

IMPACT REPORT 2023



**LIVING
OCEANS**

*Healthy Oceans.
Healthy Communities.*

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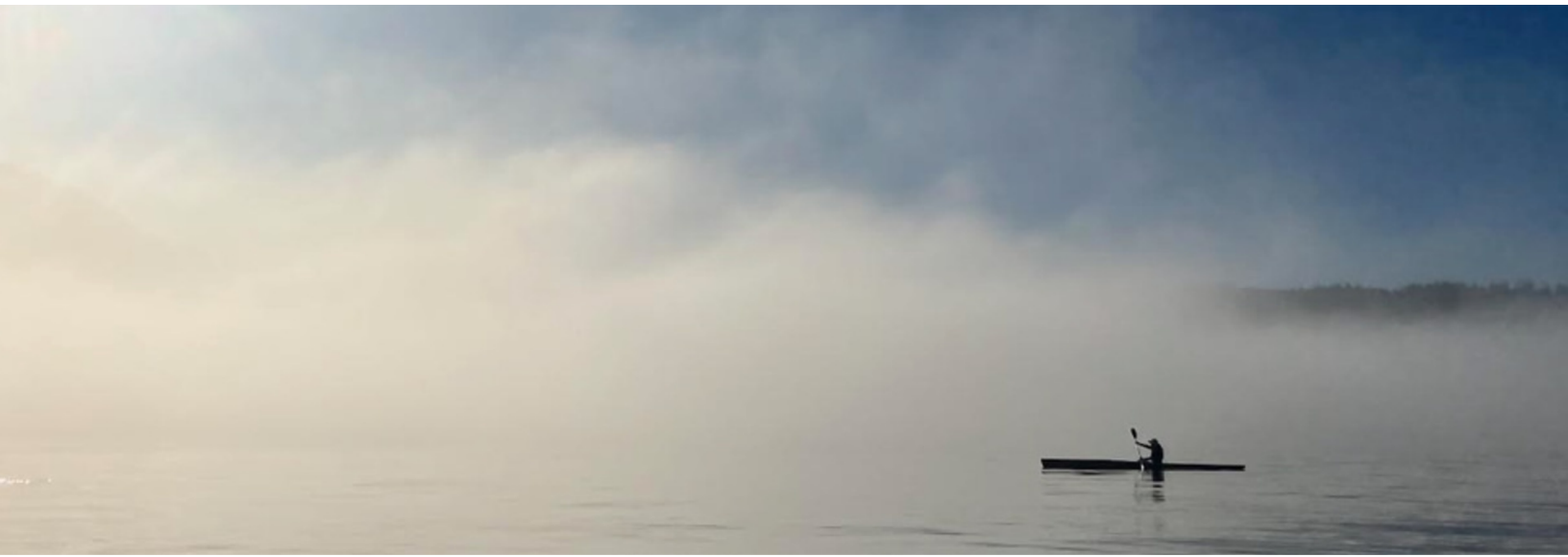
welcome

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

I don't think there was ever a year in which it was more apparent that humankind's collective wisdom falls far short of the mark when it comes to protecting the ocean, its resources and the coastal communities for whom a healthy ocean is life-blood. The flip side of that observation is that there was never a year when it was more apparent that it's going to take global action to prevent some of the worst abuses in progress and stop the ones being planned.

As an example, when the container vessel Zim Kingston spilled 109 containers into the ocean off the west coast of Vancouver Island in late 2022, it unleashed an environmental catastrophe. Highly toxic chemicals and vast quantities of plastic parts, toys, games and sport equipment spilled from those containers. Living Oceans was there to help clean it up; and we were there when the House Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans conducted an enquiry into its causes. Our testimony revealed serious shortcomings in the international regime governing the transport of goods by container ship and recommended numerous changes to the way Coast Guard responds to spills of this nature. Our recommendations are reflected in the Committee's recommendations.

Living Oceans also brought the marine plastic pollution issue to the Canadian federal



government...well, to Joyce Murray, M.P., who took up the challenge and led her government to champion global action. Today, the United Nations is deliberating on a legally binding treaty that would commit all signatories to action to stem the flow of single-use plastics. It might even address regulating chemical additives; or, in the best-case scenario, reducing plastic production around the globe.

