

# Rising Tide

Fall 2024



Photo credit: Tavish Campbell

## Salmon resurgence

**W**e have much to celebrate. 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 are all but gone: 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.

Salmon are recovering in some places because you, and many others like and unlike you, care deeply about their future.

You care so deeply that polling shows that a stunning 92% of us living in coastal communities are concerned about dwindling stocks and 90% are concerned about open-net pen fish farms. When we are able to commission polls with those kinds of numbers, politicians take notice. That, in a nutshell, is why today we have a draft Salmon Aquaculture Transition Plan, the end goal of which is a complete ban on open-net pens by 2029.

*Continued on page 4...*

# Clear the Coast 2024



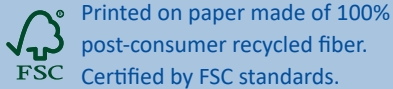
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Rising Tide is published once annually.



Living Oceans is working to ensure the long-term health of the ocean and coastal communities of Canada. We believe that people are part of the environment and that we can build sustainable communities by protecting coastal ecosystems today.

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This year will live on in memory as the one I spent the most nights ever sleeping in a tent (34, but not consecutively)! I'll also remember it as the year when we brought in so much plastic debris that we nearly matched our total over the past decade.

It just goes to show how important it is for government to establish a permanent and robust fund to keep this work going. In years past, we've had your support and that of a couple of foundations and more recently, Blue Friday. With it, we've been able to keep a consistent presence on the North Island, cleaning anywhere from 4-6 beaches per year. But this year, we had both Blue Friday and a substantial government grant from the Clean Coast, Clean Waters Initiative Fund. Sadly, this year was the last for the Fund, albeit the first time they've seen fit to fund Living Oceans.

The numbers aren't all finalized as yet, but I estimate we brought in 60 tonnes of debris. Over the prior decade, we had just topped 70 tonnes. This year's stunning result took the combined effort of volunteers, temporary paid staff and contracted organizations Lonestep Conservationist Society and Rugged Coast Research Society.

The reason we were able to collect so much debris is that we got into a lot of new places. Living Oceans did a very thorough job of Cox Island in the Scott Islands—we've been there before for day-trips but this was our first time camping out there and really digging in to every pocket we could access. Lanz Island had never been cleaned and when Rugged Coast's crew reported they'd filled 140 lift bags and weren't finished, we knew we had to change plans and bring in a tug and barge to get everything out. They filled 240 bags by the end of their expedition. Lonestep's David Jensen took that new paddleboard you helped him buy into every tiny pocket along the northwest



coast, unearthing (literally) tonnes of debris that had been there for ages.

For the first time, we sent more to landfill than we recycled, owing to the degradation of material that had spent so long in the elements. Living Oceans and Lonestep recycled 13.1 tonnes and sent 17.7 to landfill. When Rugged Coast completes their sorting later this month, we'll be able to confirm the grand total.

We hadn't quite finished putting all the gear away for the year when Blue Friday called to let us know that they've chosen us as their project for 2025! I've got my sights on another go at Lanz and Cox Islands, if only to see what a difference a year makes. I hope you can help us round up the budget enough to do that!

Blue Friday is November 29. Support the effort to clean the ocean by buying from



#BlueFriday brands on that special day! Visit [blue-friday.ca](https://blue-friday.ca)



# Living Oceans calls for tougher greenwashing rules

Greenwashing has become a prominent issue across many sectors, including seafood. That's why, in June, many conservation groups welcomed amendments to Canada's Competition Act regarding greenwashing, that will require companies use an "adequate and proper test" or "internationally recognized methodology" to substantiate their claims. However, there was concern that these new requirements lacked specificity for companies and consumers alike. In response, the Competition Bureau recently held a [public consultation](#) to develop enforcement guidance.

