

To whom it may concern.

When I started commercial fishing in the early 1970's there were no sea otters in southern Southeast Alaska either in inside waters or out on the coast. About 1978 I started fishing out of Pelican Alaska, the western most port in Southeast. When I first got there fishermen were beginning to complain about the surge of the sea otter population in the area. At the time I wasn't familiar with the animal and being a novelty to me I enjoyed watching them float on their backs breaking open shellfish and gulping them down. Over the next 12 years I watched the population grow until there were times when I would see rafts of 50 or more grouped together eating always eating. As the sea otters scoured an area we noticed the kelp was growing thicker than before. Entrances to harbors like Hoktaheen on Yakobi island became so thick with kelp only the stabilizers from the trollers coming and going through the entrances kept the harbors open. People inquired as to why the kelp was coming in so thick and the answer was the sea otters were eating all the shellfish and sea urchins, part of the food chain that helped keep the kelp growth down.

As the years passed I began seeing sea otters off Sitka Sound and then off Kuiu Island and Warren Island. After I quit power trolling I spent more time in southern Southeast and several years ago I saw a few up inside Clarence Strait. Now there is a large colony in Moira Sound and in places where I used to pick a few abalone in the 70's there are no abalone to be found. I don't have all the statistics but the Fish and Game and others do and it's apparent the cause of the shellfish decline in Southeast is because of these handsome but voracious creatures.

Hopefully the government will do the right thing and allow some sort of predator control to keep the Southeast Alaska sea otter population in check. Yes the Russian hunters went too far and apparently there is some decline in the Aleutians possibly by killer whales or maybe they've just eaten themselves out of a place to live but in Southeast Alaska sea otters are alive and well and a they are a definite threat to the shellfish population.

Thank you for your time.

Carl H (Chip) Porter
P.O. Box 7844
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Born in Ketchikan in 1949 and a commercial fisherman since 1972