We're still cleaning up behind the Zim Kingston spill, because of some bad decisions that were made early on. But we've worked to ensure that a combination of improved domestic policy and planning and international agreement will reduce the chances of a future spill becoming the massive pollution even that this one has been.

All of our campaign work now has global counterparts. We support the efforts of countless organizations pulling for binding global treaties addressing some of the most critical issues that our oceans face: overfishing, deep-sea mining and an overheating climate. It does, indeed, feel like we're swimming against the current most of the time. But with your support, we know we can—and must—continue to make change to protect the ocean.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Helen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.



protecting wild salmon

This year, our 25-year campaign to reform open-net pen aquaculture took its second major leap forward. The first leap forward was the securing of a moratorium on further territorial expansions of the industry. That was made possible by convening the support of First Nations and local environmental groups throughout the Province. Similarly, our second leap forward relied on an alliance; this one even larger than before.

It took the combined efforts of First Nations, environmental groups, sport and commercial fishing organizations, tourism operators and organizations and a host of prominent business leaders and thoughtful citizens to persuade the government to make good on its 2019 election promise to remove open-net pen salmon farms from B.C. waters. This year, the transition planning finally began.

The planning process was fraught, as anything to do with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans tends to be. We helped guide citizen activists through the consultation process and provided tools stimulating some xxx letters to MPs and the Prime Minister. Together with our colleagues, we enabled more than 40,000 people to respond to the consultation, demanding an end to this destructive industry. At the end of the day, 78% of respondents to the consultation said they wanted the farms completely out of the water.

The Department continues to speak of ‘transitioning the industry’ instead of removing it from the ocean. They want to support adding some technology.

Living Oceans researched the technology available world-wide and reported on it in Lousy Choices III: Why Salmon Farms have to come Out of the Water. Our research concludes that there is no system commercially available or in development that would remedy the issues created by open-net pens: their effluents are killing wild salmon. All of the systems resort to conventional open-net pens to grow the fish to market size.

Clearly, science and reason are not going to win over this captured regulator. Our focus has turned again to mobilizing public support for removal of the pens and educating decision-makers about the shortcomings of salmon farm technology. Our aim is to ensure that every M.P. understands the breadth and depth of commitment of the B.C. public to ending open-net pen aquaculture.

**40,000
VOICES
DEMAND
SALMON
FARM
REMOVAL**

keeping ocean debris at bay

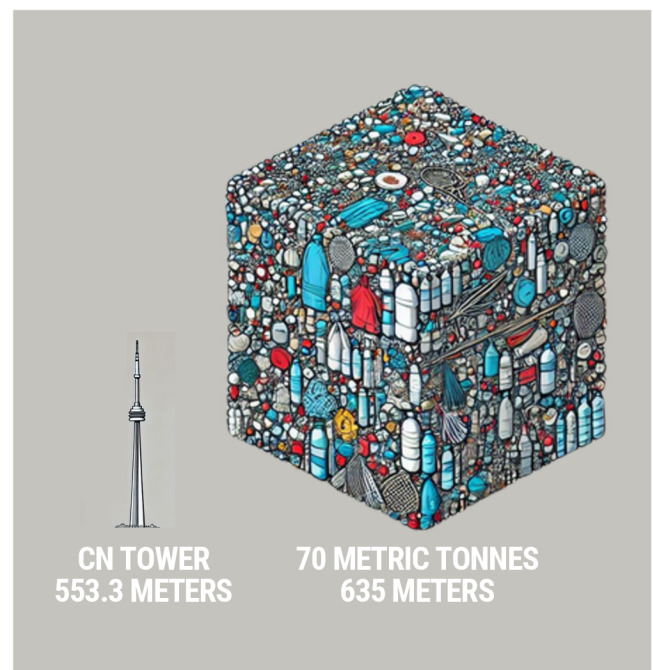
Clear the Coast entered its ninth consecutive year as a marine debris removal project. To date, it has trained over 70 volunteers and removed 70 metric tonnes of debris from northern Vancouver Island and the Scott Islands. Those numbers may not seem staggering until you consider how lightweight plastic is and what the volume really looks like.

