



**OCEAN
WISE**

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Turning the Tide Together

Ocean Wise turns knowledge of the ocean into action for the ocean.





Letter from the Board Chair

As I sit down to write this message, I am profoundly moved by the remarkable strides Ocean Wise has made in a relatively short span of time. Since 2017, when we embarked on our mission to become a globally focused ocean conservation organization, we have navigated numerous challenges (including the COVID pandemic) and emerged even stronger.

By setting ourselves the vision of a world with a healthy and thriving ocean we have set the bar high. We have bold ambition to scale the organization such that in twenty years we will look back and say “the work we did truly had an impact, together we changed the world!”

Of course, Ocean Wise isn’t doing this work alone. This year we worked to expand the international reach of our Board of Directors in a way that will strategically support our growth and connect us to international partners. Expanding beyond our Canadian comfort zone is critically important because, as we all know, there is just one ocean...and that ocean knows no borders.

As we move towards this goal, the Board is strategically investing in areas of our work that will build a springboard to the future. We are elevating our brand profile both nationally and globally, developing digital assets that makes it easier for supporters to take action for the ocean (and for us to measure their impact), and we’re building a comprehensive fundraising approach that diversifies our funding streams and lets those who love the ocean support our work.

As my first year as Chair draws to a close, I am immensely proud of our achievements and optimistic about our future.

