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Federal funding to study the feasibility of restoring sea otter populations across their U.S. Pacific range.

Siletz, OR - Thanks to the interest and effort of Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley, the FY21 federal budget, signed by the president on December 27, directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to "study the feasibility and cost of reestablishing sea otters on the Pacific Coast" and write a report to Congress within one year.

The Elakha Alliance worked closely with Senator Merkley's staff to write the language. A third-party feasibility study currently underway for the Elakha Alliance, will compliment this federal effort, providing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with significant technical support. The federal study also marks a significant benchmark toward sea otter population recovery range-wide.

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The full language from the signed bill:

*"Sea Otters.-Sea otters play a critical ecological role in the marine environment as a keystone species that significantly affects the structure and function of the*

*surrounding ecosystem. However, sea otters were effectively eliminated from the Pacific Coast of the United States by hunters and traders during the 1700s and 1800s. The Service is directed to study the feasibility and cost of reestablishing sea otters on the Pacific Coast of the contiguous United States, and to report to the Committees on the results of such a study within one year of enactment of this Act."*