If we could pile up those 70 tonnes of plastic debris into a perfect cube, it would stand about 635 meters high, wide and deep. If we stood atop that cube next to the CN tower, we'd be nearly 30 average building stories higher than the tower's peak. It would dwarf Vancouver's tallest building, the Living Shangri-La Hotel, which just tops 200 meters.

Our efforts in 2023 took us into some new areas as well as back to our regular camp at Sea Otter Cove. Early in the season, we made camp at Guise Bay, just south of the Cape Scott lightstation. From there, we were able to access five beaches which our team of six managed to clean in three days. Sea Otter Cove and environs were cleaned unfortunately late in August—very high tides made for some uncomfortable moments on the narrow beach and forced us to establish 'suburbs' to the camp deep in the forest.



Our recovery for the year was a little over 10.5 metric tonnes: gathered, sorted, bagged and transported in 13 days of field work—plus the weeks that volunteer David Jensen spent on his own out there, collecting and preparing probably 3 of those tonnes on his own.





sustainable seafood progress

The red marker came out with SeaChoice's latest Seafood Progress report. Nearly all Canadian grocers scored poorly for their failure to remove farmed salmon from their stores or take actions to improve their sourcing. The report found:

- The good: Buy-Low Foods continues to be the only grocer not selling farmed salmon. Sobeys received kudos for preferentially sourcing and promoting land-based closed containment farmed salmon.
- The ugly: Most grocers continue to rely on farmed salmon certifications that are not fit for purpose. These certifications, including the Aquaculture Stewardship Council and Best Aquaculture Practices, fail to adequately protect wild salmon from disease or sea lice impacts from certified farms.
- The bad: Costco, Loblaws, METRO, Save-On, Sobeys, and Walmart continue to sell open-net pen farmed salmon.

SeaChoice also found that most grocers avoid labelling farmed salmon as just that - "farmed". In other words, farmed salmon is often labelled as simply "salmon". Without proper labelling, shoppers are unable to make informed choices.

Having the Canadian Government require a transition to land-based aquaculture would expand the supply of closed-containment salmon for grocers, removing their reliance on open-net pens.

The red-marker also came out for the second Seafood Progress report on the social and sustainability commitments of 13 multinational seafood companies, such as High Liner and Clover Leaf. We found most companies are failing to set meaningful targets. Several companies are making progress thanks to SeaChoice's engagement and daylighting of their actions (or inaction) on sustainable seafood. Thousands of seafood shoppers used the Seafood Progress website to send letters to their local grocer calling for more action!

Visit [Seafood Progress](#) for the full 2023 results.

Living Oceans is a founding partner of the SeaChoice program along with the David Suzuki Foundation and Ecology Action Centre. Since 2006, SeaChoice has positioned itself as a credible watchdog within the Canadian and global seafood market space. Find out more in our [SeaChoice Five-Year Impact Report](#).

**9,352
LETTERS
SENT TO
GROCERS**

calling out greenwashing tactics



Since 2015, Living Oceans and our SeaChoice allies have been calling out the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) for weakening their requirements and deferring to local regulations that don't protect endangered wild salmon.

Certifications are supposed to help shoppers make environmentally friendly purchases. Yet watchdogging by conservation organizations, including Living Oceans, shows that certifications often fail to live up to their promises to shoppers. Over the last few years we have been building alliances across the globe with fellow conservation groups to help amplify criticism of and draw attention to certification greenwashing.

For instance, Living Oceans led an alliance of more than 80 groups across the globe calling on the Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) and GLOBALG.A.P. to revoke their certifications from Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania, due to unequivocal evidence that salmon farms operations in the harbour are the primary threat to the endangered Maugean skate. This was followed up by a formal greenwashing complaint to government authorities.

Living Oceans and SeaChoice have created a handy guide for shoppers on how the farmed salmon certifications stack up. Our Seafood Progress platform also scores Canadian grocers and major seafood brands based on whether they use credible certifications, or not.

