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_Dedicated to the memory of Mary Lindsay._
About Living Oceans

Living Oceans Society has been a leader in the effort to protect Canada’s oceans since we formed in 1998.

We are based in Sointula, a small fishing village on the Central Coast of British Columbia, yet our influence is national. We are the largest organization in Canada focusing exclusively on marine conservation.

Living on the coast, we are reminded each day that it’s not just about the fish—it’s about the fish and the people. We advocate 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.

2012 Highlights

- Welcomed Karen Wristen as our new Executive Director
- Achieved a unique agreement with the trawl fleet that protects corals and sponges
- Conducted a research and media campaign to counter Enbridge’s public relations offensive promoting pipelines and supertankers on the B.C. coast
- Organized volunteers on northern Vancouver Island to remove marine debris
- Helped Canada’s grocery retailers switch to selling only sustainable seafood
- Exposed an illegal iron fertilization scheme off Haida Gwaii
- Helped convene a marine planning process with First Nations, the Province of B.C. and others to ensure the oceans and those who depend on them can weather the uncertainties of a changing climate and economy.
Letter from the Executive Director

Living Oceans chalked up some pretty remarkable accomplishments in 2012, a year that may yet go down in history as the worst on record for environmental protection. Despite the ideologically-driven evisceration of environmental laws and the civil service that administered them, we were able to stay the course with our campaigns and even achieve some significant breakthroughs.

First in the ‘breakthrough’ category had to be the unique agreement we negotiated with the trawl fishery. Now enshrined in law, the agreement resulted in a vast reduction of the bycatch of sponges and corals—meaning that we have protected critical rearing habitat for countless species. This is a classic example of how Living Oceans works: set the conservation agenda, invite the participants and use our collective wisdom to find a solution that works for all.

In the same spirit, we worked to build consensus around marine spatial planning despite the federal government’s withdrawal from the process. We continue to work within the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP), where we contribute both technical analysis and input from local communities and the environmental sector.

Other significant achievements in 2012 included the release of the report of the Cohen Commission, with strong recommendations to deal with salmon farming based on our submissions; Canada Safeway implementing the sustainable seafood policy that we helped them create—that is, removing all of the unsustainable seafood from its stores; the creation of an initiative to deal with tsunami and other marine debris; and of course, our ongoing battle against oil tankers on the B.C. coast.

I hope you’ll enjoy reading about these and other successes from 2012 and I thank you most sincerely for the support that has enabled us to get this far.

Karen Wristen,
Executive Director
Letter from the Chair

Last year at about this time, I was growing concerned for the future of Living Oceans. The federal government was demonizing the environmental movement as a whole and some of our funders in particular. It had also pulled the plug on the marine planning process in which Living Oceans had invested years of effort as our best hope to establish a network of Marine Protected Areas on Canada’s Pacific coast. All this came at a time of leadership transition at Living Oceans, which are challenging at the best of times. The prospects were, to say the least, daunting.

Ignoring the rhetoric from Ottawa and regrouping with a new strategic plan, Living Oceans emerged with the ambition and skills to become a major player on both national and international ocean conservation stages. By forging new partnerships and engaging directly with the governments and industries we seek to influence, Living Oceans will bring the lessons learned in the fight to protect British Columbia’s North and Central Coast to coastal communities throughout Canada.

This year, I am pleased to report that Living Oceans’ future looks bright. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome new Director Kory Wilson to the Board, who strengthens Living Oceans with her expertise and personal roots in coastal First Nations communities. The Board supports the organization’s strong commitment to ecosystem-based management, a comprehensive approach to ocean planning and conservation, where research guides campaigns and policies. We are encouraged by Living Oceans’ plans for sharing its twin goals of healthy oceans and healthy communities with other places where peoples’ lives and livelihoods depend upon the bounty and beauty of the ocean.

In the pages of the 2012 Annual Report we share our spirit of optimism and determination to continue to win victories on the road to ocean conservation. Our Board and staff welcome your thoughts and feedback on the path we chart ahead.

