

# IMPACT REPORT 2024



**LIVING  
OCEANS**

*Healthy Oceans.  
Healthy Communities.*



# contents

3

WELCOME

4

LETTER FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

5

PROTECTING  
WILD SALMON

6

KEEPING OCEAN  
DEBRIS AT BAY

7

SUSTAINABLE  
SEAFOOD  
PROGRESS

8

CALLING OUT  
GREENWASHING  
TACTICS

9

SHAREHOLDER  
STAKEOUT

10

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER  
WHALES / COASTAL MARINE  
STRATEGY FOR B.C.

11

OCEAN EXPOSURES

12/13

SUPPORTING  
GLOBAL ACTION

14

SUPPORT

15

BEHIND THE SCENES

16

FINANCIALS

# welcome

## Our History

Since 1998 Living Oceans has advocated for oceans that are managed for the common good, according to science-based policies that consider ecosystems in their entirety.

## Our Vision

Canada's oceans are sustainably managed and thriving with abundant and diverse sea life that supports vibrant and resilient communities.



## Our Mission

To support this vision, Living Oceans Society:

- Engages in scientific, social and economic research to ensure our campaigns are grounded in fact and our solutions are science-based
- Interprets scientific data for diverse audiences through maps, reports and other publications, so that all stakeholders can be informed and involved in decision-making
- Engages with government, industry and the people who live and work on the coast to create viable solutions to conservation issues
- Promotes sound public policy and corporate social responsibility
- Enables coastal communities to protect the ocean resources they depend on



# swimming against the current

## Executive Director Letter

It's one thing to read about the fact that some fishing vessels use slave labour. It's another thing altogether to hear first-person accounts of the brutality and fear that keeps workers in servitude for years at a time, or to realize just how widespread the practice is. In *The Outlaw Ocean Project*, author Ian Urbina follows slave ships and interviews enslaved workers—the podcast version is utterly chilling.

And then, there's finding out that the seafood in your grocery store may well have been caught or processed by enslaved or brutalized workers.

Through our SeaChoice program, Living Oceans worked with Urbina to put his gruesome revelations to work for positive change: change with grocers' procurement policies and change with government policy. Using our Seafood Progress platform and longstanding relationships with the country's leading grocers, we encourage due diligence in sourcing seafood. That means no longer relying on certification schemes that purport to certify labour practices without actually auditing the conditions seafood workers encounter.

Government policy, since at least 2016, has been to develop boat-to-plate traceability for seafood, which would allow for due diligence to be carried out effectively, right back to the workers themselves. Not to minimize the challenges such traceability poses, the progress toward it has been glacial. Urbina's work has shone a very bright light on the consequences of failure: when we fail at traceability,



health and life itself remain at risk for workers and oceans alike.

In 2024, we doubled down on seafood certifications that are greenwashing environmental and human rights abuses. We rallied international NGO support for a letter condemning the sale of 'certified' farmed salmon from Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania, where farms have so depleted oxygen levels that the endangered Maugean skate may be facing extinction. Working with Australian allies, we participated in sending a first-ever shareholder resolution to the AGMs of grocers selling Macquarie Harbour fish, demanding that they disclose the environmental risk to shareholders.

Of course, we also continued our work to protect BC's wild Pacific salmon, working in collaboration with numerous domestic NGOs. On that front, we saw the first signs of good news with the Fraser sockeye returns showing markedly improved marine survival. Could it have been the removal of salmon farms from their migration route? Only time will tell for sure.

For a relatively small organization, Living Oceans continues to punch above its weight by staying on top of emerging issues and reaching out to allies the world over. It's all one ocean and we're never going to save it without global co-operation!





A photograph of salmon farming cages in the ocean. The cages are made of metal frames and green netting, with yellow buoys attached. The water is dark blue, and the sky is overcast.

# protecting wild salmon

This year was quite possibly the most hopeful for the future of B.C. salmon that we've seen in three decades. Once again, the ocean and the salmon have demonstrated their exceptional resilience. And our dogged determination to save them has paid off richly.

It isn't in the overall numbers of salmon returning that we find hope. The mighty Fraser River runs are still not restored to the tens of millions that nature used to produce. In some rivers in Clayoquot Sound, where the habitat is pristine, salmon returns can be counted on the fingers of two hands. Hope lies in those runs that have rebounded and in the reasons for their recovery.

