WENDY DAVIS

LIVING OCEANS

Healthy Oceans. Healthy Communities.

2018 Annual Report

About Living Oceans Society

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 contributions are helping to reduce harmful human impacts on the ocean.

Vision

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

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 upon.

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Letter from the Executive Director

I can tell you quite honestly that 2018 was something of a roller coaster ride for us at Living Oceans Society. There are times in the environmental movement when it seems that we take two steps forward and one step back. That certainly seemed the case over the past year as we scored some great wins in our ongoing campaigns to protect ocean ecosystems, only to have the victories too often blunted or compromised with regulatory backpedalling. Still, the resolve and devotion of the staff and volunteers at Living Oceans held firm. All of us, joined by our partners in the conservation community, rolled up our sleeves and tackled the challenges head on, with passion and conviction. At times we were met by leaders in industry and government who were willing to step ahead of the pack and make commitments to positive change. Together, we broke new ground.

Living Oceans resides at the nexus of scientific and socio-economic research, and the regulatory regime. Our organization maintains its strong commitment to ecosystem-based management where research guides our campaigns aimed at delivering on the longstanding twin goals of healthy oceans and healthy communities. I would like to thank everyone who helped us and made it possible for us to do the work we do. In the same way that a healthy environment is the foundation of a flourishing economy, the generosity of donors is essential to our continued work for ocean health. I would like to thank the people and foundations that supported Living Oceans Society. There are not enough words to express our gratitude.

Finally, I have to thank all of our supporters and especially those who enabled us to roll up our sleeves and Clear the Coast at Sea Otter Cove again. There's really nothing more therapeutic, in a campaigner's grind of meetings and documents, than a trip to Vancouver Island's stunning west coast and the knowledge that you've left it cleared of debris that can harm ocean life.

Sincerely,

Karen Wristen,
Executive Director


ALEX MORTON

Salmon Farming

Living Oceans' long campaign to get farmed salmon out of the ocean was rewarded with the amazing growth of land-based closed containment (LBCC) in 2018. LBCC is the most promising technology to grow the salmon farming industry and as a result, has become attractive to investors.

Sea lice outbreak hits new highs

The spring of 2018 saw parasitic salmon lice on both farmed and wild juvenile salmon in Clayoquot Sound reach levels never before seen in British Columbia. One farm reported an unprecedented average of over 54 lice per fish. Twelve farms operating close together in Clayoquot Sound were all over the management limit of three lice per fish during the sensitive period when juvenile salmon are first entering the ocean. Forty to 96 percent of the wild fish sampled were infested, many at levels that would ensure death.

