



**WEST COAST**  
Environmental Law

# 2022-2023 IMPACT REPORT

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**With every passing year**, we're witnessing more dramatic environmental changes in the world around us. As the climate and biodiversity crises grow increasingly acute, the calls to action have never been more compelling – both here in Canada and globally.

This year, communities in BC and across the country have experienced record-breaking wildfires, extreme heat, flooding and drought, as well as deepening concerns over the health of local watersheds, old growth forests and food security. These complex environmental challenges demand effective and collaborative legal solutions, and that's exactly what we're focused on building at West Coast Environmental Law.

Our dedicated team of environmental lawyers and strategists works alongside community members, Indigenous nations, non-governmental organizations and governments at all levels to develop proactive solutions grounded in both Indigenous and Canadian law. And this collaborative approach extends past colonial borders to the broader global community – as we each do our part in upholding our shared responsibility for taking care of our planet.

In 2022-2023, many of the issues we work on took centre stage at multiple international events. West Coast lawyers attended both the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal in December 2022 and the 5<sup>th</sup> International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver in February 2023, where we shared lessons and knowledge with like-minded experts and Indigenous land and water stewards from all over the world. These major global conferences also provided opportunities to press our governments for stronger action, contributing to a number of the exciting conservation victories outlined in this report.

Here at home, we continue to be inspired by the people we encounter taking action every day in their own communities – from the clients we meet through our Access to Justice program stepping up to protect their local waterways, to the community members mobilizing to get their local governments to sue Big Oil for climate damages, to the Indigenous partners revitalizing their laws to maintain the health of their territories for their children and grandchildren. For every shadow cast by the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, there's a beacon of light ignited by individuals, communities, and organizations determined to make a difference. We hope that these stories inspire you, just as your commitment inspires us every day.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Clogg'.

**JESSICA CLOGG**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
& SENIOR COUNSEL**



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Matthaus'.

**LISA MATTHAUS**

**BOARD PRESIDENT**

## ABOUT US

# WEST COAST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

**West Coast Environmental Law** is a non-profit group of environmental law strategists, analysts and communicators working in the public interest and dedicated to safeguarding the environment through law since 1974.

### TRANSFORMING THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

West Coast Environmental Law harnesses the power of law to solve complex environmental challenges. We are transforming environmental decision-making and strengthening legal protection for the environment through collaborative legal strategies that bridge Indigenous and Canadian law. By putting the law in the hands of communities and creating legal risk for those who would harm our land, air and water, we are building the collective power to achieve a more just and sustainable future for all.

We recognize the jurisdiction and laws of Indigenous peoples who have actively governed their territories for millennia. Their land and marine stewardship has played an integral role in shaping the ecological conditions that have allowed all beings to thrive through time. Working side-by-side with them, we seek legal solutions that bridge Canadian and Indigenous law to build greater sustainability for all.

We understand that healthy, fully functioning ecosystems are the essential foundation of healthy cultures and economies, and that human cultures and economies are part of a web of life that includes all parts of the ecosystem and all beings. This is also referred to as an “ecosys-

tem-based” approach to planning and management. We are leaders in the field of environmental law, using legislation and case law in strategic ways to advance environmental goals. At the same time, we are committed to shining the light on laws that contribute to unsustainable or unjust conditions in society and to building well-researched, comprehensive, practical legal solutions.

We support the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and the revitalization of strong, living Indigenous laws, consistent with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and calls to action such as those of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This understanding is foundational to our mandate, and enriches and strengthens our shared legal landscape.

We believe that diverse communities must be involved in developing, applying and upholding the law in order for legal orders and human societies to thrive, and to protect the environment we rely on. We are committed to building community and individual capacity to engage with law and environmental decision-making to achieve shared environmental goals. Through deep community connections and mutual learning, we build more resilient solutions and become more effective legal practitioners.

This annual report is a joint publication of the West Coast Environmental Law Association, the West Coast Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund Society (EDRF) and the West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation.

For highlights of Association/EDRF programs see pages 4–15, and for Research Foundation programs see pages 16–27.

# OUR SISTER ORGANIZATIONS

**West Coast Environmental Law** is made up of three provincially incorporated societies: West Coast Environmental Law Association, West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation, and West Coast Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund Society.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION FUND

The Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund (EDRF) is administered by the Association and is West Coast’s environmental legal aid fund. Since 1989, with the generous support of The Law Foundation of BC, the fund has allowed individuals, community groups and Indigenous nations to hire lawyers to help them protect the environment in negotiations, mediation, in court or before government tribunals.