The places where farms have been closed have seen rebounding salmon stocks. The places where farms still operate have not. This, in itself, is not scientific proof that there's a connection between these two statements. Scientific proof demands ruling out all other possible causes. But for the residents of coastal communities celebrating a resurgence of sea life all around them, the connection couldn't be clearer. Remove the pathogens, parasites and predators and it's an even bet that wild juveniles will have a better survival rate.

The courtroom was also the source of hope: Living Oceans intervened (with the help of Ecojustice, a national charity that provided our legal counsel) in an attempt by the salmon farming industry to overturn the decision of then Minister Joyce Murray that

effectively shut down the Discovery Islands. The judgment was entirely in the Minister's favour, reaffirming her right to apply the Precautionary Principle to decisions about salmon farm licensing — and her right to look beyond the captured regulator to understand the true impacts of farms on wild salmon.

The farms that are left working do so with the agreement of the Nations in whose territory they operate. In the coming year, our task will be to help find new economic development opportunities for those Nations while preventing the government from pouring our tax dollars into technology that will not solve the problems that salmon farms create for wild salmon.

**47 FARMS  
CLOSED  
(with help  
from our  
friends!)**



# keeping ocean debris at bay

**IMPACT TO  
DATE:  
133 TONNES  
IN 2024:  
63 TONNES**

As Clear the Coast celebrated a decade of continuous work to restore habitat polluted by plastic marine debris, we learned a sobering truth. The 70-odd tonnes of debris we'd collected in years 1-9 was the tip of the iceberg. This year, we brought in 63 more tonnes, in six weeks of relentless work.

We finally secured funding from the Clean Coast, Clean Waters Initiative Fund—a Provincial fund set up during COVID to support local employment. The fund was in its last year and unfortunately, the Province hasn't seen fit to renew it. But for this one year, instead of the 30-60 thousand dollars we'd usually manage to scare up, we secured over 600 thousand dollars.

With this funding and skilled subcontractors to help, we were able to devote serious attention to Lanz and Cox Islands Provincial Park. Part of the Scott Islands and the new marine National Wildlife Area, these islands are important to the seabird population. They're also the locus of a biodiversity hot spot and so the plastics polluting their shorelines have maximum potential to harm wildlife.

The Islands yielded items familiar to us from the aftermath of the Tohoku tsunami, items from two recent containership spills as well as fishing and

aquaculture gear. The sheer volume was staggering. We filled 240 lift bags on Lanz Island alone and nearly that number on Cox, where we've cleaned previously!

Our team also covered the Cape Scott Trail and the northwest coast of Vancouver Island, wrapping things up in mid-September with a tug-and barge operation. Debris was lifted by helicopter to the moving barge and floated to Port Hardy for transport by truck to landfill and recycling facilities.

We are indebted to the Blue Friday initiative which, for the second year running, chose to support Living Oceans' *Clear the Coast* project. With their support, we were able to mount a June expedition while CCCWI fund managers continued to deliberate on approval of our main grant. Approval finally came at the end of July, forcing us to field multiple teams at once to complete the work before the weather turned. Fortunately, we were able to rely on stalwart volunteers and consummate professionals to work with us to get the job done.

We will continue to advocate for a joint federal-provincial fund to provide reliable and timely funding for those of us willing to do the hard work. So far we've trained 90 volunteers!





# sustainable seafood progress

The many serious allegations of human rights abuses in global seafood chains, that connect back to Canadian grocer shelves, could not be ignored in 2024. Investigations by the Outlaw Ocean Project and Corporate Accountability Lab uncovered inhumane working conditions, forced labour, child labour, severe abuse, neglect, murder, debt bondage, illegal and unregulated fishing, and more.

Astonishingly, however, major grocers were ignoring these allegations. Cue our SeaChoice program to hold the Canadian grocers to account!

SeaChoice activated nearly 5,000 consumers to send letters to Costco, Loblaws, Metro, Save-On-Foods, Sobeys and Walmart. These letters called on retailers to take true responsibility for all the seafood they sell (not just their own brands), stop relying exclusively on certifications and audits, and take a due diligence approach to sourcing to ensure social and environmental harms don't make it on to supermarket shelves and fresh cases.

At the same time, SeaChoice also joined forces with the Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability in calling for the Canadian Government to adopt human rights and environmental due diligence legislation that would require companies to prevent, address, and remedy harms within their operations and supply chains. So far, more than 50,000 Canadians have signed the petition.

SeaChoice also joined the global coalition OECD Watch, an independent group that oversees the application OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises Responsible Business Conduct and associated Due Diligence Guidance. The Guidelines are considered the gold standard for which companies should be held to and for which governments should base any mandatory due diligence laws on.