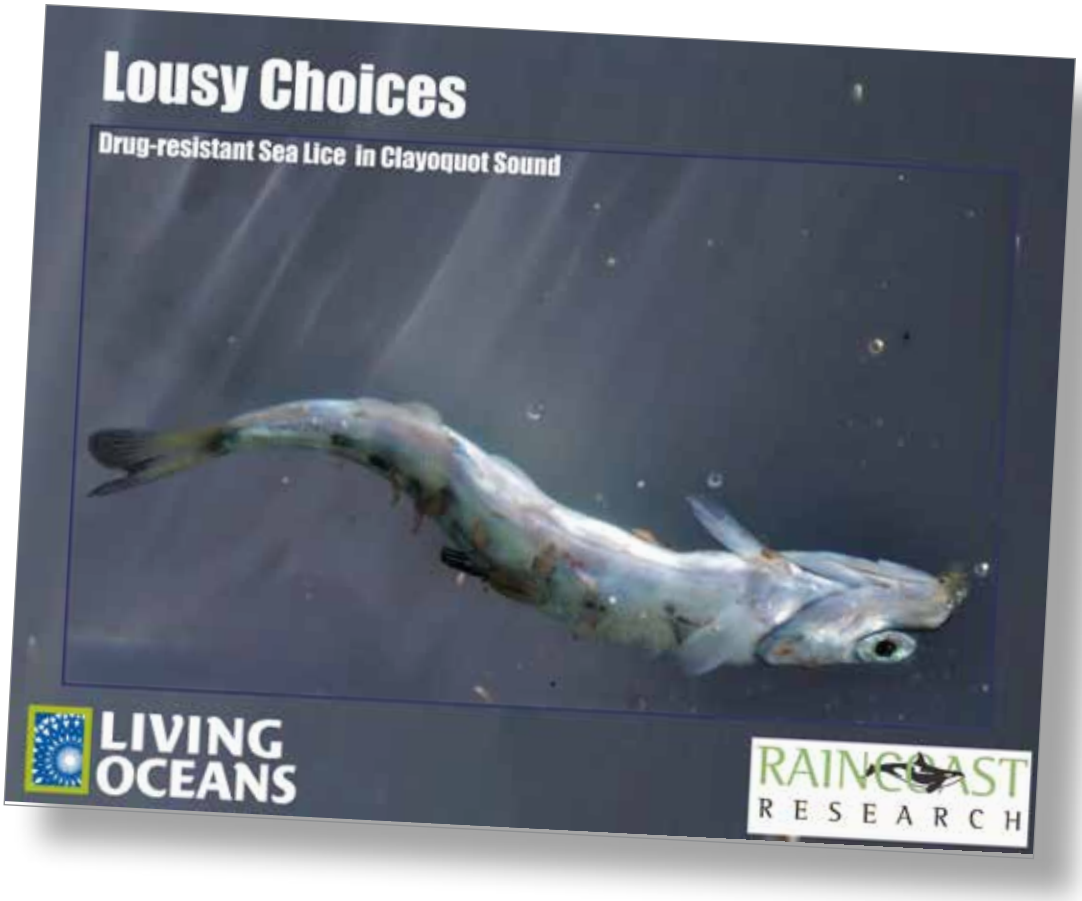
As the season progressed, further review of Cermaq's lice counts revealed a complete failure to control the parasite. More worrisome, we saw an unprecedented pattern of peaking and troughing of lice numbers, suggesting that repeated treatments with veterinary drug SLICE™, the only drug approved for lice control, were being used with little effect. The lice had finally developed resistance to the drug, as they have done everywhere else in the world where salmon are farmed. Drug resistance has grave implications for both the salmon farming industry and wild salmon: failure to control the abundance of lice near open-net pen salmon farms has led to lethal levels of infestation on wild juvenile salmon.

The alarmingly high levels of lice led us to investigate. Some of the farms in question had Aquaculture Stewardship Certification (ASC), meaning that they could market the fish as a sustainable product for premium prices. Following our complaint to ASC, five farms operated by Cermaq Canada in Clayoquot Sound were suspended.

Piscine reovirus

After a scuba diving videographer captured footage of virus-laden bloodwater being discharged into the ocean by two fish processing plants while processing farmed salmon, the B.C. Government conducted a review of all facilities in B.C. Laboratory reports found high levels of piscine reovirus (PRV) along with *enterococcus* bacterium—something you'd expect to find in raw sewage—with counts of over 60,000 bacteria per 100 ml of effluent. For comparison, the safe level for recreational waters is less than 70 bacteria per 100 ml.

Proper treatment with chlorine would have inactivated the enterococcus found in the effluent. Although at least one of the plants was equipped with a chlorination facility, it has a bypass valve. It appears that treatment was not being activated unless the facility was specifically advised that the fish it was processing were diseased. This raises questions: as to why the Minister of Fisheries continues to allow fish infected with PRV to be placed in open net-pens and processed as if the virus were of no consequence to wild salmon; and as to why the Province fails to require effluent to be treated to inactivate the virus."



Lousy Choices

Living Oceans' report, *Lousy Choices*, revealed that parasitic lice breeding in salmon farms on the Pacific coast have become resistant to SLICE™; and that neither industry nor government took effective steps to ensure new control measures would be in place in time to prevent impacts to wild salmon.

