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NARO Research & Conservation

Environmental Requirements for River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) Recolonization

by
Steve Boyle (2006)

Boyle describes seven conservation considerations for river otter recolonization. These conservation considerations are recommendations for river otter recolonization in the state of Colorado and should be applicable, with some possible variations, to North American river otter conservation initiatives across this species' geographical range.

As the author of the River Otters of South Florida website some revisions to the format had to be made to improve the content and layout of Boyle's information. Every effort was made to convey an accurate account of Boyle's information. These conservation considerations are as follows:

Environmental Requirements for River Otter Recolonization

1. Where river otters occur, or the potential exists for their recolonization, suitable otter habitat should be maintained, and potentially suitable, but degraded, habitat should be restored where opportunities may exist. At local scales, this requires maintenance of adequate streamflow (at least 50 cfs) and food

resources, good water quality, riparian vegetation that protect natural aquatic and riparian processes, ensuring the continued existence of river otter habitat.

2. Actions that alter instream flows, degrade or destroy riparian habitat, eliminate woody debris in streams, or reduce beaver activity should be modified where possible to alleviate impacts to river otter habitat.

3. Principal actions of concern on United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFS) lands include livestock grazing in riparian areas, timber harvest and fire management where they may affect riparian vegetation or stream siltation, recreational uses and road management along streams and in riparian areas, and water diversion and development projects.

4. Fisheries projects that increase fish (especially native species) and invertebrate biomass are likely to benefit river otters, but replacement of slower-swimming native fish with no native salmonids may decrease prey availability for otters.

5. Mining and energy development should be managed to avoid water pollution because of the sensitivity of river otters to pollutants.

6. Identification of key habitat linkages, protection of those linkages from habitat degradation, and the restoration of degraded or severed habitat linkages where necessary.

7. At local scales, habitat consists of streamflow (at least 50 cfs) and food resources, good water quality, riparian vegetation providing at least 50 percent cover along banks, other cover in or along streams such as woody debris or boulders, and streamflow regimes that protect natural aquatic and riparian processes.

Citation

Boyle, S. (2006). North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*): A Technical Conservation Assessment. *USDA Forest Service*, Rocky Mountain Region.

Available at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5210168.pdf