The Guidelines have been crucial in SeaChoice's conversations with major retailers. They will also be crucial when policy makers eventually do adopt mandatory due diligence laws. Which is not an if but when. In 2024, the European Union's directive on corporate sustainability due diligence went into effect setting a global precedent.

**50,000  
CANADIANS  
HAVE  
SIGNED THE  
PETITION**



# calling out greenwashing tactics



In 2024, we persisted in our calling out of the greenwashing of farmed salmon certifications that continue to rubber stamp the industry with labels like ‘responsible’ and ‘best practice’. We authored an open letter from more than 70 environmental, animal welfare, and community groups from 18 countries. This letter called out the industry trade association, Global Seafood Alliance, for its continued greenwashing of industrial salmon farming with its latest version of the Best Aquaculture Practices certification. The letter listed damning evidence of numerous BAP certified farms and facilities associated with environmental damage, illegal activity, and/or negative impacts to endangered species. Examples were found in all major salmon farming regions: the United States, Norway, Chile, Canada, Scotland, and Australia.

We also led the charge, on behalf of several conservation groups, on formal complaints to BAP and GLOBALG.A.P. certifications for continuing to endorse salmon farms that are driving a 60-million-year-old species to extinction, the Maugean skate.

In June many conservation groups welcomed new greenwashing amendments to Canada’s Competition Act that required companies to use an “adequate and proper test” or “internationally recognized methodology” to substantiate their claims. However, concerns remained as the new requirements lacked specificity for companies and consumers alike. In a public submission, Living Oceans and SeaChoice

called for the Competition Bureau to establish clear robust guidance for the new requirements backed up with stringent enforcement by government authorities.

In our seafood ecolabelling study we highlighted that we found the most common environmental claims on seafood in the Canadian retail marketplace are self-declarations (e.g., “sustainable” or “responsible” logos and statements but with no third-party verification). However, our submission also warned the Bureau that eco-certifications can also act as a means of greenwashing and/or misleading consumers with their promises – as evidenced with Living Oceans’ long legacy of watchdogging the greenwashing tactics of farmed salmon certifications.

**70 NGOS FROM  
18 COUNTRIES  
CALLED OUT  
GREENWASHING  
BY ECOLABELS**





# Shareholder stakeout

In 2024 Living Oceans was part of a global first initiative that achieved historic results. We decided to support allies in Australia to initiate the world's first shareholder resolutions to prevent an extinction emergency. Our expertise in farmed salmon, major retailer sustainable seafood policies, and aquaculture certifications informed the shareholder campaign, resolutions, and conversations with financial investors.

The shareholder activism campaign targeted two major retailers, Woolworths and Coles, over the issue of continuing to sell farmed salmon linked to the demise of an endangered species, the Maugean skate. Conservation Advice for the species classified salmon farming as a "catastrophic" to the skate's survival, yet retailers continued to market the salmon as 'responsible sourced'.

Shareholders are in a unique position as they are literally the owners with legal standing and a direct pathway to company decision-makers. The Save the Skate coalition rallied 120 shareholders in each retailer in order to lodge shareholder resolutions calling for the retailers to disclose their impact to the skate and take action. With the resolutions lodged and to be voted on, all shareholders from large institutions to small — and the boards of the companies — were forced to engage on the issue.

The resolutions were timely as a growing number of investors are taking nature-risk seriously particularly after the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which set ambitious targets for halting and reversing nature loss for businesses. For

## WORLD'S LARGEST VOTE FOR A SHAREHOLDER RESOLUTION ON NATURE RISK IN 2024

example, more than 230 institutional investors, representing more than \$30 trillion in assets or advice, have formed Nature Action 100 to use their combined influence to pressure key sectors and companies to tackle nature-risk. Nature Action 100 and several other large institutional investors engaged on the resolutions.

The resolution votes were historically significant. Nearly 40 per cent (39.11%) of shareholders voted in favour of the resolution despite Coles board's recommendation not to do so. A large vote was also achieved with Woolworths (30.42%). The Coles vote was the largest in the world for a nature-risk resolution in 2024; and fourth largest ever.

Resolution votes act as a barometer of shareholder sentiment. The votes were supported by many international and national pension funds representing millions of members; sending a strong message to the boards to take nature-risk and the plight of the skate seriously.

It is typical for votes above 20 per cent to lead to corporate policy change within two years. Stay tuned for year two of the campaign.