In our [SeaChoice submission](#), we highlighted the results of our 2020 [investigation](#) into 234 seafood environmental claims across 181 products in Canadian grocers. We found many misleading and unsubstantiated claims that could undermine real sustainability efforts. Notably, self-declarations such as "sustainable" or "responsible", which lack

third-party verification, were common. Only 35% of these self-claims could be verified. The problem is exacerbated by the absence of Canadian regulations defining "sustainability", allowing for ambiguous claims to enter the marketplace.

We also cautioned the Bureau that eco-certifications can be misleading and contribute to greenwashing. For example, the Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) certification has been linked to environmental damage and illegal activities, as evidenced in an open letter organized by Living Oceans and 75 global organizations.

Greenwashing is not limited to products but can also occur at the company or industry level. The salmon farming industry, for example, often promotes misleading claims such as "salmon aquaculture feeds the world" or "eat farmed fish, save wild fish," despite evidence that the industry uses large quantities of wild

fish to feed farmed salmon, impacting coastal communities and ecosystems.

We urge the Competition Bureau to scrutinize all potentially misleading claims, including eco-certifications. Companies should be required to provide publicly accessible, science-based evidence to support their environmental claims.

Living Oceans will work to hold those who greenwash to account through these new amendments and guidance, as they come into force over the coming year. Of particular interest are changes, due to come into force on June 20, 2025, that allow civil society to apply directly to the Competition Tribunal to challenge company greenwash.



## Supermarkets, seafood, and superbugs

This summer, Living Oceans and colleagues at SeaChoice and World Animal Protection were busy collecting seafood and meat samples from major grocers across the country in what is anticipated to be one of the largest Canadian studies on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The study is in partnership with McGill University's AMR Centre and Health Canada.

AMR occurs when bacteria or viruses evolve to resist medicines designed to kill or treat them, creating so-called "superbugs". The World Health Organization has identified AMR as one of the top global public health threats of our time.

Overuse and misuse of antibiotics in aquaculture and livestock agriculture contributes to AMR which then enters our food supply and, in turn, us. We are concerned that Canada has weak regulations on the use of antibiotics in our food sector and poor oversight of seafood imports.

Antibiotics used in aquaculture can also cause environmental impacts through pollution causing a reduction of overall microbial diversity. Therefore,

improving farming practices can lead to positive environmental and human health outcomes.

Right now, McGill's lab is running overtime testing our hundreds of samples. We look forward to releasing the results with our partners in spring 2025. We will use the study's findings to advocate for major grocers to adopt responsible antibiotics policies for their food supply and for decision makers to strengthen regulations.



Yes, this represents a slippage from the 2025 goal, but we've seen that coming for a long time. To be fair, every Fisheries Minister since 2019 has had to fight the inertia within their department. A captured regulator if ever there was one, DFO has been no help in the realization of the Minister's mandate to transition net pens out of B.C. waters.

And, of course, there was the litigation. I'm having trouble remembering how many times we went to Court, always represented by our lawyers with Ecojustice, to defend the Minister's right and duty to conserve wild fish. This year, we celebrated a ruling upholding Minister Murray's decision to refuse salmon aquaculture licences in the Discovery Islands—that critical area for migrating wild salmon. You'll likely recall that Dr. Kristi Miller-Saunders' team at the DFO genomics lab produced a number of papers documenting how Discovery Islands farms acted like incubators for bacteria and viruses; and the fact that wild fish were becoming infected by those pathogens. When modelling linked those facts with poor returns of wild salmon, it became clear that Discovery Islands farms had to be removed.

MOWI is appealing that ruling: stay tuned! We'll be off to Court again, likely early next year.

First Nations along the coast didn't wait for the Minister to act, however. Back in 2019, newly armed with the ability to refuse to have net pens in their territories, the Namgis, Kwikwasut'inuxw and Mamalilikulla First Nations in the Broughton led the way by entering into a unique agreement with MOWI and Cermaq that would see staged closure of the Broughton farms and enhanced monitoring in the meantime. The last of those farms closed down early this year. Less publicly, the Shishalh and Gwawa'enuxw shut down farms in Sechelt and north Broughton, respectively; and Quatsino First Nation

has closed two on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island.