The report was co-written with researcher Alex Morton, whose review of documents obtained under access to information laws unveiled how Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) covered up evidence of the drug resistance from both the public and the B.C. Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Council on Finfish Aquaculture. DFO and the industry knew resistance was developing as early as 2013, but publicly and repeatedly denied the fact. Following the release of *Lousy Choices*, DFO finally admitted to the media that they have documented cases of SLICE™ resistance beginning in Klemtu in 2013.

DFO has been criticized for its sea lice management policy which lacks scientific underpinning and fails to come to grips with impacts on wild juvenile salmon at the most sensitive period in their life cycle.

In 2018, eight years after the Cohen Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River released its final report, DFO aquaculture scientists are still struggling to prove that salmon farming poses "no more than minimal" threat to wild salmon. As they reach for conclusions that will allow farms to remain on wild salmon migration routes, the Department's science is coming under intensifying scrutiny.

Genetically modified salmon

In 2013 the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change approved genetically modified (GM) Atlantic salmon production in Prince Edward Island where GM salmon eggs are currently manufactured. In 2016, Health Canada approved GM fish for human consumption. In 2018 it was revealed that the Canadian Government is receiving 10 percent royalties from the sale of GM salmon.

The royalties are part of a 2009 $2.8 million-dollar loan agreement between the company AquaBounty and the federal government's Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The royalties will be paid to the Government of Canada until the loan is paid back. If the GM salmon is not a commercial success, the loan will be forgiven and this experiment will have been funded by Canadian taxpayers.

The GM fish is the world's first genetically engineered animal and was developed with public funds but without public consultation. And it's being sold without labels. Living Oceans and our partners raised concerns over the investor-regulator role of the government and called on it to halt any further assessments of the GM salmon until it takes steps to increase transparency in the regulatory process and marketplace, including by establishing mandatory labelling of GM foods.

An Atlantic salmon in the foreground compared with an Aquabounty genetically modified salmon that grows to market size much faster. Because Canada has no labelling laws, this GM product is indistinguishable from other salmon on the supermarket shelf.

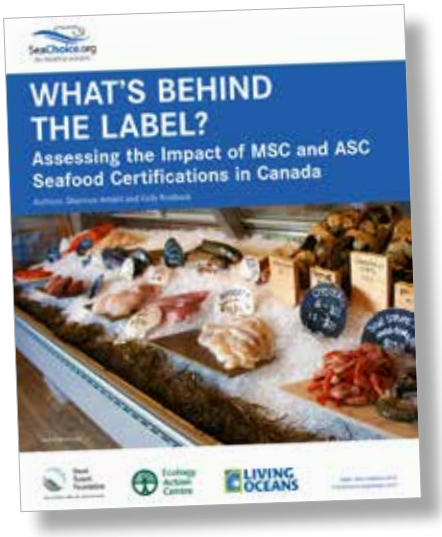
Sustainable Seafood

Living Oceans Society and our partners formed SeaChoice in 2006 to work on behalf of Canadians to find solutions to the challenges facing our priority species, to ensure eco-certifications remain credible, and to improve seafood labelling and traceability.

Keeping watch on the Aquaculture Stewardship Council

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) Salmon Standard is considered the 'gold standard' certification for sustainable seafood. It requires a certified farmed salmon to meet 154 environmental and social indicators, including specific thresholds for marine mammal deaths, sea lice pesticides and antibiotics. Twenty-seven per cent of the global farmed salmon production is eco-certified by the ASC. In B.C., around half of the industry's production features the ASC "responsibly farmed" green tick eco-logo and there are plans for all salmon farms to be certified by 2020.

All told, farmed salmon take up to 36 months to grow from egg to harvest size. Given that the environmental impacts of salmon farming can occur at any stage of the production cycle, it would be expected that ASC eco-labelled farmed salmon would be assessed according to the Salmon Standard criteria from hatchery to harvest. This is not the case.