Ian Warner

Ian Warner, Board Chair, Ocean Wise

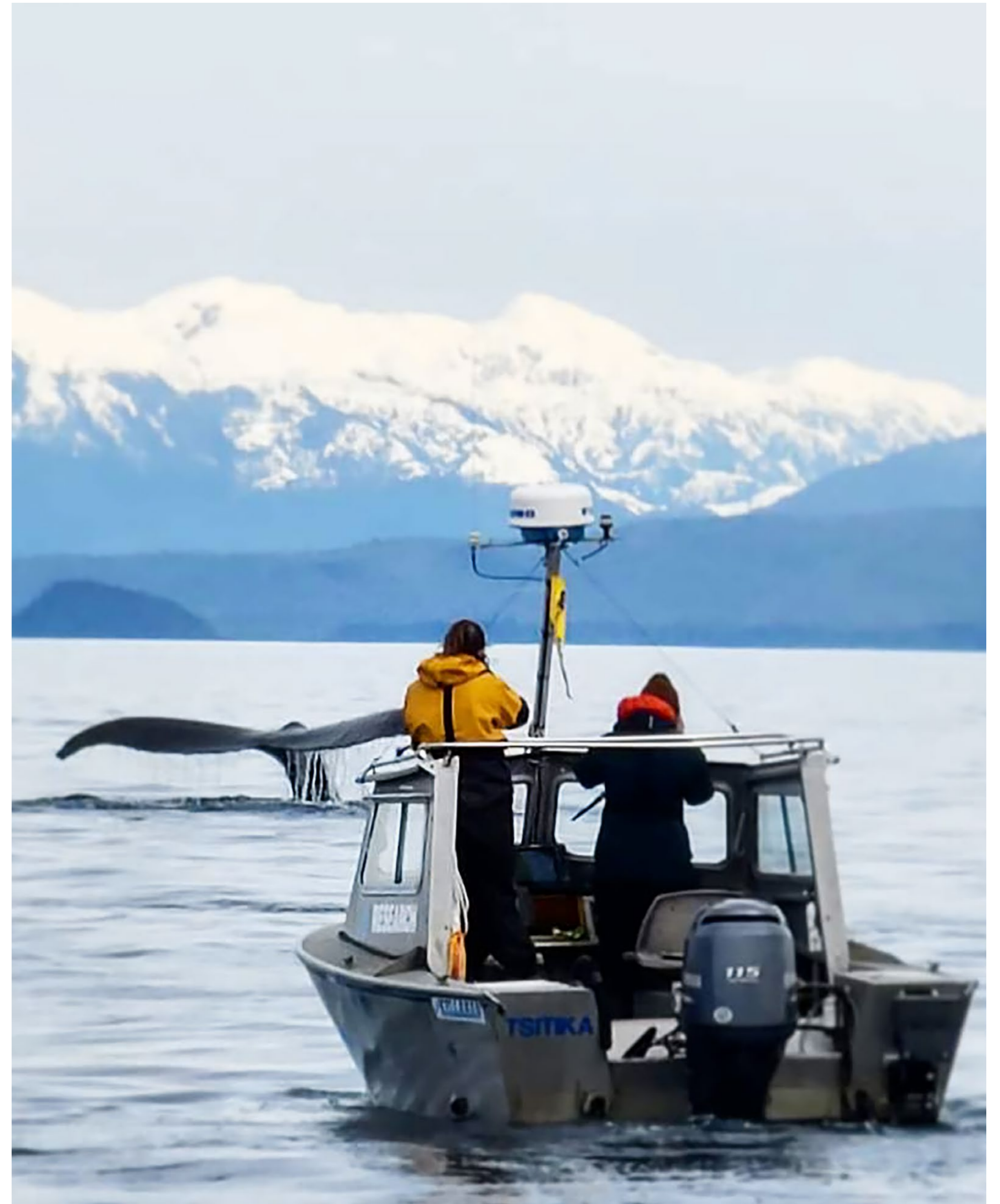


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Message from the CEO

What a year 2023 was. At the global level we saw incredible progress on agreements that may pay off huge for the ocean. The UN Environment Assembly negotiated a legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution, the Convention on Biological Diversity CoP 15 saw an agreement to protect 30% of nature by 2030, Climate CoP27 recognized the ocean as a fundamental part of climate solutions, and the High Seas Treaty saw international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity. To top it off, these commitments have been backed up by money, which is critical! The UN Ocean conference committed \$1 Billion to protect 30% of the world's ocean and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) launched a new fund for biodiversity.

With global recognition of the importance of our ocean and conservation the time has never been better to capitalize on the foundation we have built for Ocean Wise. 2023 has been a year of scaling the impact of existing programs and introducing new solutions to ocean issues. A few notable innovations that we introduced this year include:

- **Research establishing – for the first time – baselines for winter whale behaviour in the Salish Sea**
- **Opening of our Kelp Nursery on the North Shore of Vancouver**
- **The launch of our Rapid Assessment Standard (RAPSTA), which is opening the door for Ocean Wise to begin working directly with underrepresented small-scale fisheries.**

These innovations present the tip of the iceberg for the work we've undertaken over the past year, but what is most clear now is that in order to see the implementation of the global treaties and agreements we need to continue to take practical action.

As 2024 takes shape it is that opportunity to act that most excites me. We have a global environment that is ready for action...and we have a world class ocean organization ready to join in. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers, community partners, generous donors, and committed funders. In particular, I'd like to thank the Government of Canada for their ongoing support of our research and youth programs. Your invaluable contributions have been instrumental in the work we've undertaken for our ocean.

Lasse Gustavsson, President & CEO

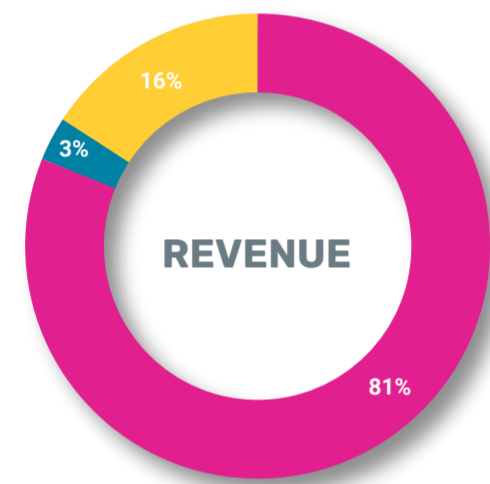


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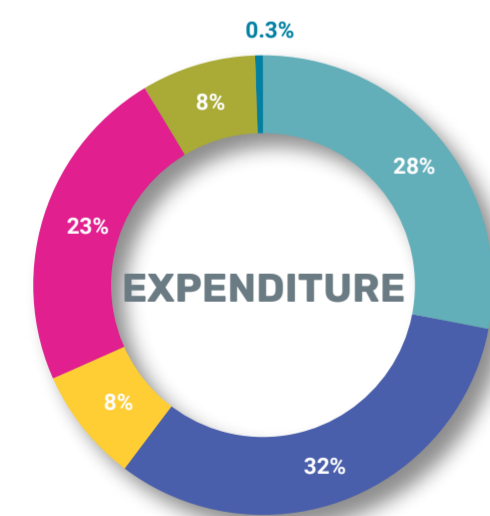
Our Impact

2023 has been a year of investment for Ocean Wise. As we continued to build a strong foundation for our global conservation ambition we are investing to build a global brand, develop digital platforms that support ocean conservation, and creating a sustainable fundraising model.