Living Oceans is also a member of Make Stewardship Count which published scorecards and critiques of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)'s revised Fishery Standard. While the MSC Standard did not go far enough in improvements, one win was the new requirement that sharks must be landed with fins attached.

Living Oceans also participated in the Steering Group for ISEAL's Code of Good Practice which outlines best practice guidelines for certifications, including ASC and MSC, to adhere to. Our involvement resulted in improvements to the Code's expectations for certifications on transparency and stakeholder engagement.

We also provided feedback and expertise into the peer-reviewed greenwashing framework produced by the Climate Social Science Network, an international network of scholars.

**83 GLOBAL
GROUPS
CALL OUT
ECO-LABELS IN
OPEN LETTERS**



BC coastal waters marine planning

Protecting and restoring our coasts.

Living Oceans contributed to developing the first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy for British Columbia. It's a bit amazing to think that a province with so much coastline, built by steamships serving hundreds of coastal communities, has never had a strategy to guide coastal development and safeguard the environment. But that's the case in British Columbia; and the derelict infrastructure and choked estuaries that can be found along our coast are a testament to that fact.

We were excited to be able to contribute to the first major strategy to be co-developed by the Province and First Nations. Indigenous participation began with the creation of an Intentions Paper that was rooted in the participating Nations' ethics, reminding us that everything is one; that everything has its purpose and must be respected; and that we share a collective responsibility to care for the land, water and people.

Proceeding from that ethic, the Intentions Paper identified six outcomes that the Strategy seeks to achieve:

- a healthy and productive coast
- resilience to climate change
- trusting, respectful relationships
- holistic learning and knowledge-sharing
- community wellbeing
- a sustainable, thriving ocean economy

For each outcome, a number of pathways were identified to achieve the outcome. The Strategy is thus a high-level guide to future action and deserves nothing but praise for both the process and content.

Working with colleagues in the Marine Debris Working Group and others in marine planning, we submitted comments directed toward the concrete steps that should be taken to put the Strategy into action. Our primary concern is that we should set measurable goals for each outcome and increase capacity to monitor and report on progress toward meeting those goals. Legislation to protect and enable the goals to be met will be key to achieving them: we are looking at a lengthy process of restoration and recovery. Without the force of law, the Strategy would be subject to electoral politics that might erode its progress.

Most important of all, we stressed that First Nations' engagement must continue throughout the process of implementation of this strategy, fully respecting and implementing the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