Our report *What's Behind the Label?* found that most salmon farms ASC audits exclude the end of the production cycle from assessment. This was due to auditors conducting early audits, rather than waiting until the farm achieves "peak biomass" (i.e., the fish are harvest size). This practice allows the company to market its current cohort of fish with the ASC eco-label. The early grow-out stage of production is also excluded from assessment, despite the ASC's own definition of the "production cycle" clearly including them. This means that the ASC audit might evaluate as little as 18 months of that cycle. During this time any marine mammal deaths, pesticides, antibiotics or other impacts are simply ignored.

The ASC's Salmon Standard asserts the claim that farms "must meet 100 percent of the [Standard] requirements" in order to be certified. However, we found this claim to be misleading given the majority of ASC certified farms don't follow the Standard as written. We also found that certified farms in major non-conformance with the Standard are able to sell their product with the ASC logo.

In the spring of 2018, seven of Cermaq Canada's Clayoquot Sound farms reported elevated lice loads, up to 10 times DFO's management threshold. Five of these were certified by the ASC. These harvested farmed salmon were entering retailers and restaurants bearing the ASC eco-logo and being marketed as 'environmentally responsible'. Yet in reality, these farms were endangering wild salmon.

Living Oceans and our SeaChoice allies called on the ASC to immediately suspend the farms. Following our media release, Cermaq "voluntarily" stopped using the eco-logo. A few days later, the third-party auditing company, who granted the initial certification of the farms, formally suspended their ASC certificates.

SeaChoice

Seafood Progress

In 2018 SeaChoice launched Seafood Progress, an online resource that assesses and reports on Canada's nine largest retailers' sustainable seafood commitments and their procurement against those commitments. This initiative was born from our recognition that continuing to increase the sustainability of seafood in Canada requires the aggregation of retailer leverage across the country.

Consumers can use Seafood Progress to find useful information about the stores where they buy their seafood. Retailers can use the resource to see where they are performing above the national average and where they should improve to meet or beat the current "best practices." In 2018, Canada's major seafood retailers scored an average of 37 out of a possible 100 on Seafood Progress's transparency step; there is room for improvement.

Canadian seafood needs better traceability and labelling so consumers can tell what species their dinner is, where it was produced, which method of fishing or farming produced it, and where it was processed. Detailed labelling and accurate traceability are two of the most important elements to ensure seafood purchased at any point along the supply chain is indeed what it says it is. Weak labelling and traceability regulations can leave gaps where economic fraud, labour abuses and Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported (IUU) seafood can enter the supply chain.

Global Review of ASC Salmon Standard uncovers troubling trends

In 2018 Living Oceans released the report, *Global Review of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council's Salmon Standard* as part of our work with SeaChoice. Our intent in carrying out this review, as well as our engagement with other eco-labels, is to recommend actions that eco-labels can take to address deficiencies, maintain the scheme's credibility and, ultimately, have a positive impact 'on the water'. In the end, we want to ensure that consumers and retailers buying seafood with these eco-labels are truly supporting industry best practices for sustainability.

To understand how ASC certified salmon farms stack up, we conducted a comprehensive review of over 450 farm audits (i.e. compliance assessments) filed for each of the 257 certified salmon farms from the first farm certified in 2014 through to March 15, 2018. Our analysis included all major Atlantic salmon farming regions, including Australia, Canada, Chile, Norway and Scotland.

Our report found that the Salmon Standard is being continually weakened by the use of variances and interpretations to avoid meeting its criteria as written. For example, all of B.C.'s certified farms would have failed to meet the sea lice criterion, but were certified because the ASC chose to grant a variance allowing B.C. farms to follow DFO's guidance on sea lice, rather than the Standard. This means that the Standard ceases to be global in significance: an ASC-certified salmon in B.C. is not held to the same level of scrutiny as an ASC-certified salmon farmed in Norway.