# southern resident killer whales

Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) were already endangered when the federal government decided to approve the Trans Mountain Pipeline project, increasing the tanker traffic through their critical habitat seven-fold. Then came the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 approval; then Tilbury. All increasing vessel traffic, noise and pollution potential in critical habitat. It's a real test of our commitment as a nation to endangered species.

Living Oceans joined colleagues working on SRKW recovery to petition the government for an emergency order under the Species at Risk Act. Although every year, government announces protection measures aimed at quieting SRKW habitat and protecting its preferred food (large Chinook salmon), nothing seems to be working to reverse their steady decline.

Population viability analysis shows this population to be teetering on the verge of extinction. At just 73-74 individuals in 2024, there are barely enough whales of reproductive age to hope for recovery to their (assumed) historical level of about 200 animals. In these circumstances, we argued, the Ministers of Environment and Fisheries have a positive duty



## PETITIONED THE GOVERNMENT FOR AN EMERGENCY ORDER TO PROTECT SRKW

under the Species at Risk Act to take measures that actually improve the whales' prospects for recovery.

Our Petition cited the increasing risks, the failure of voluntary annual protection measures to help the population and the urgent and dire need for action. While the Ministers sought and received an opinion from staff that yes, indeed, the SRKW faced imminent threat to their survival, two more whales died.

Working with Ecojustice, we plan to take legal action to compel the Ministers to make a recommendation to Cabinet regarding the emergency order, as they are required by law to do. While the law doesn't specify a timeline for making that recommendation, by its very nature, it demands prompt and decisive action.

### Coastal Marine Strategy for British Columbia

The final strategy was officially adopted, marking a significant milestone. To ensure it moves from words to action, we submitted another letter urging government to legislate the plan and provide the necessary funding. Ongoing advocacy will be key to securing real, lasting change through implementation.



# ocean exposures

The 2024 photo contest brought in an extraordinary collection of images that captured both the beauty and fragility of our oceans. The creativity and vision of the participants left us inspired, and we extend congratulations to the winners: **Eduardo Baena, Sara Ellison, Ana Lucia Pozas Franco, Amanda Nelson, Alys Williams, Ken Szeto, Yasmine Mohammad, Aleah Wong, Kim Senko and Neil Saxvik.**

The success of this event was only possible through the generosity of our sponsors, whose support ensured the contest could reach and engage so many. We are grateful to: **Spirit of the West Adventures, Sirene Chocolates, Vancouver Island Whale Watch, Audain Art Museum, Cranked Energy Bars, Dancing Eagle Designs, The Eco Alchemist, Gnosanté, Iron Dog Books, Kidsbooks (Edgemont), Love Morning Moon Nature Jewelry, Nature Bee, Old Salty, Simply Natural Canada, Truffle Pig Chocolates, Vancouver Island Refillery, Old Salty and Simply Natural Canada.**

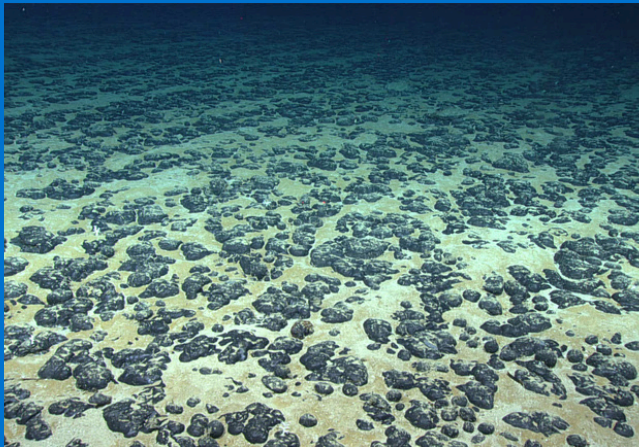
Together, our community of ocean lovers and sponsors made this year's contest the best yet!

[View all of the 2024 submissions!](#)





# supporting global action



## Deep-sea mining

We highlighted a petition from Only One urging the United Nations to halt deep-sea mining. Scientists warn that the deep ocean may be Earth's largest carbon sink, and remarkable new species continue to be discovered there. Canada has already taken a stand against this destructive practice.

*Image courtesy of the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, 2019 Southeastern U.S. Deep-sea Exploration.*



## Global Salmon Farming Resistance

The mission of the GSFR is to share knowledge and coordinate action to stop the expansion of the salmon industry and remove open-net salmon farms from oceans worldwide. We are proud to stand as part of this global resistance, working every day to challenge and push back against the industry.