## ASSOCIATION

West Coast Environmental Law Association provides legal services to individuals and organizations who have concerns regarding the environment. The Association also advocates for legislative reforms to protect the environment, to uphold the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples, and to promote meaningful public participation in environmental decision-making. The Association publishes West Coast’s Environmental Law Alert blog and our Legal e-Brief e-newsletter, and maintains the website.

## RESEARCH FOUNDATION

West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation is a registered charity producing trusted, in-depth legal research to shape laws, regulations, standards and objectives that promote the maintenance of environmental quality. The Research Foundation educates the public about environmental law issues and advocates on behalf of individuals and communities to prevent legal violations and improve the effectiveness of environmental laws and regulations.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*\* The name “West Coast” refers to one or all of the West Coast Environmental Law societies, depending on where the reference appears in the report (ie., references to “West Coast” on pages dedicated to West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation refer to the Research Foundation).*



Photo: Kevin Mueller (Unsplash)

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Through our **Access to Justice** programs, West Coast Environmental Law provides valued legal resources and support for British Columbians seeking to defend the people, places and living beings they love from environmental harm. We offer free legal advice and funding to help organizations, community groups and individuals hire lawyers and experts; and our helpful online resources keep the public in the know when it comes to new developments in environmental law and regulation. We also provide unique educational opportunities and hands-on experience for young lawyers, law students and legal volunteers, fostering the next generation of public interest environmental lawyers and advocates.

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE

**Individuals and grassroots community groups** play a vital role in protecting the environment in BC. West Coast's Access to Justice team provides essential support to these dedicated environmental defenders, in the form of legal information, funding to retain lawyers and experts to assist them, connections to resources, and moral support.

More than ever, residents of British Columbia are concerned about the sustainability and quality of their water supply and the forests that provide carbon storage, wildlife habitat, protection from flooding and landslides, and access to clean freshwater. Through our **Summary Legal Advice** services and the **Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund** (EDRF), the Access to Justice program offers a lifeline for people facing environmental challenges that feel daunting and complex.

## FEATURED CASES

### EZRA MORSE DEFENDS FREE SPEECH FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

We are pleased to report that the BC Supreme Court dismissed a defamation lawsuit against Qualicum Nature Preservation Society and Ezra Morse for speaking up against a development proposal in Qualicum Beach. West Coast supported their legal defence through the EDRF, with many thanks for the excellent representation by Chris Tollefson and Anthony Ho.

This decision [*Todsén et al. v. Morse et al.*, 2022 BCSC 1341] is one of the first meaningful decisions applying BC's *Protection of Public Participation Act*, which passed in 2019 following years of advocacy by West Coast and many others to protect citizens from Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP).



EDRF Client Ezra Morse, Qualicum Nature Preservation Society / Photo: Ezra Morse

“ This is a very important decision with significant implications for British Columbians who speak up about risks to nature and their communities. The decision recognizes that individuals and organizations advocating in good faith for the public interest are able to say what they think, without fear of reprisal in the form of costly lawsuits from corporations, developers or others who wish to silence their critics.

**DR. LARRY REYNOLDS**

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE LAWYER**

## SUPPORTING WET'SUWET'EN ACCESS TO THE WEDZIN KWA AND YINTAH

For several years, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition has supported access to the land and water along the Wedzin Kwa (Morice River) on Wet'suwet'en territory for elders, youth, community members and supporters through guided rafting trips. The trips include visits to ancient village sites, monitoring of wild salmon, documenting salmon spawning activities, and intergenerational cultural knowledge sharing and language revitalization.

The river guides and their guests witnessed increased activity in the area related to the Coastal GasLink pipeline project, which is drilling under the river, adjacent to a Gidimt'en smokehouse site. They are regularly denied access or threatened with arrest, and are subject to heavy surveillance by private security and the RCMP Community-Industry Response Group.

With funding from the EDRF, the Coalition has been able to obtain legal advice from lawyer Noah Ross to help them understand their legal rights and how to keep themselves safe from detainment on the trips. They are continuing to work together on ways to ensure that the Wet'suwet'en are able to access their Yintah (land) and the Wedzin Kwa for cultural, food security and monitoring purposes.

## PROTECTING WEST HOWE SOUND'S WATER SUPPLY

The Sunshine Coast Regional District and the Town of Gibsons have been facing increasingly frequent and severe drought conditions and drinking water shortages – leading the District to declare a state of emergency in October 2022. The Gibsons Aquifer and Langdale-Hopkins Aquifer require long-term protection, which means protecting the forested landscapes that are critical for “recharging” the groundwater reserves. Yet, BC Timber Sales' 2020-2026 plan proposes clear cuts in the aquifer recharge area.