Astrid Scholz,
Chair
Ecosystem-Based Management

In 2012 Living Oceans’ researchers defined 26 principles of ‘ecosystem-based management’ (EBM) as a tool to determine how to best manage ocean-based businesses and coastal economies so they will continue to provide for our communities well into the future. EBM is based on the four pillars of ocean health: living things, food webs, habitat, and the chemistry of the ocean itself. This is a new approach to ocean planning—until now, we’ve only worried about our impacts on a handful of valuable species. With EBM, the scope is broadened to consider how our activities impact all species and the habitats they depend upon, including deep-sea corals, kelp beds, marine mammals, the water they swim in and the plankton they eat.

We are also working to ensure that these EBM principles are used in the protection of the Scott Islands sea birds, the Hecate Strait Sponge Reef and Bowie Seamount by participating in the management planning processes for these MPAs.

EBM principles are being incorporated into the Pacific North Coast Integrated Management Area (PNCIMA) draft plans and in the products of Marine Planning Partnership for the North Pacific Coast where we represent the conservation sector on planning committees. MaPP for short, is a partnership among the Province of B.C. and First Nations, working with ocean stakeholders to create regional and sub-regional management guidance and spatial plans for the North and Central Coast; northern Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii.
MaPP draws on local knowledge

Living Oceans has collected local ecological knowledge for many years on B.C.’s northern Vancouver Island and Central Coast. It is the knowledge that is passed through cultures or earned through a lifetime of living and working in the same locations, as with fishermen.

We are committed to advocating for community representation and gathering input and feedback from local community members and experts to ensure everyone’s voice is heard by all levels of government through the marine planning processes we work on. A collective voice will ensure we’ll have a plan that will help the oceans, the communities and people who depend on them to weather the uncertainties of a changing climate and economy.

In 2012 we had the opportunity to utilize these valued relationships in a new way, by building a network of concerned individuals who help us provide feedback on MaPP’s North Vancouver Island and Central Coast planning products, with the goal of ensuring we create an effective network of MPAs and rigorous spatial management guidelines that will safeguard the health of our ocean.

MPA research

The Royal Society of Canada cited our analysis of fishing closures in Canada’s Pacific MPAs in its 2012 Sustaining Canada’s Marine Biodiversity report and public presentation as an example of how Canada is not meeting its biodiversity commitments. Our findings on MPA closures were also cited by the IUCN in their Guidelines for applying the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories to MPAs, as an example of how IUCN categories have been miss-assigned to MPAs.

We updated our research to include all fisheries closures and MPAs in British Columbia current to 2012. These results will become a tool for increasing the pressure for more effective management plans in those marine reserves that are intended to be closed to fishing.
Energy and Climate Change

Living Oceans is taking a stand against two tarsands proposals to bring supertankers to Canada’s beautiful Pacific coast. Between the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project and the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Port Expansion, the B.C. coast would see as many as 600-700 supertankers each year.

Despite the current federal government policy—and perhaps because of it, at least in part—we have made very significant progress toward a tanker ban for the North and Central Coast. Public concern regarding tarsands developments has reached such a high point that opposition parties, both federally and here in British Columbia, have been able to move with confidence to publicly oppose new pipelines to the Pacific.

Our summer outreach events offered a very popular postcard, directed to the provincial Premier, demanding that she bring the decision on the Enbridge pipeline back to the Province of B.C., by opting out of an agreement signed in 2010 that relinquished B.C.’s jurisdiction to conduct an environmental assessment. That demand was immediately taken up by the opposition, placing the Premier in a very difficult position from which she has utterly failed to extract herself. Unwilling to support or oppose the project in public, she has instead set five conditions for its approval, at least two of which will not be met. Her public speculations concerning the jurisdiction she would use to prevent the project going ahead have met with widespread legal criticism.
Hundreds sent us their photos saying ‘NO’ to Enbridge for our Keep It Clean online map and visual petition. If you haven’t posted your photo and message there’s no time like the present!

Oil spill research

This year we took a close look at the level of oil spill response preparedness even as the federal government slashed funding to Environment Canada’s emergency oil spill response program and shut down its regional offices—including the one in Vancouver. We found out that the spill response solutions that Enbridge would deploy, such as containment booms and chemical dispersants, are often rendered useless by the notoriously bad weather and sea conditions on our coast.

In 2012 our relentless research and media work succeeded in countering Enbridge’s public relations offensive. We kept up the pressure throughout the year with the press spilling enough ink to fill several supertankers. The growth of tanker-free coast movement has been fantastic!