## Off the Table

The #OffTheTable campaign engages the hospitality sector, urging chefs and restaurants to remove farmed salmon from their menus and spotlight the environmental, sustainability, and welfare concerns tied to the industry. Its success depends on how many food leaders choose to take part and champion change.



# supporting global action

The logo for the Plastic Pollution Coalition, featuring the text "plasticpollutioncoalition" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The word "pollution" is in a bold, white font, while "plastic" and "coalition" are in a lighter, grey font. The logo is set against a dark grey rectangular background.

## Plastic Pollution Coalition

Plastic Pollution Coalition is a non-profit communications and advocacy organization that collaborates with an expansive global alliance of organizations, businesses, and individuals to create a more just, equitable, regenerative world free of plastic pollution and its toxic impacts.

The logo for Stop Funding Overfishing, featuring the text "STOP FUNDING OVERFISHING" in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "STOP" is in a larger, bold font, while "FUNDING" and "OVERFISHING" are in a slightly smaller, bold font. The text is set against a light blue background with a white wave pattern. To the left of the text is a green square.

## Stop Funding Overfishing

Over one third of global fish stocks are already overexploited, placing immense pressure on ocean health. In June 2022, the World Trade Organization reached a landmark agreement to curb harmful fisheries subsidies, including those supporting IUU fishing, overfished stocks, and unregulated high seas fishing. The next step is for governments to ratify the treaty so it can take effect.

The logo for the High Seas Alliance, featuring the text "High Seas Alliance" in a bold, sans-serif font. The words "High Seas" are in a larger, bold font, while "Alliance" is in a slightly smaller, bold font. The text is set against a white background. To the left of the text is a circular graphic with a blue border, containing silhouettes of various marine animals including a whale, a shark, a fish, and a squid.

## High Seas Treaty

The adoption of the High Seas Treaty marks a turning point for our ocean. For the first time, nations have committed to safeguarding life in waters beyond their borders, closing critical governance gaps and creating a foundation for global cooperation to protect marine ecosystems for generations to come. The 60th country to ratify will trigger a 120-day countdown, after which the Agreement enters into force and the Treaty becomes law. Canada has yet to ratify this agreement.



# thanks

The work of Living Oceans is supported by grants and contracts from:

- B.C. Parks
- Jarilowsky Foundation
- Canadian Coastal Research Society
- Sitka Foundation
- Annual Foundation
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The McLean Foundation
- Aqueduct Foundation
- Makeway Foundation
- Power to Give Foundation
- St. Louis Community Foundation
- Mustang Survival
- Pacific Sands Beach Resort
- South Island SUP
- Simply Natural Canada
- Shades of Green
- Alcove Homegrown Living
- The Sewing Club
- Searl Soap Company
- Merge
- The Bare Company
- The Cedar Nook
- Nanette Moss
- ASH Refillery and Co.
- The Eco Alchemist
- plentiFILL Refillery & Sustainable Living inc.
- Comox Valley Kayaks & Canoes
- The Purposeful You
- Wild Waterways Adventures
- Our Footprints
- Eco Store and Refillery
- Saskia Acton
- Bad Moon Suits
- Goldilock Wraps
- Vancouver Island Refillery

## Photo Credits

Pg 1 Alys Williams

Pg 2 Sara Ellison

Pg 3 Aleah Wong

Pg 9 Amanda Nelson

Pg 10 Darryl Luscombe

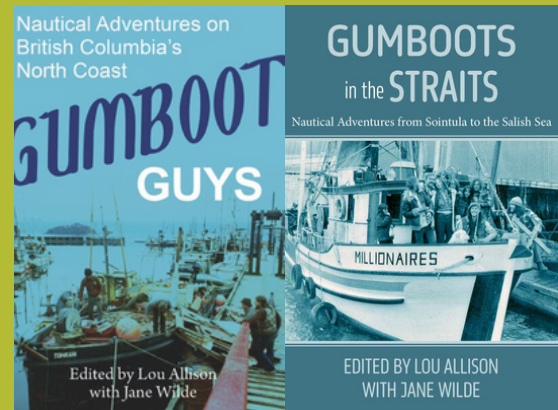
Pg 12 Tavish Campbell

Pg 13 Allison Voth

Pg 17 Ana Lucia Pozas Franco



We are very appreciative to Blue Friday for supporting our Clear the Coast initiative.



We are so thankful to the authors of *Gumboot Guys* and *Gumboots in the Straits* for choosing to donate their royalties for book sales to Living Oceans.