With support from the EDRF, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) is taking active steps to collaborate with the Squamish Nation, the Town of Gibsons, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, Ministry of Forests and other partners to find viable ways to legally protect the aquifer recharge areas.

Working with lawyer Maya Stano and the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria, the SCCA now has a legal opinion on some of the options available. While their long-term goal of developing a Water Sustainability Plan under the *Water Sustainability Act* will take years – and political will to initiate – the SCCA is looking at interim measures to protect the watershed from logging for up to a decade.



“ Thank you so much for those legal contacts, that really is a big help – as was our meeting with Larry Reynolds... Thanks again... for your advice and your ongoing work at WCEL.

**ALEX WALLACE**

**PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF CYPRESS  
PROVINCIAL PARK SOCIETY**

# BY THE NUMBERS

## SUMMARY ADVICE



# 179

GROUPS / PEOPLE HELPED WITH SUMMARY ADVICE

## ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION FUND



# 37

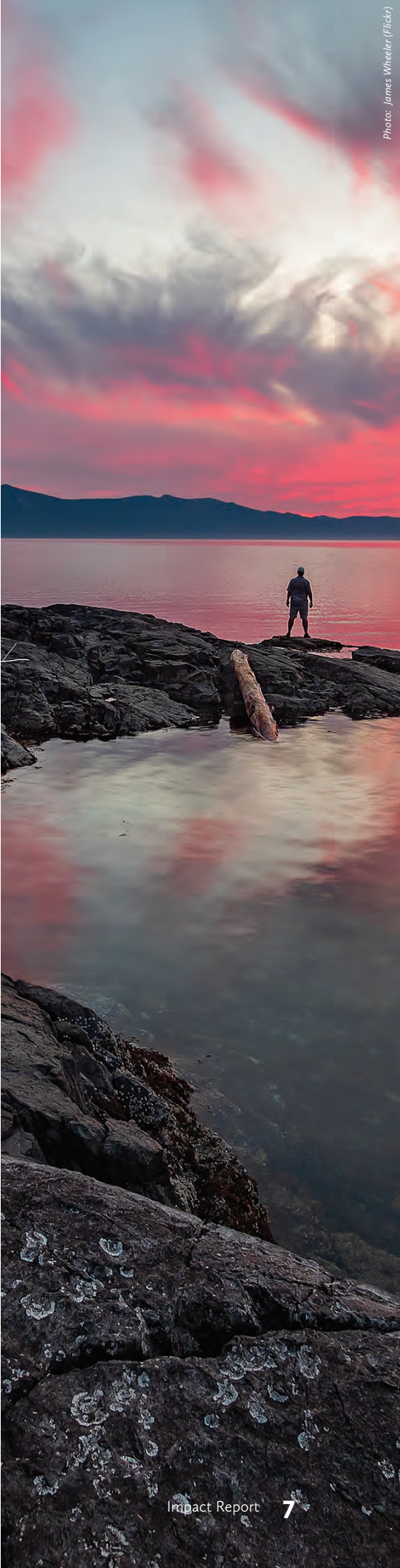
GRANTS AWARDED FROM MAY 2022 - APRIL 2023



