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Senate Urges Management of Sea Otters to Protect Shellfish

JUNEAU – The Alaska Senate today passed a resolution urging the federal government to take action and protect Alaska’s shellfish for subsistence, commercial, and recreational use from predation by sea otters.

“The food locker for Southeast Alaskans is rapidly being depleted by sea otters,” said Sen. Bert Stedman (R-Sitka) the resolution’s sponsor.

Under federal management, sea otters have increased in number from zero in the early 1960s to an estimated 51,000 today. The sea otter population is growing largely unchecked by approximately 13 percent per year. Sea otters have also spread across a large area in Southeast Alaska, eating large quantities of shellfish wherever they go, and causing major negative impacts to shellfish populations.

By 2030, the Alaska State Board of Fish estimates that if the federal government continues to do nothing to reduce the sea otter population, sea otters will be eating over 1 million pounds per day of shellfish and other foods. These same shellfish are heavily relied upon for subsistence, commercial, and recreational use by Alaskans.

Federal rules under the Marine Mammal Protection Act allow hunting of sea otters by Alaska Natives, but they require hunters to have at least one-quarter Native ancestry.

The resolution urges the federal government to coordinate with the State of Alaska and Tribes to take more sea otters and reduce the population. It also urges the federal government to change its blood quantum requirement to allow more Alaska Natives to participate in the hunting of sea otters.

[SJR 13](#) is now on its way to the Alaska House of Representatives for consideration.

Click [here](#) to read Alaska Board of Fisheries Chairman John Jensen’s support letter urging federal action on sea otter management.

For more information, contact Senate Majority Press Secretary [Daniel McDonald](#) at (907) 465-4066

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