High levels of public awareness regarding tarsands and pipeline development were amply demonstrated in polls we commissioned which indicated that over 80% of British Columbians are concerned or very concerned about pipeline and tanker projects supported by the federal government. For the first time that we can recall, an environmental issue tied with the economy as ‘the most pressing issue facing the province today’ and ranked ahead of health care in that list.

Northern Gateway Review

Living Oceans had intervenor status at the Joint Review Panel on the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline and tanker project. Over a thousand people gave an oral presentation at the community hearings of the Panel—only two of whom spoke in favour of the proposal. We organized more than two thousand people to write letters of opposition to Northern Gateway. Our public education events assisted people on northern Vancouver Island and in Vancouver to assemble their submissions. One of those sessions was held in conjunction with a speaking event in Port Hardy, where we were honoured to host oil spill activist Dr. Rikki Ott—a veteran of the Exxon Valdez disaster who related first-hand reports from the Kalamazoo and Bluewater Horizon spills.

After the community hearings, the Panel heard evidence from intervenors and Enbridge. Behind the scenes, we worked closely with our counsel at Ecojustice to ensure that the highly technical evidence we had presented on spill response and preparedness, the problems with double-hulled tankers and the giant holes in Enbridge’s evidence would be supported through their questioning of witnesses.

At the end of the day, Enbridge backed off altogether from cross-examining Living Oceans’ witnesses—a sure sign that our evidence was so professional and cogent that they knew they couldn’t score any points against us.

The final decision on Northern Gateway is now in the hands of the federal Cabinet, taken away from the Panel by amendments made in the government’s 2012 Omnibus Bill. The Panel will now make only recommendations, due by Dec. 31. 2013. Cabinet will then make the final decision.
Sustainable Seafood

Living Oceans is helping to improve fishing and fish farming practices by increasing the demand for sustainably harvested seafood. On a global scale, fishing and aquaculture are pushing some ocean ecosystems to the brink of collapse. But the seafood story isn’t all bad. Growing numbers of seafood producers are catching and raising seafood with a healthy ocean in mind. They can also see the increased economic value from a growing market for ocean-friendly products.

SeaChoice

SeaChoice is a national program of five leading Canadian environmental groups, including Living Oceans. Through our partnerships with major retail chains, SeaChoice provides expertise and guidance to improve their procurement towards selling only ocean-friendly seafood. We do this by connecting retailers and suppliers with industry leaders who are pioneering sustainable fishing and aquaculture practices. We help retailers implement sustainable seafood policies throughout their supply chains, train their staff and actively engage with them on seafood policy reform initiatives.

Through SeaChoice we’ve helped bump sustainable seafood from a niche market status to holding a widely popular share of the Canadian seafood marketplace. Real progress is being made by forward thinking companies to set the oceans on a path to recovery. SeaChoice retail chain partners include Canada Safeway, Overwaitea Food Group, Federated Cooperative Ltd., Whole Foods and most recently, Buy-Low and Nesters.

Safeway continued to make steady progress, removing red-ranked products and replacing them with ocean-friendly products. For example, the store discontinued its private label yellowfin canned tuna because of concerns with overfishing and bycatch. Now Safeway’s private-label brand uses skipjack, a more sustainable tuna species. Canada Safeway is the first retailer in North America to commit to using only tuna caught by free-school purse-seine methods.

In 2012, Canada Safeway implemented the SeaChoice traffic light rankings at seafood counters for their customers with ‘Green’ and ‘Yellow’ product labels, point-of-sale signage, wallet guides and informative brochures. In preparation for the in-store materials, we trained Canada Safeway’s seafood staff to help them guide their customers through the growing number of sustainable seafood products that are available to shoppers. SeaChoice also provided the western Canadian retail giant with sourcing assistance, policy development and merchandising, and outreach support.
**Sustainable Fish Secure Future**

Approximately 80 percent of seafood harvested in British Columbia is exported to international markets. British Columbians are then obliged to buy seafood that comes from far away and was likely farmed or caught using unsustainable practices. Living Oceans is working to remove the barriers to selling locally harvested sustainable seafood in B.C.

After conducting interviews with fishermen, retailers, restaurants, suppliers and distributors, Living Oceans authored the report *Sustainable Fish Secure Future: An Assessment of the Wild Seafood Supply Chain on Vancouver Island With a Focus on Local Sustainable Fisheries*. The report examines the barriers and opportunities for local wild seafood within the regional supply chain.