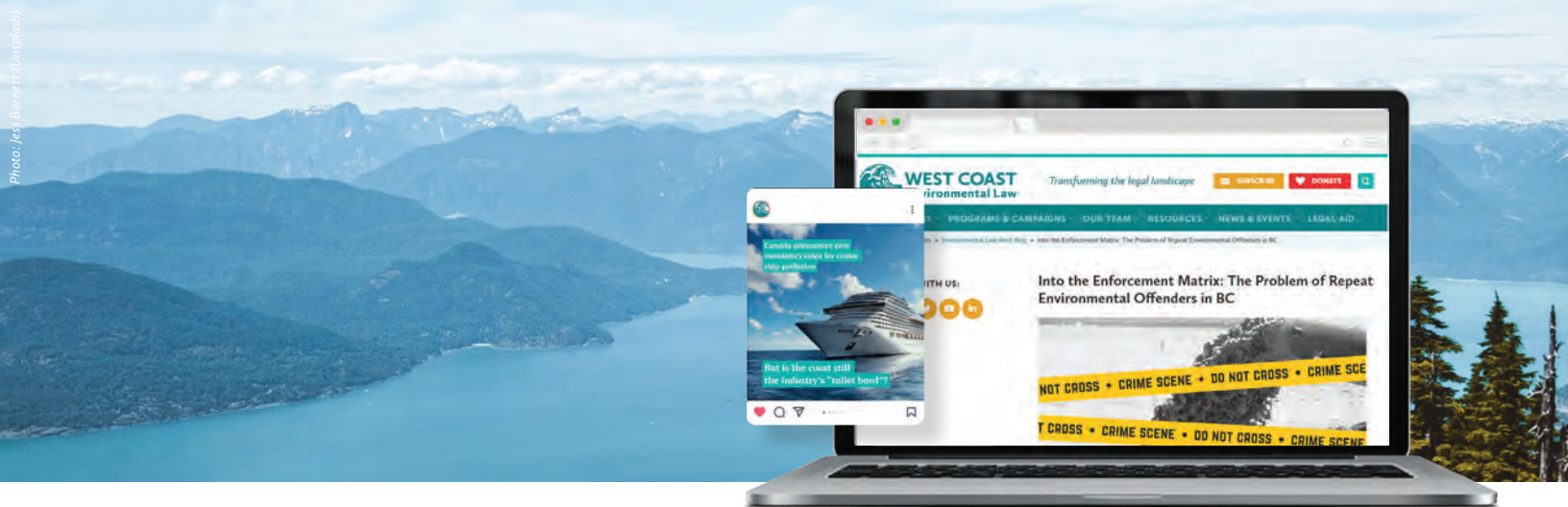
# \$244.7K\*

FUNDING AWARDED MAY 2022 - APRIL 2023

\* Includes Law Foundation funds allocated to EDRF grants, plus cost awards and unused grant funds returned to EDRF and regranted in 2022-23







# ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ALERT

**You shouldn't need to be a lawyer** to understand how laws and government policies may affect the environment around you. At West Coast, we strive to provide accessible news and analysis to educate and inform the public on these topics, as part of our Environmental Law Alert (ELA) program.

Through our blog, newsletters, webinars and other online resources, our experts provide trusted information and weigh in on key issues and developments in environmental and Indigenous law. In 2022-2023, we covered a wide range of topics such as marine pollution, climate litigation, Indigenous fisheries governance, and environmental enforcement in BC. Our blog also featured on-the-ground reports from major international events like the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) and IMPAC5 ocean conservation congress, and updates on high-profile court proceedings at the BC Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of Canada.



**Dec 2022–Mar 2023:** With help from Osgoode law student Ibrahim Arif, we published a blog series investigating challenges with environmental enforcement in BC. The three-part series focused on what the BC government can do to dissuade repeat offenders from continually violating environmental laws. Our work on this topic also contributed to an in-depth story in the Vancouver Sun.



**Sep 2022:** We published a blog post and thought paper explaining how a proposed BC law for biodiversity and ecosystem health can benefit local communities. We also hosted a webinar ahead of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) convention to inform local government officials about efforts to establish such a law, and encourage them to support related resolutions at UBCM – which passed by a wide margin.



**Jun 2023:** After West Coast raised the alarm about cruise ship pollution and encouraged ELA readers to write to MPs about the issue, Transport Canada announced stronger restrictions on dumping from cruise ships in Canadian waters. We published another blog post reviewing the new rules and identifying potential loopholes, and calling for the government to close them.





From L-R: Summer law students Jessica Frappier, Karla Froese and Sophia Sidarous

## BUILDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW BAR

**As environmental lawyers,** we know how important it is to build capacity within the legal profession to tackle environmental challenges. That's why West Coast is committed to providing hands-on experience and mentorship opportunities for aspiring lawyers entering the field.

This past summer we had the opportunity to work with three amazing law students, who completed summer placements with West Coast. They are now back at their respective law faculties, taking the next steps in their professional careers, but we're grateful for their work with us and inspired by their energy and commitment. In fall and winter 2022-2023, interns from the University of British Columbia and Osgoode Law School also completed placements at West Coast.

Congratulations to our two articulated students, Navjot Jassar and Shawn Smith – graduates from the first class of the University of Victoria's Joint Degree Program in Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders – who have recently completed the requirements for their articles, and have been hired back as West Coast Staff Lawyers.

*"I am very grateful for the opportunity to work at West Coast Environmental Law this summer. Getting to learn from the incredible team was affirming in the path that I am taking pursuing a career in law. It was really moving to witness how West Coast respects and upholds Indigenous law as an environmental law organization. As I move forward with my studies in the Indigenous law degree at the University of Victoria, it is enheartening to see many of the methodologies I've been learning in the classroom being implemented on the ground."*

– Jessica Frappier, 2023 Summer Law Student

# LAW REFORM & ADVOCACY

**West Coast Environmental Law Association** advocates for stronger environmental laws, better enforcement and more democratic decision-making in BC and across Canada. For almost 50 years, we have played a leading role in shaping key environmental laws at the federal and provincial level, from impact assessment to climate accountability. Our legal team engages in all stages of environmental law reform – sharing expert recommendations, shaping legal solutions, testifying before committees, meeting with government officials and mobilizing community members to speak up for stronger environmental laws. Once new laws are in place, we continue to act as a watchdog, advocating for strong regulations and enforcement.

