



The Otter Project
www.otterproject.org

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California sea otter census gives shaky results

Monterey, CA -- The Otter Project is uncertain with today's results of the spring sea otter survey, which paint a mixed picture for sea otter recovery.

"The press release distributed by the U.S. Geologic Survey, the agency conducting sea otter research, says that the population is in decline and the agency calls for more money for their research; yet when you read the actual results of the survey, they counted more otters than last year," said Steve Shimek, founder of The Otter Project.

The spring 2010 survey found 2719 otters, slightly up from last year's count of 2654. The "decline" statement comes from the Agency using a three year running average to dampen the impact of a single year's count.

"The Otter Project is very uncertain about today's result and sea otter recovery in general," said Shimek. "The count is ever so slightly up – a good sign. The pup count is sharply down – a bad sign. And year-to-date strandings are sharply up – another bad sign."

Much can be done to aid sea otter recovery, including more research. "There is so much we can do – beyond research: We need to rally around our favorite ocean mammal and help them recover," said Shimek.

The Otter Project cites a number of key actions we can take to promote the recovery of the otter population. These include:

- Ending the no-otter zone in Southern California to allow for natural range expansion
- Reducing disease by improving water quality, including sewage treatment, preventing sewage spills, stormwater and urban runoff, and agricultural runoff
- Preventing a catastrophe such as an oil spill throughout the sea otter range
- Improving food resources by continuing to implement a network of Marine Protected Areas throughout the otter range, to promote ecosystem recovery and restored biodiversity

"These are really simple things we can do with immediate benefits for otters and people too," said Shimek. "Helping sea otters improves our human lives."

For more information on sea otters visit www.otterproject.org.