We identified a number of government policies and social challenges that cause barriers for fishermen to sell locally. For example, provincial policies encourage the exportation of B.C. seafood and small-scale fishermen are increasingly competing with larger fleets and import markets.

However, the report also found that suppliers, retailers and chefs are showing an increased willingness to market local sustainable seafood. It also found that fishermen want to sell more of their catch locally and that the public is eager to buy it.

**Market Certifications**

Throughout the year there was an increasing proliferation of seafood certifications in the marketplace, for aquaculture in particular. The credibility and environmental rigour varies between certifications, with the vast majority falling into the weak category. Living Oceans is working towards shining the spotlight on the low performers and engaging to strengthen certifications.

In 2012, the Canadian fisheries and aquaculture industries (with government funds) worked actively to create a ‘Canadian’ certification scheme, which would potentially allow for industries like farmed salmon to become certified as ‘sustainable.’ The Aquaculture Stewardship Council’s Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue (SAD) was finalized, with Living Oceans—as part of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR)—formally voting ‘no’ to the standard. The Canadian Organic Aquaculture Standard was also publicly released. With the support of our allies we drew awareness to this low performance standard with the media launch of www.organicsalmon.org
A new bottom trawling agreement means that every time skippers set their gear, one of the most pressing concerns will be to avoid corals and sponges.

Sustainable Fisheries

Freezing the trawl fleet’s footprint

In 2012 Living Oceans played a major role in the development of innovative new fisheries management measures to reduce the British Columbia bottom trawl fleet’s impact on deep-sea habitat.

Our Sustainable Fisheries campaigners worked hard for over a decade to spread the word about the environmental damage bottom trawling does to the corals and sponges that provide oases of life on the sea floor of the B.C. coast. Our work paid off when the bottom trawlers took notice that an increasing number of retailers removed red-ranked seafood from their stores.

The economic need of the fishermen to improve their SeaChoice ranking gave us the leverage to negotiate the first-of-its-kind measures that limit coral and sponge bycatch, and freeze the fleet’s footprint. The new conservation measures were officially implemented in Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s 2012 Pacific Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan.

Early results from the first year’s fishing under the Habitat Conservation Agreement are promising for both the fishermen and deep-sea habitats. Compliance was extremely high and fishermen able to harvest their target species within the new trawl footprint while limiting their bycatch of corals and sponges to a level well below the target established in the agreement. An upcoming SeaChoice reassessment of the fishery will demonstrate the full impact of the measures. Living Oceans, industry and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are monitoring the effects and impacts and will make any adjustments to fishing practices annually to ensure ongoing deep sea ecosystem conservation.
Mapping and Analysis

Maps are one way we share our research and knowledge of the coast. Our maps give people a clear idea of the location and conservation value of the many remote places we are working to protect.

Visualizing how all the pieces fit together is an important step in planning for a healthy ocean. Our maps allows planners to gauge the potential impacts of human activities on ocean ecosystems, as well as recreational and commercial activities. In 2012 we expanded our innovative online map gallery. Viewers can explore how different natural features overlap with valuable habitat, and how they tie in with economic activities.

The folks at Google Outreach asked our talented GIS department to work with them on a mapping technology called Maps Engine. Our feedback helped to improve their beta version and we put this new technology to work in our interactive Ocean Planning Map.

B.C. Marine Conservation Analysis

In 2012 our GIS department continued to manage the datasets compiled for the B.C. Marine Conservation Analysis (BCMCA). Now concluded, the project was a collaborative endeavour that produced a rich set of maps showing the ecological features and human activities in the marine environment. These datasets are now being used to inform marine planning initiatives and by a wide range of people interested in marine resources and activities.
Salmon Farming

Wild salmon are the foundation of life on the West Coast, but their existence is threatened by diseases and parasites spread from open net-pen salmon farms that can put young migrating wild salmon at risk. The solution is for salmon farmers to switch from open net-cages to land-based closed containment systems. Closed systems will go a long way to eliminating waste and feces that smother the ocean floor. This ecologically sound containment system greatly reduces the need for antibiotics and chemicals currently used to control viruses, bacteria and sea lice that breed and spread to wild salmon. Closed containment will also end the intentional killing and drowning of sea lions and seals.

