Clear the Coast’s program to gather and dispose of marine debris has drawn to a close until next spring. Several tonnes of debris—mostly plastic—were removed from beaches around northern Vancouver Island.

“There’s more and more plastic debris arriving on all our beaches every year and it will continue to trash the marine ecosystem for decades to come,” said Will Soltau, Clear the Coast Manager. “It’s just like a persistent oil spill washing ashore but in solid rather than liquid form.”

Plastic is made from hydrocarbons, isn’t biodegradable but, is photodegradable, becoming brittle and breaking down into smaller and smaller particles over time. Microscopic bits of plastic are entering the food web at every level, bringing with them a load of toxins whose effects may prove to be very long-lasting. Meanwhile, seabirds mistake it for food and feed it to their chicks, who die of starvation with bellies full of plastic. Otters, seals and other mammals are entangled, often drowning or starving as a result.

Continued on page 3

Clear the Coast wraps up marine debris campaign for winter

Thanks to all the volunteers who pitched in to help

Living Oceans partnered with BC Parks this past summer to set up debris stations with collector bags and posters at remote Provincial Parks on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The collector bags were made from old seine nets by a Sointula fisherman. The posters invited park visitors to pitch in and fill the bags with any debris they found. The stations where a big success and plenty of people volunteered to Clear the Coast.

See what our volunteers found at: www.livingoceans.org/maps/clear-the-coast
It was a bit of a puzzle to me when the on-again, off-again negotiations between Premiers Clark and Redford suddenly gave rise to a cheery, coffee klatsch photo op and headlines announcing a framework agreement, billed by the media as ‘paving the way for pipelines.’ Since it was immediately apparent that Alberta remained steadfast in its refusal to share royalties with B.C., just what, I wondered, could the Premiers be agreeing about?

There is one thing—and only one thing—that Alberta has the power to do, to satisfy Premier Clark’s famous five conditions for pipeline and tanker projects: part with some cash. This, Premier Redford hastened to point out, was not in the cards. But Premier Clark was declared ‘free’ to negotiate with oil companies directly, to extract some benefits for her province.

B.C. didn’t need Premier Redford’s blessing to do that.

We are told that the framework agreement exchanges Redford’s ‘acceptance’ of the five conditions for Clark’s ‘signing on’ to Alberta’s Energy Strategy. I can’t recall ever seeing more noise about an agreement with less substance.

Redford has no jurisdiction or influence that would help answer the remaining four conditions—she won’t change the minds of First Nations who have banned pipelines and tankers from their territory; she can’t make effective oil spill recovery happen when the technology to do so is nonexistent; she has no say whatsoever over pipeline safety in B.C. and the successful completion of the Joint Review Panel process does not hinge on her opinion.

Clark’s signature on the Alberta Energy Strategy signifies precisely the same: nothing. If you haven’t read the strategy, you really must—you will either laugh or weep. In a nutshell, it promises that Alberta will wring every last drop of oil out of its tarsands and tell the world it’s a leader in environmental protection while doing so. If you’ve ever studied the extent of the devastation wrought by tarsands mining, or looked into the volume of water rendered toxic by processing and leaks, you’ll realize that the strategy itself is meaningless, except as a guide to Alberta’s public relations department.

And they tell us this buys social licence for tarsands projects? I think not.

Karen Wristen,
Executive Director
Clear the Coast wraps up

On October 20 five scuba divers from the Top Island Econauts Dive Club plunged into the chilly waters of Beaver Cove near the mouth of the Kokish River to recover ghost fishing gear. The divers found abandoned crab traps in the murky water. Other traps were too deep to recover that day, but the club returned with better equipment one week later to finish the job.

Over the summer season at Raft Cove and San Josef Bay Provincial Parks, Clear the Coast volunteers hiked in to set up debris collector bags and replace them as they filled up. But there’s no road to the beach and the terrain is too rugged to pack out all the debris on the long trails through old growth forest. We used helicopters to lift the debris to volunteers waiting in the parking lots with pickup trucks to transport, sort, recycle and dispose of the debris.

September 16 was the season-closing day of cleanup on Hecht Beach—a site identified by locals as a ‘collector beach.’ It certainly lived up to its reputation! Volunteers found an astounding amount of debris.