We also found that certified farms in major non-conformance with the Standard are able to sell their product with the ASC logo. Some B.C. salmon farms remained certified despite breaching criteria governing marine mammal deaths or viral diseases. Furthermore, ASC-certified farms that do not have Indigenous consent to operate in their traditional waters misrepresent the Standard's claim to be 'socially responsible' regarding respecting First Nations' rights and title. At least seven ASC-certified farms are in unceded territories of First Nations that are so opposed to salmon farming that they evicted and then occupied the farms. The farms that ASC audits nevertheless deemed them "compliant" with this criterion.

Our report Global Review of Aquaculture Stewardship Council's Salmon Standard offers the steps the ASC should take to reverse the erosion of the Salmon Standard to improve confidence in its application.

ALEX MORTON

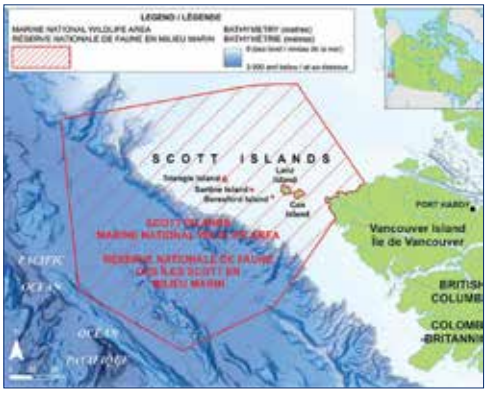
Between March and September every year, the Scott Islands are home to over two million seabirds.

Marine Planning and Protected Areas

Living Oceans celebrated the creation of the Scott Islands Marine National Wildlife Area (mNWA) in 2018. Over two million seabirds live on the Scott Islands at certain times of the year, making the islands a nationally and internationally Important Bird Area.

Through our place on the advisory board, we worked to establish a science-based approach to defining the boundaries and permitted uses of the mNWA.

The nesting seabirds on the Scott Islands face many threats and there are years when they are unable to feed their chicks properly. The seabirds arrive in the summer because currents from the deep bring cold, nutrient-rich waters to the surface fuelling a rich food web. The waters around the Scott Islands teem with herring, sandlance and other small forage fish.



Work remains to be done though; although the marine protected area is now designated, there are not yet any measures in place to ensure protection for the colonies of seabirds and sea lions and their feeding grounds.

We and the other conservation groups involved in the announcement were not pleased with the 'business as usual' approach to the designation of this area, which was no surprise to the federal government. But they had a surprise in store for us. The government had been negotiating with Shell Oil concerning its expansive offshore oil and gas exploration permits, and the announcement of the protected area was completely eclipsed by the oil company's announcement that it was voluntarily surrendering the permits which cover a vast ocean area from the Scott Islands to Haida Gwaii.

We were, of course, pleased to hear that Shell was relinquishing its offshore holdings although they were useless to them in any event due to the exploration moratorium that has been in place since 1972. There are still leases held by other oil companies that will need to be retired in order to achieve the protection required for the Scott Islands.

We look forward to seeing implementation plans for the area, coupled with some robust research projects that will enable us to review both the spatial extent and the permitted uses within the mNWA.

Energy and Climate Change

Living Oceans has been working to protect Canada's Pacific coast from fossil fuel development and transport for 20 years.

Trans Mountain Expansion Project

In May 2018 the Government of Canada entered negotiations to buy the Trans Mountain Pipeline from Kinder Morgan. The proposed expansion of the pipeline would bring over 400 Aframax tankers through the Salish Sea to the Port of Vancouver each year.

In August 2018 Living Oceans, along with Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Ecojustice, won the legal battle against the expansion project in the Federal Court of Appeal. The ruling was unanimous that the federal government's approval of the project violated its legal obligations to protect endangered orcas under Canada's Species at Risk Act. The success of our challenge was an important decision for the remaining 75 southern resident killer whales.