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. And for the Minister of Fisheries, the need to apply the Precautionary Principle to decision-making about salmon farms is invoked: the lack of scientific certainty should not be used to avoid taking decisive action to save species, according to the law.

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.

### Goals for 2025:

1. Enshrine the 2029 ban on salmon farms in regulations.
2. Prevent DFO from approving semi-closed in-ocean farms that won't solve the problem.
3. Defend the Minister's decision in Court, to ensure there is no erosion of her right to invoke the Precautionary Principle.
4. Finalize the Transition Plan and help support Nations transitioning to new development opportunities.



Transition Plan Roundtable

# Holding grocers, certifications to account for human rights abuses

This past year has seen a slew of investigative exposés on human rights abuses in global seafood supply chains. Some of the seafood implicated in these abuses ends up on grocers' shelves in Canada. In response, Living Oceans and our SeaChoice allies have been actively drawing attention to the issue, including a campaign where nearly 5,000 letters were sent to major grocers demanding they put a stop to egregious human rights abuses in their seafood supply.

Most, if not all, grocers rely exclusively on certifications as a way to prevent environmental and social harms in their supply chains. However, certifications often fail to address such issues. Case in point: a recent study by Katrina Nakamura of Sustainability Incubator reveals the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is neglecting to spot forced labor behind the tuna it stamps “certified sustainable.”

The [Nakamura review](#) found MSC doesn't screen vessels or companies against published lists of labor and human rights abuses, meaning vessels known to be connected to these abuses

are able to benefit from the use of the world's most recognizable ecolabel for sustainable seafood. Furthermore, 74% of the MSC's certified tuna could not be traced back to the vessel or employer.

Various NGOs in the sustainable seafood movement have voiced concerns about MSC's social sustainability standards for years. In response to a weak effort made in 2019 to address labor concerns under its revised Chain of Custody Certification, the MSC was called out for taking a low-bar approach that served as a poor model for other certification schemes looking to address seafood workers' rights.

SeaChoice's [recent campaign](#) on the issue leveraged the [disturbing findings](#) of recent investigations conducted by The Outlaw Ocean Project and [Corporate Accountability Lab](#). Collectively, these reports unveiled countless acts of inhumane working conditions, forced labor, child labor, severe abuse, neglect, murder, debt bondage, illegal and unregulated fishing, overfishing, and more. Unfortunately, these findings aren't new, as human rights abuses have long been reported throughout global seafood supply chains. In fact, a [recent report](#) by the

International Labor Organization revealed that annual profits from forced labor across sectors have increased by 37 per cent over the past decade.

One core demand outlined in SeaChoice's [letter to retailers](#) is to stop relying exclusively on flawed certifications. Retailers need to do their due diligence by investigating their seafood supply chains, including those of the third-party products they sell. To effect change, certification schemes and retailers must stop [passing the buck](#) and take responsibility for the human rights abuses behind seafood.

In 2025, Living Oceans and our SeaChoice allies will continue to place pressure on major Canadian grocers to clean up their seafood supply chains from environmental harms and human rights abuses. We will continue to call out the limitations and flaws of certifications. We will also turn the heat on government officials to adopt mandatory corporate due diligence legislation - i.e., laws that will require companies to take real action for the planet and people.



# Ocean Exposures 2024 winners revealed

View all the submissions by visiting [flic.kr/s/aHBqjBKNA2](https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjBKNA2)