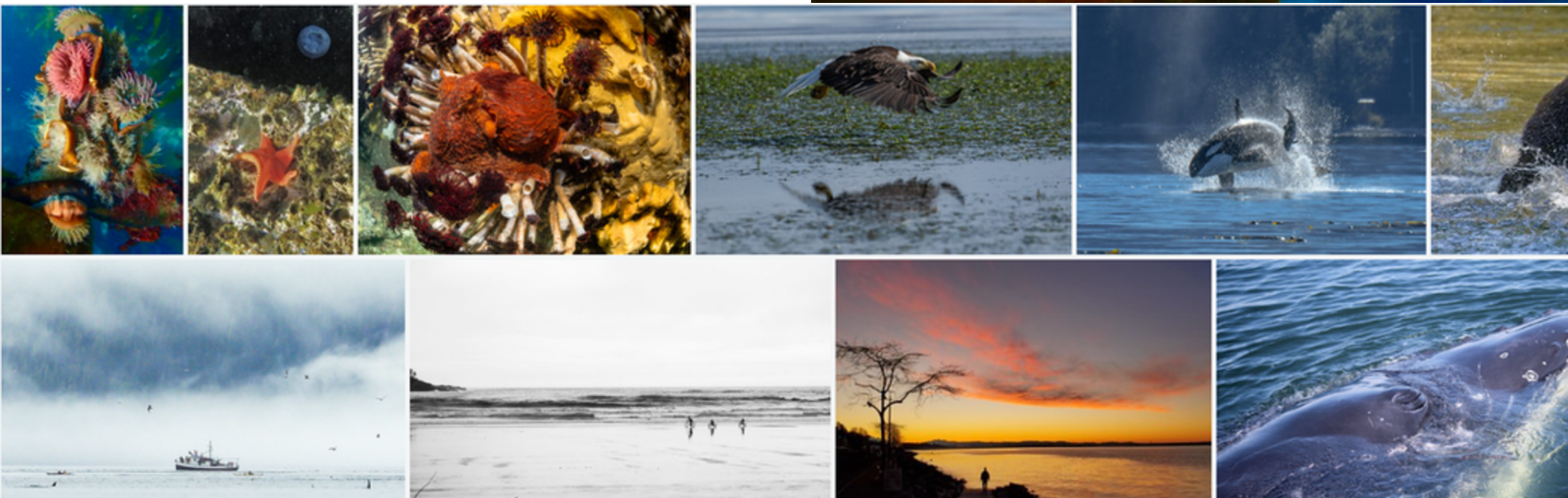
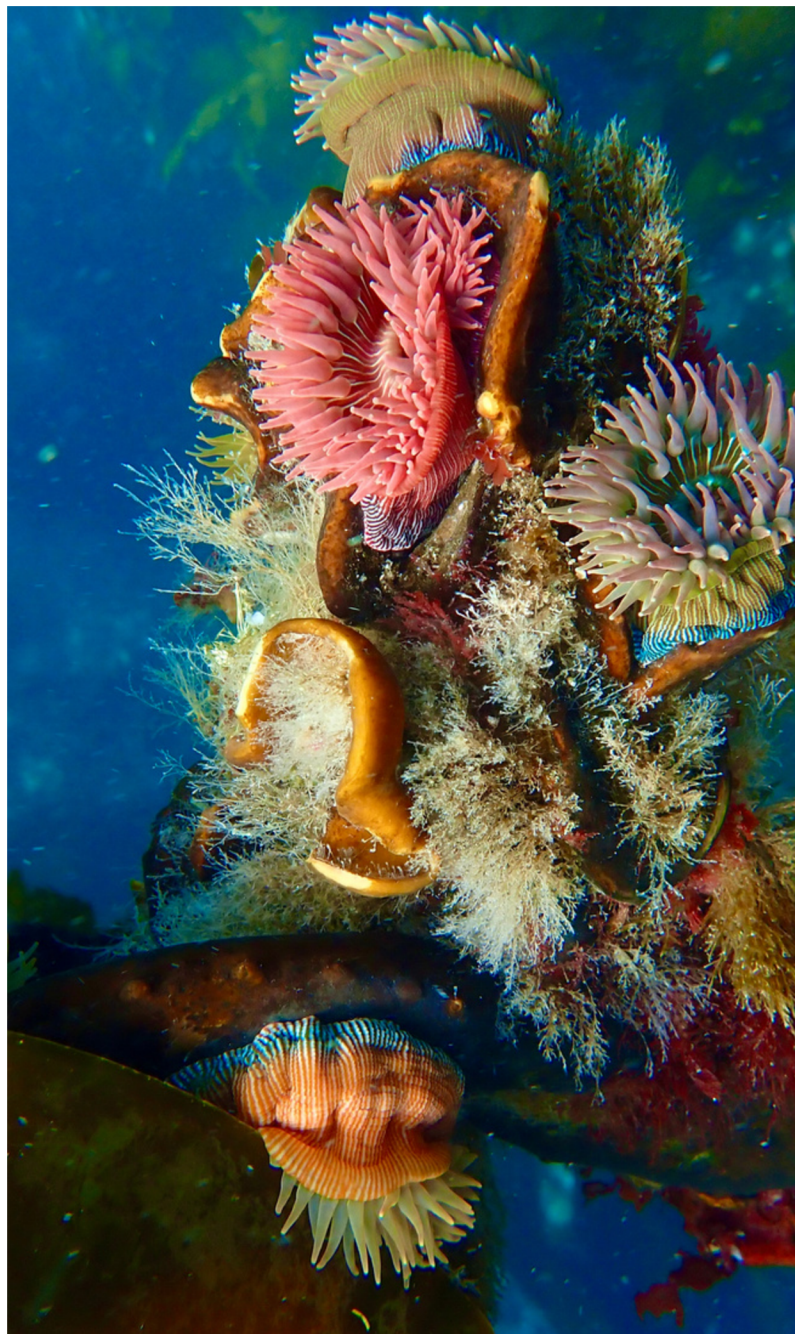
ocean exposures

Capturing our imaginations.