The taste of victory was sweet but short-lived. The next day the government concluded the purchase of the pipeline at a cost to Canadian taxpayers that may top $15 billion if the expansion project is ever built. The government then responded to the court ruling by ordering the National Energy Board (NEB) to conduct a "reconsideration" hearing into marine impacts and consult more effectively with First Nations.

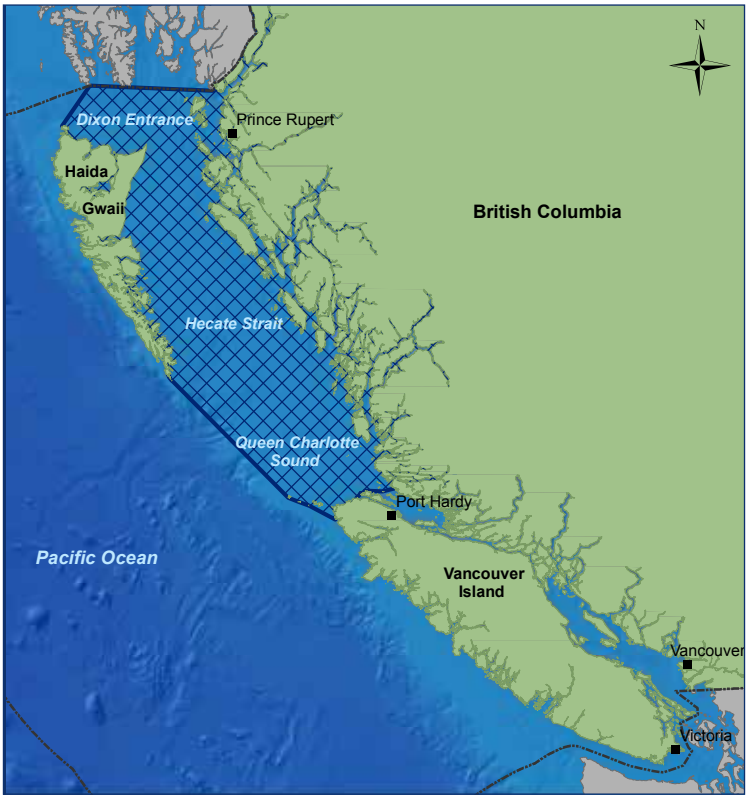
The NEB's timelines were extraordinarily tight: its hearing order gave us just 30 days to review everything filed by the government (which was now the proponent) and provide our evidence to the Board.

The marine impacts of the pipeline and tanker project are far-reaching. It's more than the orcas that are at stake, of course. There are 125 potentially impacted species at risk in the Salish Sea as well as hundreds of thousands of migratory birds protected under multinational agreements.

The federal government had promised to 're-do' the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain assessment process and fell short of that mark when it failed to respond to cogent questions raised by its specially appointed panel. The restricted scope and duration of the reconsideration hearing meant that we had no hope of seeing that promise fulfilled in a new NEB report. As 2018 came to a close we were considering legal options for setting aside the Reconsideration Report, due in February, 2019.

North Coast tanker ban

For more than a decade, Living Oceans has worked with a coalition of northern civil society groups that have been trying to preserve their fishing and tourism economies by rejecting—over a dozen times in 50 years—the attempted incursions of the oil and gas industry. In 2018 the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act (Bill C-48), which proposed a ban on tankers in the waters of the North Coast, made its way through Parliament. This Bill is the sixth such one that seeks to formalize and extend the ban, first put in place as a U.S.-Canadian agreement affecting only Alaskan oil traffic.



The Bill would prohibit tankers that are carrying more than 12,500 tonnes of crude oil or persistent oil as cargo from stopping or unloading at ports or marine installations located along British Columbia's North Coast. We were thrilled to see the Bill brought forward as it puts to rest schemes to build pipelines through northern B.C. and transport millions of barrels of diluted bitumen and crude oil through dangerous waters and sensitive habitat.