“In two hours, four volunteers collected over 100 plastic drinking bottles along less than two km of shoreline,” said Will Soltau. “In most other locations I’ve been to this summer the number of bottles on a similar sized beach would be well under 50. The amount of other types of debris we found, like Styrofoam, rope and broken plastic, was also well above average.”

The last six collector bags were lifted off of the beach by helicopter on October 23. After the chopper left, Will and the volunteers walked along another portion of the shoreline southeast from the cleaned up area for about ¾ km.

“We could have easily picked up another 10 collector bags of foam and plastic. We have our work cut out for us next year.” Will said.

All our collector bags are in for the winter but—funding permitting—will be back out again next summer. Clear the Coast campaigners will spend the winter focusing their attention on helping northern Vancouver Island communities find ways to responsibly dispose of derelict and abandoned vessels.

Clear the Coast has been made possible with the support of Environment Canada, the Vancouver Foundation and BC Parks.
Seabirds, Salmon and Otters
Greetings from Our Raft to Yours
By Kari Watkins

I work for the Port Hardy Visitor Centre. I was on a tour in Tofino with Jamie’s Whaling Station when we came across the otters. Otters are my favorite sea animal and that was the first time I had ever seen one in the wild. Needless to say, I was overjoyed.

Photography is my hobby and helps me stay grounded and sane. When I am stressed out I break the camera out and see what I can find. I describe it this way: Nature speaks to my soul. I hope through my photos that it will speak to your soul too.

Prize: Two adult and two child passes to Science World British Columbia plus a pass to the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre in Sydney.
Below the Surface

Nudibranch Number 3

By Isaac Balaam

This photo was taken along docks of the Port Sidney Marina, Sidney B.C. This marina is a wonderful place for people and kids of all ages to hang off the sides of the docks to see animals. This is where I get to admire some of the beautiful creatures that live in our waters on the coast. The colours and species of animals vary, but are always breathtaking. I found this beautiful nudibranch crawling along the dock, alongside several other species of nudibranchs and tube worms.

I am married to a marine biologist, and we live in beautiful Victoria, B.C. I have been a scuba diver for the past 15 years, diving all over the world but enjoying B.C. for the beauty it has to offer. I am self employed, and actually work in the ocean, presently in the diving industry, inspecting boats, retrieving items that get dropped and taking photos of people’s boats and animals.

Prize: Two Sea Hugger sustainable T-shirts plus a Fish For Thought cookbook.
A decision is anticipated in December from the Joint Review Panel that examined the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. The panel’s decision will be couched in terms of a recommendation to the federal cabinet and accompanied by a list of conditions for approval, whether they recommend approval or not. The cabinet will then have 180 days to respond with a decision. If they approve the pipeline, they must impose the conditions recommended by the panel. First Nations have already said they will challenge any approval of this pipeline in court.

**TransMountain Pipeline application coming**

Living Oceans will apply to intervene in the next pipeline and tanker project to threaten Canada’s oceans. On December 16 Kinder Morgan files its National Energy Board application to expand the capacity of the TransMountain Pipeline to 890,000 barrels per day of diluted bitumen from the tarsands. That would bring 400 tankers per year or more into the Port of Vancouver and the Salish Sea.

The NEB, under legislation revised in one of the Harper cabinet’s reviled omnibus bills, has only 15 months to review the proposal and will hear only from those ‘directly affected’ by the pipeline. We will be represented once again by lawyers from Ecojustice.

**Tanker routes cross critical humpback habitat**

The federal government has finally designated critical recovery habitat for humpback whales after being spurred into action by a lawsuit. At least as long ago as 2010, parts of Douglas Channel and Barkeley Sound were identified as essential areas to protect if we want to ensure the continued recovery of these whales. But planned tanker routes for TransMountain and Northern Gateway cut through these prime humpback feeding grounds. Ship traffic is identified as one of the main threats to humpbacks which are the whales most often reported in B.C.’s ship-strike incidents. Between the two projects, over 700 supertanker trips per year would threaten virtually all of B.C.’s coastline.

**Marine Planning in Marseilles**

**By Kim Wright, Marine Planning and Protected Areas Director**

I had the honour of travelling to Marseille, France in October to represent Living Oceans at the International Marine Protected Area Congress (IMPAC III). It gave me a number of opportunities to present on the abysmal state of Canada’s MPAs. Despite the government’s claim on the international stage that our MPAs are world class, Canada has set aside only one percent of our ocean waters in protected areas. Even with that small amount, parts of the MPAs that are sensitive to fishing pressures aren’t protected from commercial fishing. Because of government mismanagement, there are fisheries allowed in all but one of Canada’s 197 Pacific MPAs.

