

## **Monterey County Herald, Letter to the Editor, February 2004**

Last month Representative Sam Farr announced the introduction of the Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act which authorizes spending of \$5 million per year for 5 years to help recover our declining population of California sea otters.

Naysayers criticize the bill as a diversion from the wars and homeland security. We applaud Farr's broader view.

Researchers at UC Santa Barbara found that each sea otter brings between \$170,000 and \$500,000 in tourism revenue. That's a lot of kayak trips, hotel rooms, and JOBS in Monterey County.

Repeated ecological research shows otters dramatically enhance diversity and productivity by eating the grazers that can devastate Central Coast kelp beds. These same kelp beds are nurseries and the base food source for commercially valuable fish.

The bill funds research. And yes, most of those dollars could end up in Monterey and Santa Cruz, Farr's district. So what's wrong with that?

Finally, the bill gives fishermen – some critical of otters – an equal voice in recovery decisions along with researchers, agencies, and conservationists.

Soon there will be a campaign to help pass the Sea Otter Recovery and Research Act. Become involved; help the otters and Central Coast jobs.

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