Photo credit: Below the Surface - first place - Eduardo Baena

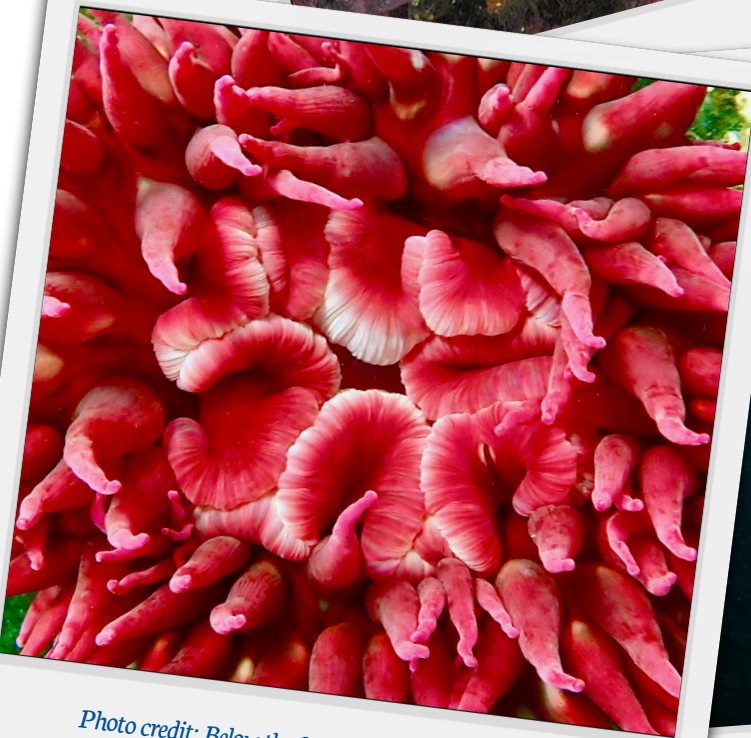


Photo credit: Below the Surface - second place - Sara Ellison



Photo credit: Below the Surface - third place - Ana Lucia Pozas Franco



Photo credit: Coastal wildlife - first place - Amanda Nelson



Photo credit: Work and Play on the Ocean - first place - Aleah Wong

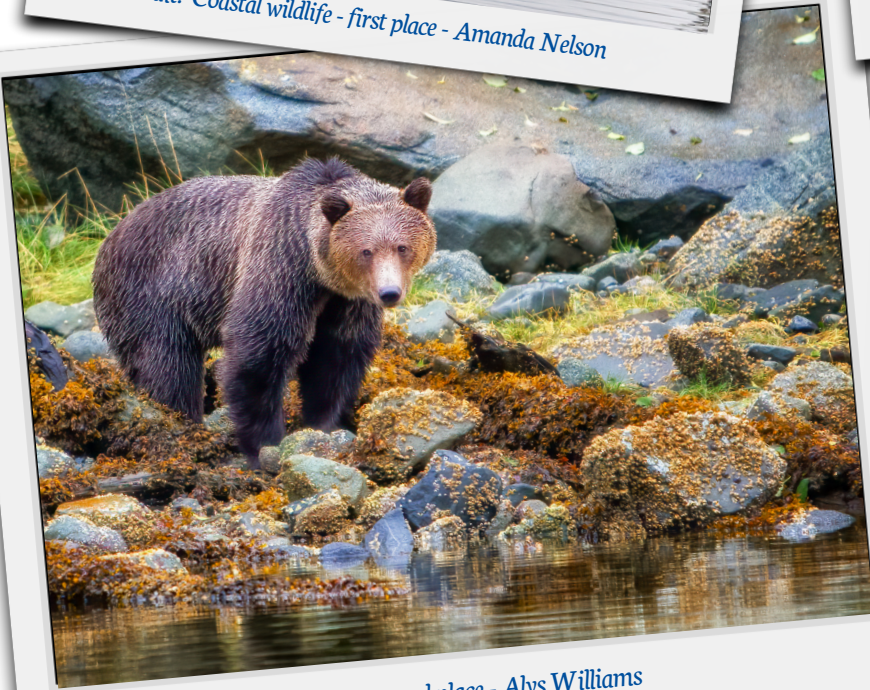


Photo credit: Coastal wildlife - second place - Alys Williams

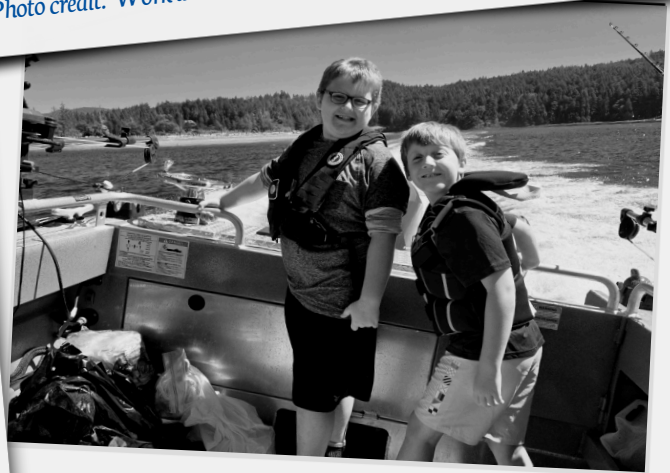


Photo credit: Work and Play on the Ocean - second place - Kim Senko



Photo credit: Coastal wildlife - third place - Ken Szeto



Photo credit: Work and Play on the Ocean - third place - Neil Saxvik

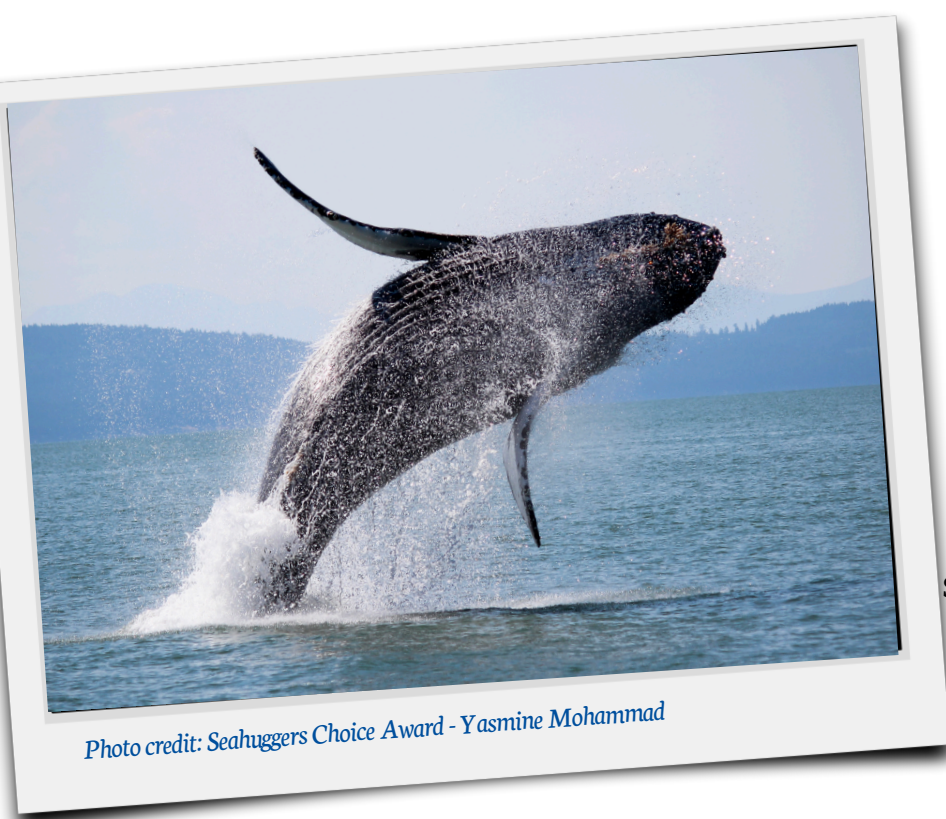


Photo credit: Seahuggers Choice Award - Yasmine Mohammad

- Spirit of the West Adventures [kayakingtours.com](http://kayakingtours.com)
- Vancouver Island Whale Watch  
[vancouverislandwhalewatch.com](http://vancouverislandwhalewatch.com)
- Sirene Chocolate [sirenechocolate.com](http://sirenechocolate.com)
- GnuSanté [gnusante.com](http://gnusante.com)
- Audain Art Museum [audainartmuseum.com](http://audainartmuseum.com)
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- Iron Dog Books [irondogbooks.com](http://irondogbooks.com)
- Kidsbooks Edgemont [kidsbooks.com](http://kidsbooks.com)
- naturebee [naturebeewraps.ca](http://naturebeewraps.ca)
- Old Salty [oldsalty.ca](http://oldsalty.ca)
- Simply Natural Canada [simplynaturalcanada.com](http://simplynaturalcanada.com)
- Truffle Pig Chocolate [trufflepigchocolate.com](http://trufflepigchocolate.com)
- Vancouver Island Refillery [virefillery.ca](http://virefillery.ca)