These investments are part of our multi-year strategic initiative for digital strategy in order to position Ocean Wise for future growth and impact. These costs are considered to be an investment to improve the Association's administration support function with widespread impact to the organization's conservation programs. These costs will pay off many times over, for the organization and for our ocean in the years to come.



	2023 (in 000s)
81% Grants and Donations	\$13,445
3% Programs	\$442
16% Other income	\$2,683
Total revenue	\$16,570



	2023 (in 000s)
28% Conservation	\$5,617
32% Youth and Education	\$6,311
8% Communications and Development	\$1,520
23% General Administration	\$4,642
8% Digital Strategy	\$1,664
0.3% Amortization of tangible capital assets	\$67
Total expenses	\$19,821
Operating deficiency of revenue over expenses	(\$3,251)



1. Dollars have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
 2. For Capital Asset and Reserve Funds information, see the audited Financial Statements.
 3. For a complete set of the financial statements audited by KPMG LLP, please contact us at contact@ocean.org.

7 Ways Ocean Wise Changed the World in 2023



2023 was a year of impact for Ocean Wise, empowering future leaders through expanded youth programs, pioneering kelp restoration efforts and advancing microfiber pollution prevention with industry collaborations. This annual review highlights Ocean Wise's commitment to ocean conservation, showcasing achievements that promise a sustainable future.



Seafood's new Rapid Assessment Standard

In February we released the Ocean Wise Rapid Assessment Standard (RAPSTA), a novel approach for evaluating the sustainability of more Canadian fisheries. Since its launch, RAPSTA has allowed Ocean Wise to provide sustainability ratings for an additional **180 historically excluded Canadian fisheries**. Turning 180 “no information available” seafoods into 31 “Ocean Wise” recommended and 149 “Not Recommended” options. This unique assessment method gives Canadians a better understanding of domestic seafood sustainability while simultaneously creating a more accessible entry point for small-scale fisheries and an incentive to move their sustainability needle.

“The point of RAPSTA isn’t to generate more Recommendations. It’s about giving Canadians a better understanding of domestic seafood sustainability while simultaneously creating a more accessible entry point into the sustainable seafood space for small-scale fisheries.”

Samantha Renshaw, Science Lead, Ocean Wise



“Through our Seaforestation initiative, we aim to restore critical ocean habitats and marine life, build sustainable economic opportunities for coastal communities and accelerating carbon sequestration.”

Carlos Drews, EVP, Conservation, Ocean Wise

Kelp Nursery Launched to Restore Vital Ocean Habitat

On April 4, 2023, we opened the doors to our Kelp Nursery in West Vancouver at the Pacific Science Enterprise Centre. This marks a crucial step toward restoring and cultivating kelp forests both in British Columbia, and on a global scale. The nursery acts as a research and development hub to test **new and improved techniques for kelp restoration and cultivation**. This is done by experimenting with novel kelp seed production methods, outplanting techniques and monitoring practices which help to fill significant knowledge gaps in the field.

Winter Whale Research Study

Ocean Wise’s pilot winter whale field study has established a new baseline for understanding winter whale behaviour in the Salish Sea. By gathering individual identification and location data from approximately 50 whale encounters and employing innovative environmental DNA (eDNA) techniques, the study sheds light on population dynamics, structure, and the winter diets of at-risk species such as southern resident killer whales and humpback whales. **This study documented the first observation of a humpback whale foraging on spawning herring in the Salish Sea, which has implications for how both herring and humpback whales are managed during the winter months.** This inaugural year of fieldwork establishes a new baseline for winter whale behaviour in the Salish Sea, guiding future interventions for at-risk populations.

[Explore Whale Research Reports](#)



Shoreline Cleanups Informing the Dirty Dozen

All year long we celebrate our volunteers and corporate champions for cleaning up our shorelines, and this year was no different. We had 35,346 participants that cleaned up 1,188 km of shoreline and removed 8,375 kg of litter. In September we hosted a nationwide celebration for International Coastal Cleanup Day, mobilizing hundreds of volunteers along shorelines to combat plastic pollution by preventing litter from entering the ocean and collecting vital data that will be used to inform effective policymaking and upstream solutions.

