

HUNTING AND USE OF SEA OTTERS BY ALASKA NATIVES



FACT SHEET

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Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Department of the Interior

This fact sheet addresses often asked questions about sea otters. For answers to other specific questions contact one of the offices listed on the back of this sheet.

WHO MAY HUNT SEA OTTERS?

Alaska Natives (Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos) who reside in Alaska and who dwell on the coast of the North Pacific Ocean or the Arctic Ocean may harvest sea otters for subsistence purposes or the creation and sale of Native articles of handicraft or clothing if the harvest is not wasteful. A Native must be one-fourth degree or more Alaska Indian, Aleut or Eskimo or be enrolled under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. It is illegal for a person who is not Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo to actively participate in any manner in hunting sea otters.

IS THERE A HARVEST LIMIT FOR SEA OTTERS?

No. Alaska Natives are not limited by Federal Law in the number that can be harvested, providing the harvest is not wasteful. Numbers killed should be limited to what can reasonably be utilized. Sea otters may be harvested any time during the year. Check with local tribal entities or the Alaska Sea Otter Commission for guidelines on sea otter hunting.

ARE THERE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR SEA OTTER HUNTERS?

Yes. Hunters must present the hides and skulls to Fish and Wildlife Service representatives for tagging. Hides and skulls must be tagged within 30 days of the kill. The hide and skull should be thawed when tagged to: 1) allow an unbroken pre-molar tooth to be extracted for aging; 2) allow accurate skull measurements to be made; and 3) allow the hide to be examined for determination of sex. Flipper tags and radio transmitters must be given to the tagger. A list of tagging representatives is available from the Service's Marine Mammals Management Field Office.

WHAT MAY BE SOLD AS A NATIVE HANDICRAFT?

Authentic Native handicrafts may be sold to anyone. This means items composed of a significantly altered pelt that is wholly or in some respect made of natural materials and produced, decorated, or fashioned in the exercise of traditional handicrafts without the use of pantographs, multiple carvers, or other mass copying devices. Traditional handicrafts include, but are not limited to weaving, carving, stitching, sewing, lacing, beading, drawing and painting.

ARE THERE OTHER LEGAL USES OF SEA OTTERS?

Yes. The meat or other edible parts from sea otters may be sold if it is sold in an Alaska Native village or is sold to an Alaskan Native.

MAY RAW (TANNED OR UNTANNED) HIDES BE SOLD OR TRANSFERRED?

Yes, but only to an Alaska Native within Alaska or to a registered agent for resale or transfer to an Alaskan Native within Alaska. It is illegal to give as a gift, trade, or sell either tanned or untanned hides to non-Natives.

HOW MAY A NATIVE HAVE A HIDE TANNED?

Natives may have sea otter hides tanned by taxidermists or tanneries which have a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service. A list of authorized tanneries is available upon request. Sea otter hides must be tagged in order for the tannery to tan the hides. Tanneries have been instructed not to process untagged hides. Individuals sending hides for tanning may wish to include a signed and dated statement indicating they are a Native and may legally possess the hide.

MAY SEA OTTER HANDICRAFTS OR CLOTHING BE EXPORTED?

Handcrafted sea otter products may be exported to a foreign country. However, the exporter must first obtain a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service. A CITES permit is not required for sea otter handicrafts that are personal items if they are worn, or carried out in accompanying baggage, however, a U.S. Customs Service declaration form should be completed prior to taking any personal marine mammal product out of the country if it is intended that it will be brought back by the same person. Exporters should inquire about foreign import restrictions, since some countries may not allow the importation of handcrafted sea otter products.

MAY SEA OTTER HANDICRAFTS OR CLOTHING BE IMPORTED?

Sea otter handicrafts may not be imported for commercial sale. Any person may re-enter the United States with sea otter handicrafts that are personal items which were exported under a declaration form. Alaska Natives may also import sea otter handicrafts if they were acquired outside of the United States as part of a cultural exchange. For specific information, contact one of the offices listed below.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING OFFICES:

The Alaska Sea Otter and Steller Sea Lion Commission, 6239 B. St., Suite 204, Anchorage, AK 99518, (907) 274-9799 or **1-800-474-4362**

Office of Law Enforcement, Special Agent in Charge, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503 (907) 786-3311

Office of Law Enforcement, Resident Agent in Charge, 1412 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99701 **(907) 456-2335**

Supervisor, Marine Mammals Management Office, USFWS, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503 **(907)786-3800 or 1-800-362-5148**