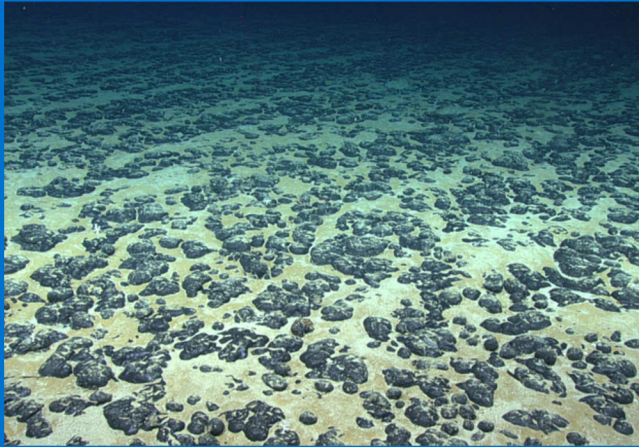
The photo contest is always inspiring, but this year we had some truly amazing shots capture our imaginations.

Congratulations to all the winners: Sara Ellison, Mark Cantwell, Chris Sherwood, Amanda Nelson, Wendy Davis (winner in two categories), Ken Szeto, Catherine Anderson, Allison Voth, and Yasmine Mohammad.

We could not have made this event such a success without the generosity of the sponsors who supported the contest. Many thanks: Spirit of the West Adventures, Eclipse Awards, Learn Photography Canada, Morning Mon Nature Jewelry, Vancouver Island Whale Watch, Audai Art Museum, Britt Buirs Art, Cranked Energy Bars, Discovery Passage Aquarium, Honey Candles, kidsbooks, Massy Books, Old Salty, Pacific Alchemy, Patagonia, Simply Natural Canada, Skipper Otto, and Zeal Optics.



supporting global action



Deep-sea mining

Living Oceans joined colleagues the world over to call for an end to deep sea mining. Some scientists believe that the deep sea and its water column may be the largest carbon sink on Earth, and new species are still being found there. Canada is one country that has taken a position against deep-sea mining. *Image courtesy of the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, 2019 Southeastern U.S. Deep-sea Exploration.*



Global Salmon Farming Resistance

Open-net pen salmon farming threatens communities all over the world. In over a dozen countries, the farms pollute and destroy wild ecosystems. In a handful of other countries, its insatiable demand for wild forage fish depletes local diets and economies. Groups both large and small have been resisting the growth of this destructive industry for decades and now, we're doing it together. Learning, sharing and shining a brighter light than ever on harmful practices, GSFR members support one another. We are proud to be among the founding and contributing members.

supporting global action



Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation treaty

Living Oceans endorsed the treaty and mobilized its followers to do the same. Over 900,000 individuals and 2,781 organizations have signed.



Stop Funding Overfishing

We joined thousands of groups worldwide to bring attention to important talks at the World Trade Organization. Negotiations were underway to eliminate harmful subsidies to fisheries targeting severely depleted stocks. Our combined action raised the profile of these talks, which culminated in success in June of 2022. The text promises to crack down on Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. We continue to press for ratification of the treaty.



High Seas Treaty

The new High Seas Treaty will safeguard life in the entire ocean beyond countries' national jurisdictions. It is the global opportunity to finally address the many governance gaps that have plagued the ocean and left it vulnerable to overexploitation for decades.