2012 saw a number of new closed containment projects under construction to meet the supply chain’s growing demand for a more sustainably farmed salmon. Living Oceans works with these producers to help forge connections in the supply chain, including our SeaChoice retail and supply partners. We also began offering guidance to closed containment farmers to help them meet the sustainability criteria for SeaChoice science assessments.
A wrench in the closed containment machine

In 2012 salmon farmers Marine Harvest pulled out of a commitment to a closed containment pilot project and joint research on the true costs and benefits of both net-pen and closed containment economics. We had hoped to effect real change in salmon farming practices. While slow progress was unquestionably made on that front, the salmon farmers claimed poor economic conditions as an excuse to drop this important work.

When the goal is protecting the environment and improving industry performance, the most productive way forward is through collaboration, not confrontation. We found this to be true with the trawl industry and were hoping to apply the same approach with the salmon farmers. As much as the salmon farming industry makes claims of openness and approachability, there does not appear to be much substance behind the words.

Cohen Inquiry

“I therefore conclude the potential harm posed to Fraser River sockeye from salmon farms is serious or irreversible.”

~ Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River

After previously testifying about the impacts to wild salmon from salmon aquaculture and participating with fellow allies under the Conservation Coalition led by EcoJustice, Living Oceans was pleased to see that a number of our recommendations were incorporated by Justice Cohen. One particularly key message and recommendation delivered by the Cohen Commission was to remove the mandate to promote farmed salmon from DFO in order to allow it to focus more intently on its constitutional mandate to protect wild salmon.

The concerns outlined by Justice Cohen for the Fraser River sockeye apply in some measure to all of Canada’s wild salmon. His report applied the precautionary principle for the first time, reversing the onus and requiring salmon farmers to establish to Canada’s satisfaction that they are not posing a risk of serious or irreversible harm. While we feel vindicated by the findings, we will continue to push government to act upon Justice Cohen’s recommendations.
Clear the Coast

In 2012 Living Oceans launched our new Clear the Coast initiative on northern Vancouver Island to help local communities deal with plastics in the ocean and other marine debris.

Marine debris can be as harmful to ocean ecosystems as destructive fishing practices. Tonnes of plastic are circulating on ocean currents and breaking down into smaller and smaller particles, often ending up on or inside seabirds, marine mammals and fish. Closer to shore, debris accumulates on beaches including near-shore waters like estuaries that have a high conservation value.

Clear the Coast is also tackling some of the harder clean up issues, like finding and removing lost fishing gear and dealing with derelict boats. The initiative is raising awareness about the harm done to marine ecosystems by abandoned, derelict vessels that can pollute our local harbours.

We’re researching best practices and lessons learned from vessel removal projects elsewhere so they can be adapted and applied on the North Island. Our findings will give harbour and marina managers a starting point to develop local solutions to deal with the problems that these wrecks pose.
Volunteer power

*Clear the Coast* coordinates the efforts of volunteers, organizations, service clubs, businesses and governments that want to pitch in to help find and dispose of the debris.

The volunteers report debris sightings, especially objects that are too large, heavy or dangerous to move. We post their reports on the *Clear the Coast* map showing where the debris impacts places with high ecological values and the successful extent of community clean-up efforts. Living Oceans shares this information with other organizations and agencies that are tracking marine debris.

Volunteers use the online reporting form to list the debris’ location, amount and type, as well as what they pack away for disposal. The data we collect is used to assess the debris to study how it’s impacting the North Island’s ecosystem and economy.
**Donors and Supporters**

Living Oceans Society would like to thank all the people, groups and organizations that have contributed funding and in-kind resources in support of our work for a healthy ocean—today and for generations to come.

**Institutions**
- Canada Environmental Assessment Agency
- Conservation and Research Foundation
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Environment Canada
- ESRI Canada
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
- Jackman Foundation
- Mountain Equipment Co-op
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- Oak Foundation
- Tar Sands Campaign of the Tides Foundation
- Tides Canada Foundation
- Tides Canada Initiatives
- Vancouver Foundation

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- Malcolm Island Bird Club
- Malcolm Island Lions Club
- MEC Victoria
- Nanaimo Dive Outfitters
- Organic Ocean
- Storytellings Consulting
- Sointula Co-op Store
- Upper Crust Bakery
- Vital Choice Wild Seafood & Organics

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2012 Financials

Revenue

Revenue in 2012
$1,162,503

Expenditures by Program

Total expenses in 2012
$1,163,689
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