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Photos: [Feasibility Study Announcement](#)

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OREGON SEA OTTER REINTRODUCTION DRAFT FEASIBILITY STUDY AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

The Elakha Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring sea otters to the Oregon coast, announced today that a draft Feasibility Study is now available on the group's website for public review and feedback. The Elakha Alliance contracted with a half-dozen top-level scientists to conduct the study.

The Feasibility Study will assist the Elakha Alliance, state and federal agencies, ocean users, and the public in understanding, evaluating, and addressing the many complex factors that must be considered before a decision is made to return sea otters to the Oregon coast. A final document will be produced in January, 2022, after comments are received.

Robert Bailey, Elakha Alliance Board President, emphasized, "The Feasibility Study is not intended to provide a definitive conclusion about reintroducing sea otters to Oregon."

Bailey said, "This is an information document, not a decision document. We want to make sure that we and the public have the pertinent information and best available science to consider when making decisions about returning sea otters to Oregon. We want everyone working off the same set of information. So, we need the public to give us feedback and help us make sure that the study is as complete as possible."

The draft Feasibility Study covers such factors as the location and suitability of habitats for sea otters, the potential for positive and negative effects on Oregon's marine and estuarine ecosystems, possible social and economic impacts, the health and veterinary aspects of sea otter return, administrative and legal requirements, logistical constraints, and steps for implementation.

The draft Feasibility Study may be found on the Elakha website, www.elakhaalliance.org. Chapter summaries as well as complete chapters are available for downloading. An online feedback form is provided on the website. A final study will be published in early 2022.

A centerpiece of the draft Feasibility Study is the Oregon Sea Otter population model (ORSO) https://nhydra.shinyapps.io/ORSO_app/, an online computer model that can be used online by anyone to run various scenarios of future sea otter populations based on how many animals are released and where. Bailey said: “This model gives us a peek into the future. It gives us an idea of how many sea otters might be present 25 or 30 years out depending on how many animals we release and where. It will take that long to see whether we have been successful.”

A separate Economic Impact Assessment is underway and will be released for public review later this year.

Elakha (ee-LAK-uh) is a Chinook trading language word for sea otter, which were once plentiful in Oregon’s coastal waters. Sea otters were decimated by hunting for pelts in the 1700s and 1800s, effectively eliminating them from Oregon by the early 1900s.

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Notes to editors:

- Bob Bailey spent nearly 40 years in coastal and ocean planning and management for the State of Oregon. He also served as a City Commissioner for the City of Oregon City, a member of the City of Salem Budget Committee, and chair of the Oregon Wave Energy Trust. He is the Board President of the Elakha Alliance.
- The top six scientists who authored the Feasibility Study draft are:
 - **Dr. Tim Tinker**, principal author; Research Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Geological Survey; Adjunct Professor, UC Santa Cruz
 - **Dr. James Estes**, contributing author; Ecologist, U.S. Geological Survey (retired); Distinguished Professor Emeritus, UC Santa Cruz
 - **Dr. James Bodkin**, contributing author; Research Wildlife Biologist (retired), U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center
 - **Dr. Shawn Larson**, contributing author; Curator of Conservation Research, Seattle Aquarium
 - **Dr. Mike Murray**, contributing author; Jane Dunaway Director of Veterinary Services, Monterey Bay Aquarium
 - **Dr. Jan Hodder**, contributing author; Emeritus Professor, University of Oregon, Institute of Marine Biology