Buy a copy at your local bookstore or visit the Caitlin Press website.

Monthly donations help ensure that our ongoing campaigns can continue.

Every gift helps.

**We thank you for your generosity.**

[livingoceans.org/donate](https://livingoceans.org/donate)

## Volunteers

Your time, energy, and passion made a real difference this year. From cleaning coastlines to amplifying campaigns, every action strengthened our impact. Together, we are protecting oceans and inspiring change.

# behind the scenes

## Board

- Astrid Scholz, Ph.D., Immediate Past President of Ecotrust
- Tundi Spring Agardy, Ph.D., Science and Policy Director at the World Ocean Observatory
- Phillip Dearden, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Geography, University of Victoria
- Evelyn Pinkerton, Ph.D., Professor, School of Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University
- Eric Grantner, Retired physician
- Jodie Bergeron, House Accountant at PosAbilities

## Staff



Karen Wristen  
Executive Director



Kelly Roebuck  
Campaign Director, Sustainable Seafood



Fionn Yaxley  
Communications and Development Manager



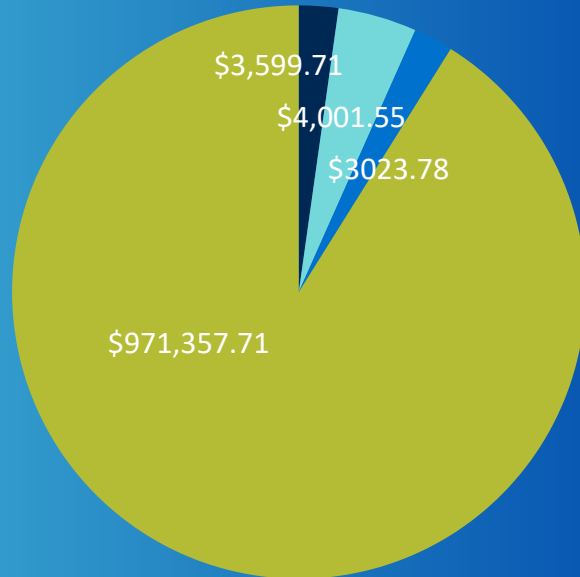
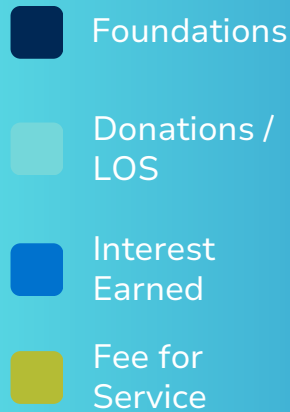
Azar Mohsenipour  
Bookkeeper



# financials

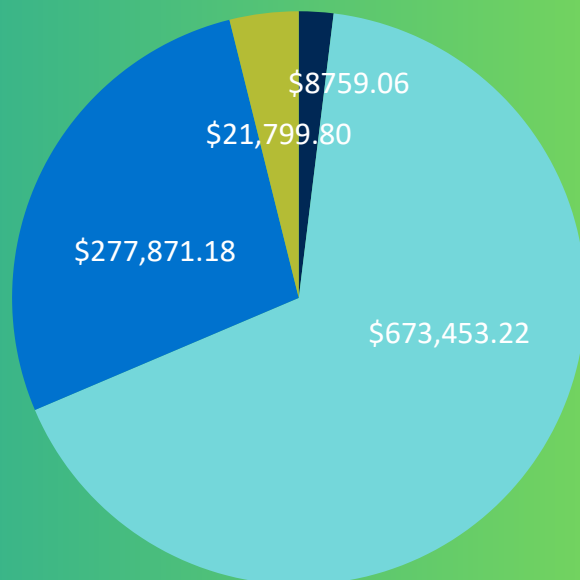
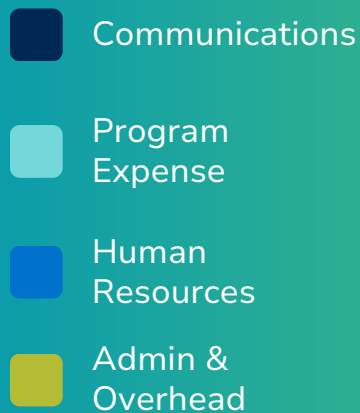
## Revenue

2024 \$981,982.75



## Expenses

2024 \$981,883.28





**LIVING  
OCEANS**

*Healthy Oceans.  
Healthy Communities.*