This was just one of many cleanup events in 2023 that contributed to our Dirty Dozen report, a list of the top 12 most found items on the shorelines. In 2023, for the first time in a decade, the Dirty Dozen

did not include plastic drinking straws. This change may be due to a number of factors and cannot confirm a reduction in the total number of straws in the environment year over year. However, it is a positive indicator that efforts like Canada’s Single-use Plastics ban have a direct impact on our shorelines and ocean. We’re working to prepare data analysis that will report on effort-corrected trends in shoreline litter for next year’s Dirty Dozen.

[Shoreline Cleanup Impact Report](#)



The 2023 Dirty Dozen

1. Cigarette Butts	174,608
2. Plastic Pieces	97,898
3. Paper	41,907
4. Food Wrappers	37,164
5. Bottle Caps	26,062
6. Styrofoam Pieces	23,436
7. Soft Plastic Packaging	14,406
8. Rigid Plastic Bottles and Jugs	13,653
9. Beverage Cans	11,904
10. Plastic Bags	9,435
11. Plastic Bottles	8,547
12. Coffee Cups and Lids	8,089

Innovating Solutions to Cut Microfiber Pollution

Collaborating with Samsung and Patagonia, Ocean Wise has played a pivotal role in the development and rigorous testing of the Less Microfiber Filter. This device traps up to 98% of microfibers emanating from washing machines before they have the chance to infiltrate the ocean. This technology has the potential to wield significant influence, as it empowers individuals to curtail their microfiber footprint right within the confines of their homes.

[Learn more about our Partnerships](#)

The Ocean Wise Sea Dome Travels to Manitoba and Ontario

After last year's inaugural tour of Alberta and Saskatchewan, in 2023 the Sea Dome's summer tour has headed further East to bring the ocean to 18 schools, 7 camps, 17 civic centres and 2 community events across Manitoba and Ontario, **reaching 17,460 youth** and members of the community. This immersive pop-up ocean adventure captivates audiences with 360-degree 4K cinematic footage, as well as showcasing marine artifacts and interactive activities. This tour is part of Waves of Change, funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada.

[Book the Sea Dome](#)



“When I grow up, I’m going to save ALL the sea turtles!”

Grade 1 student, Toronto

“Thank you Ocean Wise Education for the awesome Sea Dome experience. Such a great opportunity to learn about our ocean and actions to conserve this incredible resource.”

Educator, Toronto

“While one voice alone may not be very loud, once that voice multiplies, not a corner of the planet will be left quiet.”

Tasmiya Rahman, Youth to Sea Ambassador, Montreal

Youth Programs, a Year of Expansion

Our youth programs have expanded now including two new microgrant programs. The Ocean Action Grant and Eco-Action Accelerator were launched, distributing **\$171,928 which supported 142 youth-led projects** to help our ocean and planet. Beyond the new programming, the Youth to Sea program for youth aged 15-18, expanded beyond its Vancouver roots, extending nationwide with cohorts in Victoria, Halifax, Montreal, and Ottawa. Allowing us to accept 143 youth in 2023, who engaged 6,762 members of the public through their projects.

[Explore the youth programs](#)



2023 Conclusions

In closing our year, we are so grateful for the countless individuals who have stood by us, supporting our mission to restore the ocean. Their unwavering commitment has made our work possible, and for that, we are truly thankful.

Yet, as we express our gratitude, we cannot ignore the challenges that lie ahead. Our ocean is the air we breathe, the food we eat, and even the water we drink, it is the lifeblood of our planet, and it faces many threats. Issues like pollution, overfishing, and rising global greenhouse gas emissions pose an enormous threat to our ocean's health.

In 2024 we are introducing the **#BeOceanWise** campaign, a powerful movement that unites communities. This campaign is more than just awareness; it's a call to action. Together, we will combat climate change, reduce plastic pollution, replenish fish stocks, support the next generation of leaders, and protect whales.

We're ready to make a splash and want to invite YOU to Learn, Act and Give, because by Turning the Tide Together, we can ensure a brighter, bluer future for our beloved ocean.



#BeOceanWise

We need the ocean, the ocean needs us!

Learn more at ocean.org