We applaud our sponsors for their support and generosity. Without these donations we could not offer such amazing prize packages to the winners. Thanks to Spirit of the West and Sirene chocolates some top winners got a cash bonus in their package. All the goodies and treats provided by our sponsors were wonderful and we can't thank them enough!

You can thank them too. Visit their websites and follow them on social media. Use #OceanExposure and add our handle on social.





# Global first shareholder resolutions

This year we've been [working with allies](#) in Australia to initiate the world's first shareholder resolutions to prevent an extinction emergency. Our expertise in farmed salmon, major grocer sustainable seafood policies and aquaculture certifications informed the shareholder campaign, resolutions and conversations with financial investors.

[The resolutions](#) call on Australia's two major grocers, Woolworths and Coles, to disclose how their farmed salmon sourcing is impacting threatened species. They ask the grocers to stop selling Macquarie Harbour salmon due to impacts to the endangered Maugean skate - a shark-related species that has been

around since the time of the dinosaurs. Only 40-120 adult skates remain in the Harbour, its only home.

Some of Australia's largest ethical funds declared their support for the resolutions ahead of the grocers' Annual General Meetings. At the AGMs, tough questions were asked of the companies' boards and CEOs - by our own Sustainable Seafood Campaign Director, Kelly Roebuck, among others - as to how they can justify continuing to sell a product associated with greenwashing an extinction during a time when companies are expected to prevent biodiversity impacts throughout their supply chain, not contribute to them.

At time of writing, we are excited to share that the resolutions have already made history! At the Woolworths AGM, our resolution received a 30% supporting vote. This is one of the largest votes globally for a shareholder resolution against the recommendation of a board, sending a clear message that shareholders expect action on nature risk in supply chains.

