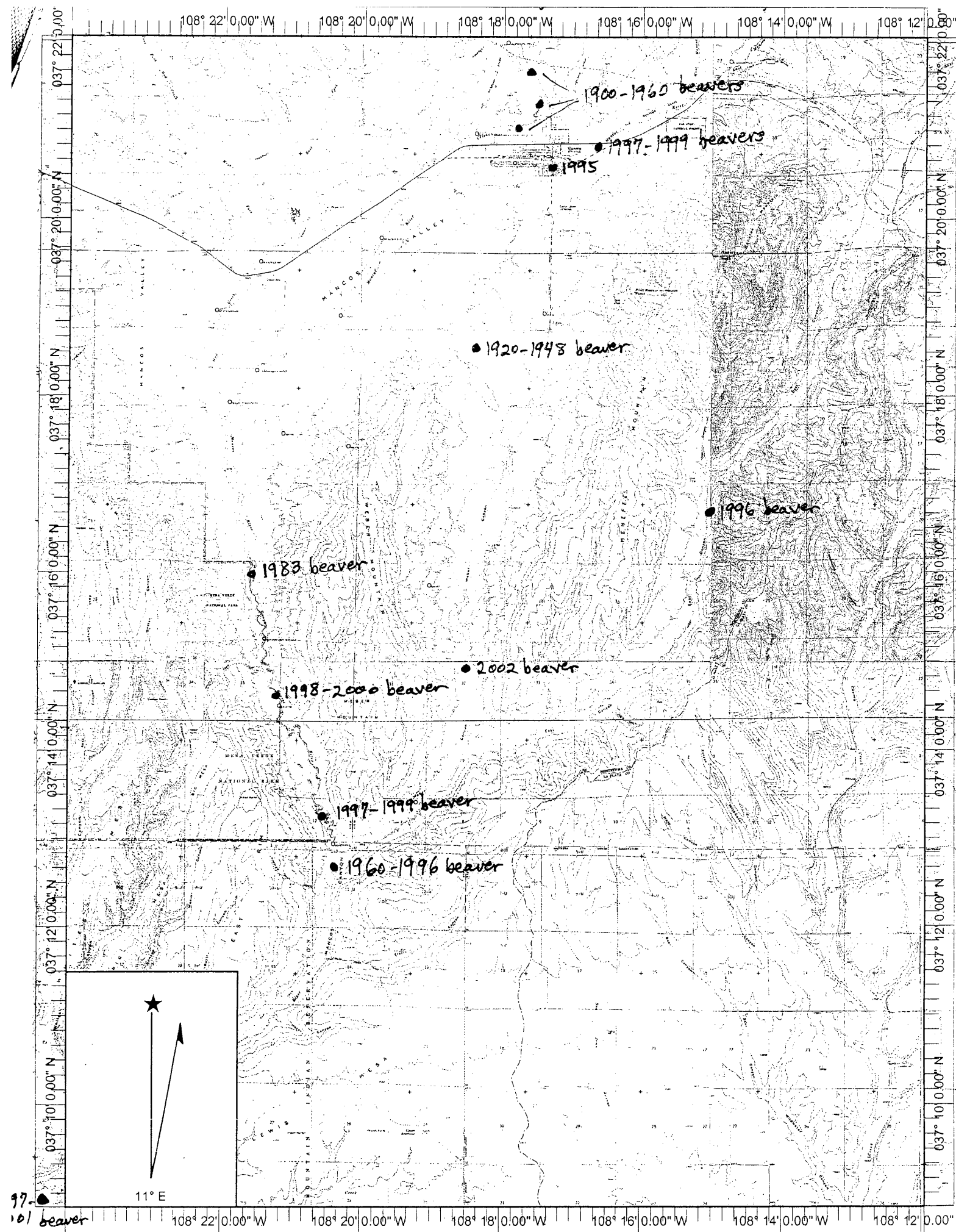
The local county Animal Damage Control Services have developed a successful program that involves live-trapping unwanted beavers from irrigation ditches. ADC evaluates potential release sites, transports beavers to acceptable sites, and will also do follow-up monitoring. ADC attempts to keep related beavers together to assure their residency in the release site.

### BENEFITS OF BEAVERS:

In past observations we have seen that beaver activity may result in the loss of a relatively few sapling cottonwood trees during the first year or two of establishment in an area. Then plant and animal diversity and density increases as pools are formed, the water table rises, and habitat generally improves. This past drought year would have greatly benefited from the presence of beaver dams. The ponds would have been a safe haven of deeper water for the native fishes of the Mancos River. The ponds would have served as settling ponds for the silt and ash coming off the 2000 burn. {It has been this silt and ash that has been so detrimental to the river's fishes as pools are filled and hiding crevices are plugged, meaning even little minnows have no place to be safe.} The raised water table would have allowed for more plant growth along the diminished river.

### BEAVER RESTORATION:

We propose to evaluate the river for adequate release sites within the park. These selected sites should be accessible by vehicle. They will be in the middle portion of the park so the beaver will not easily travel away from the park. Willows and some cottonwood trees must be available for food. There will be sandy, alluvial banks nearby for denning burrows.



Notes: many of the populations are short-lived / removed for innovation purposes