

For Immediate Release

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Oregon to Celebrate Sea Otter Awareness Week

The Elakha Alliance, an Oregon non-profit working to restore sea otters to the Oregon coast, invites the public to celebrate Sea Otter Awareness Week (SOAW) September 24-30, 2023. The Alliance joins California based organizations including Sea Otter Savvy, Defenders of Wildlife, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and California State Parks to inspire a deeper awareness of these unique marine mammals, their ecological importance and the challenges they face. Elakha Alliance representatives will host in-person events at the Oregon Zoo, Oregon Coast Aquarium, and BLM Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area.

This year's theme, "**Restoring Missing Links**," recognizes that sea otters remain absent from large portions of their historical range and celebrates active efforts of conservation groups to restore a continuous population of these charismatic creatures along the Pacific coast. To view the full SOAW schedule, visit <https://defenders.org/sea-otter-awareness-week>.

Oregon Sea Otter Awareness Week activities (see www.elakhaalliance.org for details);

- Monday Sept 25th, 6:30pm: [Webinar: Elakha's Next Steps & What Makes Sea Otters So Unique](#)
- Tuesday Sept 26th, 12pm-2pm: [Float Down the Coast Livestream & Educational Table at Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area](#) (Newport)
- Wednesday Sept 27th, 10am-2pm: [Sea Otter Viewing Station at Oregon Coast Aquarium](#) (Newport)
- Friday Sept 29th, 10am-2pm: [Sea Otter Viewing Station at Oregon Zoo](#) (Portland)
- Saturday Sept 30th, 10am-2pm: [Sea Otter Viewing Station at Oregon Zoo](#) (Portland)

Sea otters, once plentiful on the Oregon coast, were hunted nearly to extinction for their lush furs by the early 1900s. A few surviving animals in California and Alaska enabled the population of sea otters to rebound in many places. However, they remain absent in their former habitats on the Oregon and northern California coasts, a stretch of nearly 800 miles.

In 2022 the US Fish and Wildlife Service released a study of the feasibility and impacts of returning sea otters to the region. The study found that there would be many ecological and economic benefits from returning sea otters due to their importance in protecting kelp forests which are critical habitat for many marine species, including fish caught in commercial and recreational harvest. An economic impact assessment conducted for the Elakha Alliance in 2022 found that the return of sea otters would provide economic benefits to Oregon coast communities, although shellfish harvest in some areas could be affected. A 2023 study of potential impacts on tourism and travel economics on the southern Oregon

coast from the return of sea otters predicts a substantial boost to the local economy from increased tourism and travel.

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