During 2025, we will continue to follow up with Australian retailers and hold their feet to the fire.



## Calling on Canada to ratify the High Seas Treaty today!

Canada signed the High Seas Treaty on March 4, 2024, but now we need to see more urgency! The historic Treaty requires **ratification by 60 countries** to make it law and protect marine biodiversity. We're nowhere near that yet.

Canada must act now. The delay by Canada to ratify the Treaty sends a message that swims against being an environmental leader. The longer Canada waits, the less influence it will wield to shape ocean issues. As a country surrounded by significant bodies of water, this seems short sighted.

Protecting the High Seas is an essential step in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework, which sees 30 per cent of land and ocean protected by 2030. Canada's ratification of the Treaty will signal our commitment to the

protection of our oceans and marine biodiversity.

Let Canada's leadership know you want the Treaty ratified. Use #HighSeasTreaty #RaceForRatification and tag Minister LeBouthillier and Prime Minister Trudeau in your social media posts.

You can follow which countries have signed and ratified the agreement here: [highseasalliance.org/treaty-ratification/table-of-countries](https://highseasalliance.org/treaty-ratification/table-of-countries)



## Unveiling Ghost Farms: A Hidden Threat to Our Seas From Coastal Pollution to Microplastics - Collaborative Efforts to Tackle Ghost Farms and Their Impact

Healthy Seas is hosting this webinar on November 19, 2024 (8:00 AM - 9:00 AM PST). It explores the impacts of abandoned aquaculture farms and marine pollution on ocean health.

