

## Royal Lake's Engineers

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Some folks wondered about the canals in Royal Lake, especially at the Rabbit Branch end. Whereas this area is slated for dredging (start time is uncertain), the engineers responsible for this work are not human. It is the action of industrious beavers. A bit slow and vulnerable to predators on land, beavers prefer traveling via waterways. If the water is too shallow, these rodents excavate the bottom down to several feet. Any mud not used in dams and lodges gets deposited along the channel. A close look reveals a hump or lip at the water's edge where the muck is placed. Under further examination, beaver prints may be found on these berms.



**Figure 1. The canals seen here were carved by *Castor canadensis*.**

Besides benefiting beavers, these canals help keep water flowing through the lake. Without the beaver activity, more of the shallows would be stagnant and silt up faster. Instead of an island here, this land mass would be a single, large shoal.

Beavers chomped on some river birches near Lakeside Park's blacktop, too. These doings are more of the animals' normal wintertime functions. Preferring summer's fresh vegetation, North America's largest rodent must subsist on bark through winter months. Years ago, the birches were felled by beaver, the trees recovered, large trunks arose, and now the cycle continues again. River birches, black willow, and other native riparian trees evolved to withstand—even benefit from—beaver predation.

Not to worry about the beaver during the lake dredge. These adaptive animals will move along if disturbed by the operations, perhaps as close as the Shane's Creek outflow into Royal Lake, and will return at the project's completion.

For more information about Royal Lake's beavers, check out the [Eco-Article archives](#):

- [A Tribute to Beavers \(December 2008\)](#)
- [Applying the Beavers' Blueprints \(January 2009\)](#)
- [Beavers Making Due for the Winter \(January 2010\)](#)

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