

## U. S. MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

# Southern Sea Otter

### San Nicolas Island Translocation Attempt

One of the primary threats to the southern sea otter is the risk of an oil spill. To reduce the risk of a large oil spill contacting otters throughout all or much of the species' range, the FWS, in the late 1980s, attempted to establish a separate population at San Nicolas Island through a translocation of otters from the parent range. The population never grew as expected and in 2012, the [FWS declared the translocation a failure](#). The FWS determined that moving the otters that remained on San Nicolas Island would likely result in several deaths to the animals and decided to allow the otters to remain at the island. Despite the translocation having been declared a failure, the population on San Nicolas Island continues to increase. The population has grown by about 10 percent per year over the past decade and contained about 100 otters in 2019. When the translocation program was established, it created a management zone from Point Conception to the Mexican border from which sea otters would be excluded. As a result of the failure finding, there no longer is a legal obligation to try to prevent expansion of the parent population's range south of Point Conception.