Register today:  
<https://bit.ly/UnveilingGhostFarmsWebinar>

# Trans Mountain and the Southern Resident Killer Whales

The TransMountain Pipeline was finally completed this year, over budget by a mind-boggling \$30 billion. As expected (although completely contrary to the proponent's assertions) production in the tarsands has ramped up to its highest level ever. We expected to see a massive increase in tanker traffic as a result. Oddly enough, that has not yet materialized, even though the new line has been functional since May. Traffic has increased, certainly; but not to the extent one would have expected from all the brouhaha about discounted prices and oversubscribed pipelines.

The proposal for the pipeline promised us a seven-fold increase in tanker traffic, to about 34 per month. To date, Westridge Terminal's busiest month was July, which saw 21 tankers loaded—still a significant increase, with the promise of more to come. More troubling is where those tankers are going and how they're getting there.

Despite all the rhetoric about how the pipeline was essential to avoid the deep discount applied to Canadian oil by U.S. processors, nearly half (48%) of the tankers leaving Westridge Terminal since May have gone to Washington State or California. Both destinations can be reached by pipeline alone. More troubling, voyages to Washington State refineries have kept the tankers in Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW) critical habitat for the entire transit.

The Friends of San Juan Islands have been tracking vessels leaving Westridge and have discovered that they're passing through the southern Gulf Islands as anticipated and going on to Port Angeles. But at Port Angeles, they reverse course, travelling on the U.S. side of the border back into Puget Sound to call on the Cherry Point and Anacortes refineries. The reasons for this circuitous routing

are unclear as yet, but the consequences for SRKW are clear: each of these transits has doubled the anticipated impact of vessel strikes, oil pollution and underwater noise.

Back when the Canadian Energy Regulator (CER) was deliberating on the marine impacts of the Trans Mountain project (because our court case forced them to do so), it came up with a list of 16 so-called mitigating measures. Those measures were outside of its jurisdiction to order, but the CER felt they were necessary to afford endangered whales the protection promised by the Species At Risk Act. The Government of Canada stepped in and undertook to put all 16 of those mitigation measures in place before the project became operational.

Then they didn't.

Working with our counsel at Ecojustice, we picked up on the failure to mitigate Trans Mountain's impacts and began querying the government on its progress with implementation. We learned that some of the measures—like the regional cumulative effects management plan--will not be implemented. In addition, there is no timeline for the promised offsetting program for underwater noise.

This failure to act is likely owing to the number of approved projects, creating new and more dire consequences for the whales while making cumulative risk assessment and management challenging. Meanwhile, the population of SRKW continues its slow decline. In 2018, they numbered 78 individuals. Today, there are just 73.

Working with Ecojustice and colleagues, we filed a Petition for an emergency order under the Species At Risk Act. That triggered an obligation on the government to conduct an "imminent

*Continued on page 11...*



Picture caption: This is the route followed by the Tarbet Spirit, an oil tanker that left Westridge Terminal in July, 2024. From the moment it left Burrard Inlet until it called at Cherry Point, it was transiting SRKW critical habitat.

threat assessment” that has now been completed and sent to the Ministers of Fisheries and Environment. They must form an opinion as to whether or not SRKW face an imminent threat to their survival and recovery and if so, recommend emergency measures. The last time our colleagues did this, in 2018, the Ministers reasonably concluded that there was an imminent threat and recommended an emergency order, but Cabinet declined to make one. Cabinet was of course contemplating the approval of Trans Mountain at the time and didn’t need any orcas holding up the plan.

The government has since approved both Trans Mountain and the new

Roberts Bank terminal, both of which will increase the risks of ship strikes, pollution and noise for SRKW. The integrity and utility of the Species At Risk Act is truly on the line here, as is the future of these endangered whales.

The scheme of the Act requires that the Ministers proceed with speed to arrive at a recommendation about measures to protect the whales. Our Petition was filed June 7, 2024 and we’re still awaiting the recommendation.