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
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- Foster Skin Care
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- Hair of the Dog
- LL Supply
- Luna Mavka
- Merge
- Nanette Moss
- plentiFILL Refillery & Sustainable Living
- Pink Raven Jewelry
- Searl Soap Company
- Shades of Green
- Simply Natural Canada
- Swallow Jewellery
- Teaboco
- The Bare Company
- The Cedar Nook
- The Market Bags
- The Sewing Club
- Vancouver Island Brewing
- Vancouver Island Refillery
- The Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada

Photo Credits

Pg 1 Ken Szeto

Pg 2 Ken Szeto

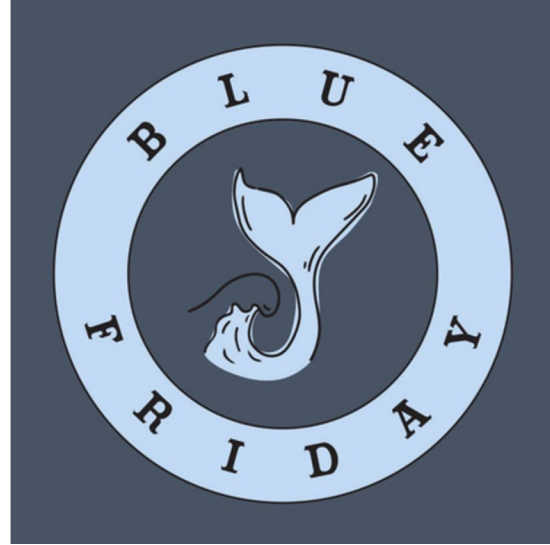
Pg 3 Joanne Partrick

Pg 5 Tavish Campbell

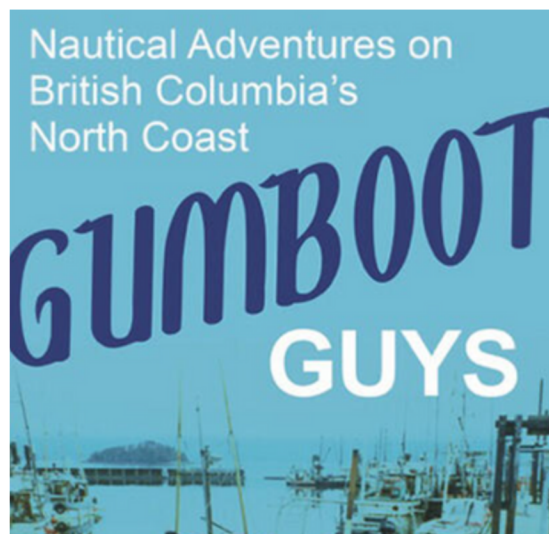
Pg 8 Alex Morton

Pg 9 Heather Baskey

Pg 16 Evelyn McGachy



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



We are so thankful to the authors of Gumboot Guys 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

Volunteers

We could not do the work we do without a dedicated and ever optimistic group of volunteers who brave the wilderness to help make sure the impact of marine debris that collects on our coast is minimized.