Opposition to the Bill was whipped up by Alberta politics and the oil industry, with opponents inventing arguments about job loss and stranded assets, "unequal" treatment of the east and west coasts and, perhaps most objectionable of all, "sterilization" of B.C.'s North Coast economy. Living Oceans applied to appear as a witness before the Senate Committee studying the Bill and worked directly with Senators to ensure that the views of coastal communities were fully heard.

Rising Tides workshops prepare for sea-level rise

Living Oceans reached out to coastal communities to help them begin to plan for sea-level rise with a series of Rising Tides workshops. This new project aims to start the conversation about appropriate adaptation measures and provide local governments and property owners with tools. Solutions are needed soon: sea levels have already risen for most of B.C.'s coastal communities and are projected to rise half a metre by 2050, and as high as one metre by 2100.

Different communities can expect different impacts due to several factors at play. Land, for one thing, may sink or rise, so that the impact of rising oceans may be amplified or reduced accordingly. The shape of the sea-bottom and the profile of the land can also influence impacts from sea level rise, as they may be more or less conducive to storm surges and other wave effects. We are exploring all these factors and approaches to deal with them in the community workshops where we also talk about the present and future costs of sea-level rise—social, economic and environmental— and the need to mitigate the source of the issue: CO_2 emissions.

Our project is part of a broader, pan-Canadian initiative of the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax, called Educating Coastal Communities about Sea Level Rise (ECoAS). Funded partially by DFO and partly by a grant from the Real Estate Foundation of B.C. ECoAS is building a network of sea-level rise practitioners to share resources and best practices, while motivating communities to begin the hard work of planning to deal with protecting public and private property.

Marine Plastic Pollution

It is estimated that by 2050, oceans will carry more plastic than fish. Living Oceans is tackling the problem of marine plastic pollution on the ground, as well as working to develop policy solutions at every level of government. The United Nations Environmental Program estimates that each year, more than eight million tonnes of plastic ends up in the oceans. This plastic wreaks havoc on marine wildlife, fisheries and tourism, and costs at least $8 billion in damage to marine ecosystems.

Clear the Coast

For five consecutive years, we've been cleaning debris off of northern Vancouver Island beaches in our Clear the Coast initiative. With the help of dedicated crews of volunteers, we've removed over 41 tonnes of debris from 4.4 million square meters—444 hectares—of intertidal habitat.

With that experience, we can say with some confidence that the accumulations of plastic and other detritus we cleared off of B.C's shores in 2018 are not the result of the Tohoku tsunami. That event caused a great pulse of debris into the Great Pacific Garbage Patch that was carried to our shores on the North Pacific Current and picked up in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Now, we are dealing with debris from sources closer to home—fishing and aquaculture equipment, for the most part—plus a variety of post-consumer waste from every nation in the Pacific Rim.

Our 2018 cleanups began at Grant Bay in early July and continued up the coast toward Cape Scott throughout August. We partnered with B.C. Marine Trails Network Association on the debris removal, to share the cost of helicopter services and land transport. Together, our two organizations brought in five tonnes of debris.

Our main expedition, to the beaches that can't be reached by trail, took place in mid-August. Project manager Rob O'Dea and Executive Director Karen Wristen each brought their sailboats to Sea Otter Cove to serve as cookhouse, accommodation and volunteer transport. This year, we had a real treat: Kari Siirala joined us as a chef, meaning that we could all focus on the job at hand while Kari focused on keeping us very well fed! Two amazing women from Australia, Matilde Gordon and Lucy Graham, raised funds and kayaked from Alaska to Victoria to raise awareness about marine debris. And once they arrived, they hopped back on the trail and attended our Raft Cove cleanup. Meantime, they'd raised $10,000 to support our work!

Cove Adventure Tours of Port Hardy organized a cleanup of Cape Palmerston in May. They blitzed the beach with a team of 30 friends, leaving the debris in bags we supplied, all tied up ready to go. Renée Baron, Ryan Wanner and Darren Saare—three experienced west coast hikers—organized their own weekend cleanup, using our bags and giving us coordinates for pickup.