At IMPAC III there were 1,300 delegates from 19 nations. I heard over and over again how local input to marine planning often leads to better conservation. For example, once a protected area is established, people living nearby can monitor and evaluate its success, but only if they play a part in the governance of the MPA.

One way to gauge an MPA’s effectiveness is by what neighbouring communities gain. For instance, MPAs that don’t allow fishing have 1.5 to two times more fish in them and show a 30 percent increase in biodiversity compared to similar unprotected sites. Some of those fish ‘spill out’ making the fishing better near MPAs. But the benefits extend beyond community based fishing.

Most people living on British Columbia’s coast cherish its natural rugged beauty. So do tourists who come to enjoy the wilderness experience which is becoming ever more rare in our crowded world. MPAs can preserve this valuable commodity, but they will only retain their recreational value if there is no development—or very little—within the boundaries. As with fishing, tourism benefits will ‘spill out’ to nearby communities.

At Living Oceans we’re working through the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP) to design a network of protected ocean ecosystems along the coast. At MaPP, an MPAs’ potential recreational value is considered alongside the worth of its habitat conservation, cultural values and local economic needs. Because coastal communities stand to reap the benefits of MPAs it’s important that they have a chance to identify the places and species that they want to see protected and play a role in the management and governance of those areas into the future. MaPP will be seeking public input beginning in the spring of 2014 and Living Oceans will make sure that the voices of the people who live and work on the coast are heard at the planning tables.
Staff welcomes and goodbyes

Jake and Yvonne Etzkorn have moved on to run a lighthouse and start a family. Jake was our Local Marine Planner and Yvonne our Office Administrator.

Kerri Reid has taken over for Yvonne, moving to Sointula after spending several years involved in the arts scene in Toronto and Saskatchewan. She and her husband are setting up a small artist residency/project space called The Sointula Art Shed. Kerri is a visual artist and musician who grew up on a houseboat in a North Vancouver marina.

Gord Curry steps into Jake’s shoes to oversee the implementation of ecosystem-based management and an MPA network in the North Island and Central Coast of B.C. Gord comes to Living Oceans after a 30 year career as a fishery manager with DFO where he worked on fisheries management strategies, stakeholder and First Nation consultation, program planning, enforcement and training.

Stephanie Rockman has come aboard as our new Grants Administrator. For the past several years Stephanie ran the Malcolm Island Inn and Whale’s Rub Pub in Sointula. She’s a well known whirlwind locally: actor, singer, yoga teacher, writer, music impresario and greenhouse gardener.

In the Vancouver office, maternity leaves have brought us two replacement sea huggers.

Julie Scott-Ashe is filling in for Carrie Robb as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist. Julie has a B.Sc. in Marine Biology and an Advanced GIS Diploma from BCIT, plus she’s taught GIS courses while working for Esri Canada. Julie has spent several years exploring the coast by water, land and air from Baja to Alaska, along the way collecting a variety of data (from photos to feces) on whales, harbour seals, mysids and more.

Jenna Stoner is leaping in with both feet to keep up the momentum generated by Sustainable Seafood Campaign Manager and mom-to-be Kelly Roebuck. Jenna holds a B.Sc. in Biology and Ocean Sciences at the University of Victoria and a Master of Marine Management at Dalhousie University, and has worked on seafood sustainability projects for the past four years.

In Memorium

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Mary Lindsay, Living Oceans interim Executive Director for nine months and Managing Director of six years.

We will remember the generosity of spirit she brought to all her work, her determination when we needed to overcome challenges and the value of chocolate when the budgets were out of balance. Mary inspired in all of us a continual desire to rise up and be our best selves. We will miss her.
Thanks for your support

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Online: www.livingoceans.org/donate

Living Oceans Society has established the Oceans Fund at Tides Canada Foundation for the purpose of supporting research and education projects that will increase public awareness of the problems affecting our ocean and solutions that will ensure our ocean will be healthy for generations to come. Tides Canada Foundation makes grants from this fund to Canadian registered charities whose work complements this purpose.

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