behind the scenes

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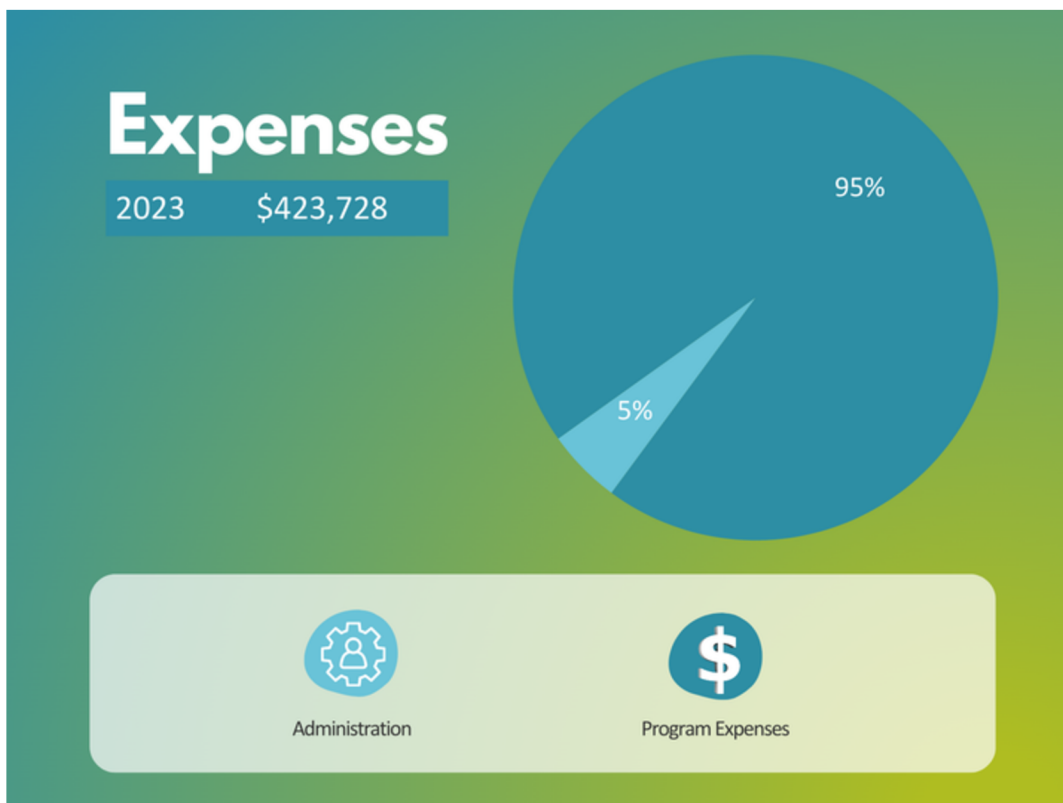
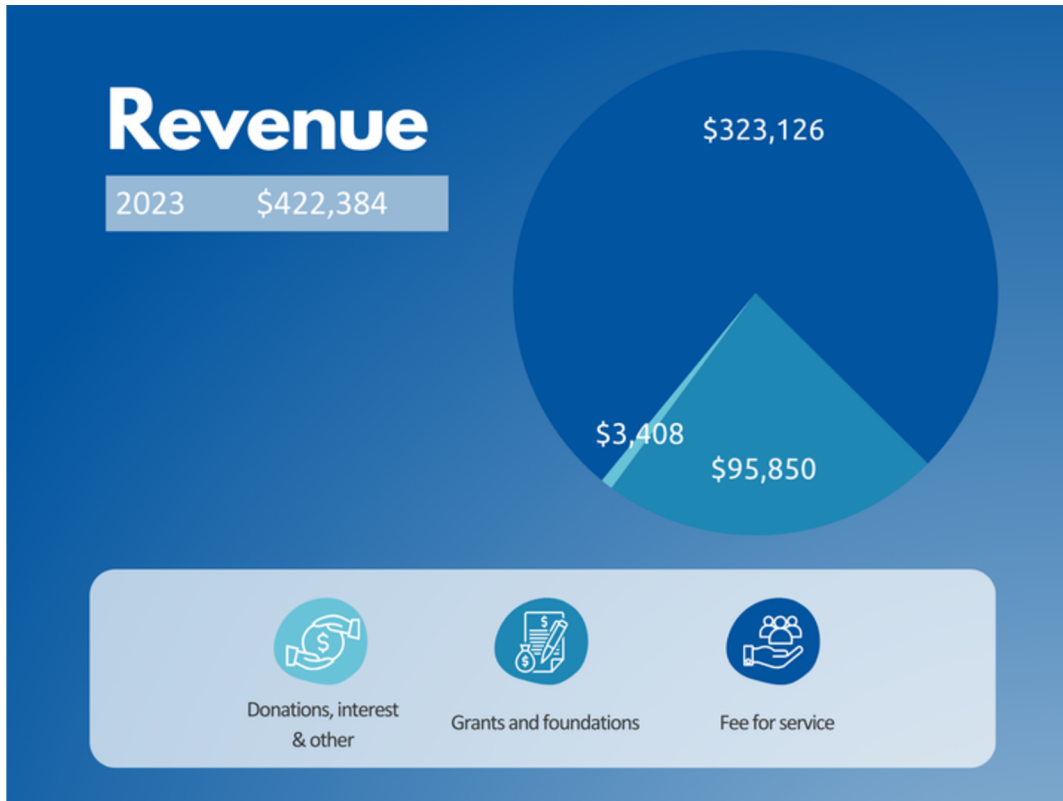


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financials





**LIVING
OCEANS**

*Healthy Oceans.
Healthy Communities.*