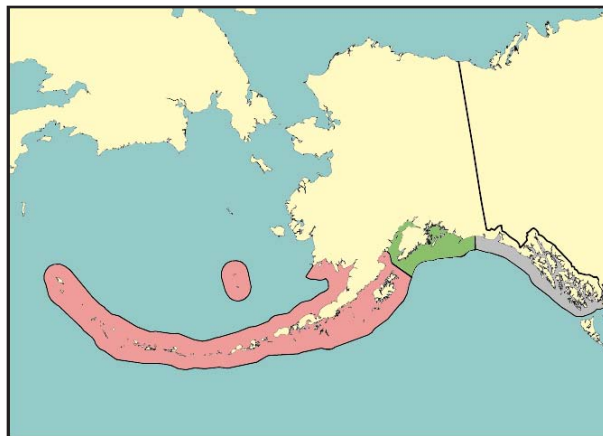


Have sea otters been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act?

Yes, but only the Southwest Alaska Distinct Population Segment (DPS).

What areas are included in the Southwest Alaska DPS?

Sea otters from Kamishak Bay westward through the Aleutians have been listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).



Southwest Distinct Population Segment as defined by the USFWS, outlined in red

Kamishak Bay is located in western Cook Inlet. The affected areas include Kodiak, southern Alaska Peninsula, northern Alaska Peninsula, the southern shores of Bristol Bay, and the Aleutian Islands.

Who can hunt sea otters?

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), coastal Alaska Natives living along the North Pacific or Arctic Ocean are the only people who may harvest sea otters. When the MMPA was passed, Congress recognized the cultural importance of marine mammals to Alaska Native peoples, and included an Alaska Native exemption for their take for subsistence or handicraft, provided that marine mammals are not taken in a wasteful manner.

If I live in the listed area, can I still hunt sea otter?

Yes. Like the MMPA, the ESA has an Alaska Native exemption that provides for harvest of a listed species for subsistence, provided that the take is not wasteful. In order for subsistence take to be regulated from the listed population, it must be shown that subsistence take is "materially and negatively" affecting the population. This has not been shown for current sea otter harvest. The sea otter population in the DPS is estimated at approximately 48,000 animals. Current harvest levels average approximately 100 animals per year, or well under 1% of the DPS sea otter population.

In September 2006, a Special Rule under Section 4(d) of the ESA became effective. This rule allows sea otter subsistence activities that were occurring in the DPS area prior to the listing to continue. This special rule makes the regulations for the threatened population consistent with the rules and regulations for sea otter subsistence for the rest of Alaska.



What about other areas of the state?

For those that live in other areas of Alaska, their ability to use sea otters for subsistence purposes is not affected by the Southwest Alaska sea otter listing. Sea otter populations in eastern Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound and Southeast are stable or increasing. Under the MMPA, in order for Federal regulation of subsistence harvest to occur, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) must show that the harvest is a threat to the survival of the species and the affected stock must *also* be declared depleted. However, to ensure the continuation of the ability to use our resources for subsistence purposes, harvests must be done wisely.

Do I need a permit to hunt sea otters?

There are no Federal permit requirements for sea otter hunting. However some Alaska Native tribal governments may have local sea otter harvest regulations, including permit requirements. Prior to hunting, it is respectful to know if any tribal government regulations exist. Additionally, some areas may have restrictions on the use of firearms in certain areas, such as within city limits. Prior to hunting, it is respectful to know if any tribal government regulations or important to know if any firearm restrictions exist.

What do I have to do once I've taken a sea otter?

The sea otter's skull and pelt must be tagged by a representative of the FWS within 30 days of the harvest. Taggers are available in most coastal communities. It is important to tag your otters as there are large fines for not tagging. Tagging is an important way of keeping track of the sea otter population and the number harvested. If you need your sea otters tagged, TASSC is a tagger.

What can I do with the pelts?

Under both the MMPA and ESA, sea otter pelts can be used for personal subsistence purposes or for the making of handicrafts. Subsistence purposes include food, clothing and other uses necessary to maintain the life of the hunter or those who depend on the hunter.

Handicrafts are defined in the MMPA and ESA as: items that are not mass-produced and are significantly altered from the tanned skin form. They should be decorated or fashioned with traditional methods including stitching, sewing and lacing. Handicrafts can be sold to Natives and non-natives.

Unaltered pelts, in the raw or tanned form, can be sold or traded to other Alaska Natives or to registered agents for resale or transfer to Alaska Natives within Alaska. Unaltered pelts cannot be sold or traded to non-natives.

REMINDERS:

- * It is legal for coastal Alaska Natives who are 1/4 degree or more Alaska Indian, Eskimo or Aleut blood (or enrolled pursuant to Section 5 under ANSCA) to hunt and use sea otters (or other marine mammals).
- * It is legal to sell handicrafts made from these animals to all people.
- * Alaska Natives can sell or trade raw marine mammal parts, including unaltered tanned/untanned sea otter pelts, only to other Alaska Natives (or registered agents).
- * It is illegal to sell raw tanned or untanned sea otter pelts to anyone except other Alaska Natives or registered agents.