Our counsel at Ecojustice continue to correspond with the Ministers, underlining the urgent need to quiet the waters for SRKW and allow them the undisturbed space they need to

forage effectively and rear their young. While the Ministers have been deliberating, orca calf L128 was born. A small female, she was last seen in early October, being carried on the back of another orca, struggling to breathe and apparently emaciated.

**We intend to continue to pursue emergency measures for SRKW in 2025, in the courts if necessary.**



Photo credit: Darryl Luscombe

## The ocean is calling

Over the year, Living Oceans has helped share the message of awareness and call on governments to take action now and protect the health of our ocean for future generations. Support for a moratorium (official pause) on deep-sea mining to allow time to gather more scientific information on deep-sea ecosystems continues to grow, but governments need to know that this is important.

Advocates for marine mining still claim extracting minerals from the deep sea would have fewer impacts on nature and human lives than land-based mining does. Environmental groups continue to insist too little is known about the ocean and the role it plays in

the health of the planet, the risk is too great, and what we don't know might come back to bite us - an indefinite moratorium is best.

Mining the ocean floor was already controversial, but a new scientific study has thrown the future of the industry into more chaos. The study, published in Nature Geoscience, exposes potential harms to ocean ecosystems due to mining and shared how mining on the seafloor could affect oxygen levels and ecosystems in previously unknown ways.

David Attenborough has been quoted saying, “The rush to mine this pristine and unexplored environment risks creating terrible impacts that cannot be reversed. We need to be guided by

science when faced with decisions of such great environmental consequence.”

Our ocean makes life on earth possible. Add your voice to **#DefendtheDeep**.



Photo credit: Sara Ellison

# VANISHING:

The Biodiversity Crisis in Canada



Graphics courtesy of Canadian Conservation Photographers Collective

## Vanishing: Advocating for a more comprehensive view of biodiversity

The Vanishing Campaign was developed in collaboration with Pacific Wild, the Invasive Species Centre, Ocean Wise and Living Oceans.

This campaign aims to raise public awareness about the interconnected nature of life and advocate for a more comprehensive view of biodiversity that considers the complex interactions between species, ecosystems and human society where every organism has a role in maintaining balanced ecosystems.

There are five main drivers of biodiversity loss: habitat loss (including land-use and sea-use change), climate change, invasive species, overexploitation of resources and pollution.

Research has shown that biodiversity loss has a comparable impact on ecosystem services to other major

threats like climate change. With biodiversity loss, we threaten to dramatically disrupt the Earth systems and services we rely on.

Visit the Vanishing website and explore the series of expert interviews highlighting critical conservation issues, including habitat loss, invasive species, overexploitation and pollution.

Our very own Karen Wristen discusses challenges, solutions and actions to protect our environment.

Use #vanishingcampaign if you share or post on social media.

[theccpc.ca/vanishing](http://theccpc.ca/vanishing)



## Thanks for your support!

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Questions? Call Karen at 604-696-5044 or [info@livingoceans.org](mailto:info@livingoceans.org)

## Ways to Donate

1. **Donate directly** to Living Oceans, if you **do not** require a tax receipt.

**By cheque:** Please make cheque payable to Living Oceans Society and mail to:

Living Oceans, Suite #7 – 650 Clyde Avenue  
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1E2

2. **Donate to the Canadian Coastal Research Society** if you would like a tax receipt (minimum \$25).

**By cheque or credit card:** please fill out this form. Cheques must be payable to CANADIAN COASTAL RESEARCH SOCIETY. Please note: Monthly donors receive annual tax receipts.

3. **Online:** You can donate directly to Living Oceans or to the Canadian Coastal Research Society using your credit card or Paypal on our web site.

Canadian Coastal Research Society is a registered Canadian charity, no. 82128 1433 RR0001. Canadian Coastal Research Society and Living Oceans collaborate on charitable projects. You will be directed to the Canadian Coastal Research Society web site if you want to make a charitable donation.

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