We were thrilled to welcome back volunteers who've been with us on previous Sea Otter Cove expeditions and to meet new recruits who have come to us through friends, media or their own research seeking a meaningful volunteer opportunity. Our team ranged in age from early twenties to early eighties and included such an array of life experiences that there was barely time to share it all.

Shaping plastic policy

At the same time as we work to remove harmful plastic pollution from one of our ocean's most productive regions, Living Oceans looks ahead to the policy needed to stem the tide of waste plastic. We worked with federal politicians including Liberal MP Joyce Murray, who was the first to entertain our plea and carry it forward successfully to her party. We supported two NDP motions in the House, one by MP Gord Johns, a local champion of plastics policy in Clayoquot Sound, and another by MP Nathan Cullen that deals with packaging.

We joined a coalition of groups across Canada working with Ecojustice to petition the federal government to use its powers under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to list single-use plastics and Styrofoam as toxic substances—a precursor to effective regulation. Together with B.C. colleagues, we asked the Provincial government to establish effective product stewardship for plastics.

We were proud to see Canada take the lead at the G7 to promote a Plastics Charter, but puzzled to see the entire investment directed offshore, as if Canada were not contributing mightily to the problem. Fishing and aquaculture gear makes up at least half of the five to ten tonnes of debris we remove from the Cape Scott area every year.

As government policy unfolded, we met with staff to point out the need to deal with both ends of the plastics problem: there is an enormous legacy of plastic waste in the ocean and only one effective way to deal with it, which is to pick it up where it strands temporarily on our beaches. Policy initiatives to date tend to prioritize source control and the reduction of single-use plastics over cleaning up the debris that washes up on Canadian shorelines every day.

Living Oceans will continue to advocate for decisive action to limit the import and sale of single-use plastics; and to provide effective product stewardship for essential plastics.

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The Commonage Legacy Foundation
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Government revenues

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National Energy Board Participant Funding Program
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KARI WATKINS

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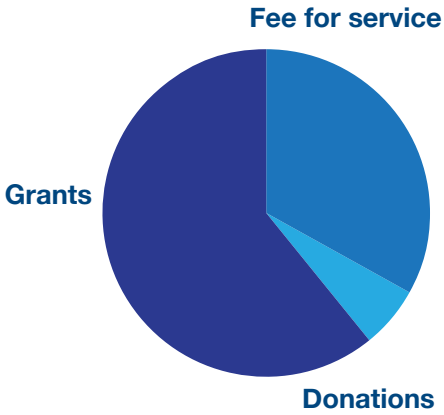
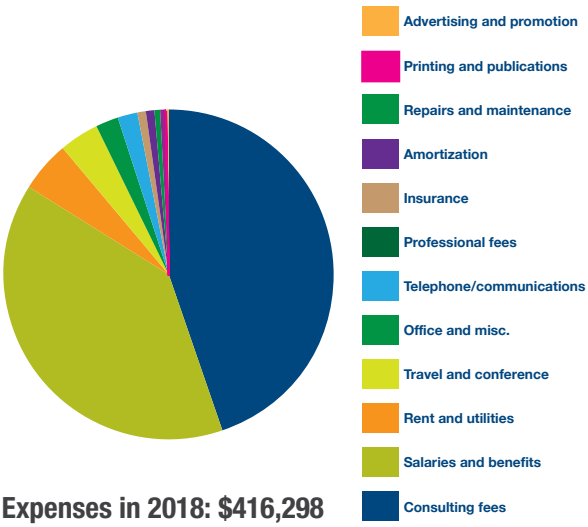
Financials

Revenue



Revenue in 2018: $375,626

Expenses



Expenses in 2018: $416,298

LIVING OCEANS

Healthy Oceans. Healthy Communities.

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