In addition to our law reform work, West Coast conducts research and advocacy at the intersection of Indigenous rights, climate change and finance – which includes analyzing and communicating legal and financial risks of continued fossil fuel expansion.

West Coast also provides legal support for Indigenous lawmaking initiatives, and advocates for greater recognition of Indigenous laws and jurisdiction by Crown governments and institutions through our RELAW program (Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land, Air & Water).<sup>\*</sup> This includes legal work supporting the establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and other contemporary expressions of Indigenous law. A project grant from the Law Foundation of BC supports West Coast's Indigenous law-making work. We gratefully acknowledge their support.

<sup>\*</sup> RELAW is a joint program of the West Coast Environmental Law Association and the West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation

# CREATING A BLUEPRINT FOR THE COAST

In 2019, **West Coast** and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS BC) started the Blueprint for the Coast campaign, calling on British Columbia to adopt a coastal protection strategy and law.

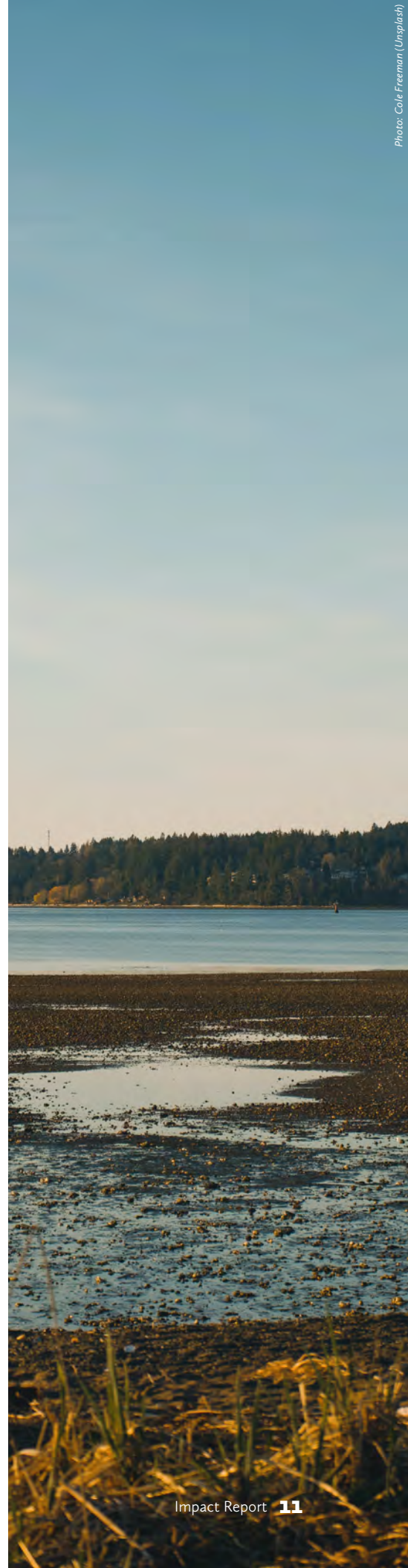
Blueprint for the Coast found traction with British Columbians who are worried about the future of coastal ecosystems and communities, as climate change impacts are intensifying, and keystone species such as wild salmon and resident orcas are struggling. The campaign quickly has drawn a large coalition of support from organizations, communities, and residents from throughout the province.

The BC government heard our call, and in 2020 committed to co-developing a “coastal marine strategy” with coastal Indigenous nations. The government subsequently created the new Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) to, among other things, be a hub for coastal management in BC and to lead the process of developing the strategy.

In December 2022, the Ministry of WLRS released a Policy Intentions Paper for a Coastal Marine Strategy for British Columbia, which was co-written with representatives from coastal Indigenous nations. The Intentions Paper lists six outcomes for coastal areas which the Province aims to achieve over the next 20 years, as well as 30 policy intentions to get us there. The policy intentions are informed by and reflect much of the research and advocacy that the Blueprint for the Coast campaign has undertaken, including intentions to:

- consider comprehensive coastal zone legislation;
- advance collaborative management with Indigenous nations and other governing bodies;
- manage the cumulative impacts of economic development in coastal and marine areas; and
- protect and restore nearshore habitat.

Based on the Intentions Paper, the Ministry of WLRS will now work with coastal Indigenous nations to co-create the actual Coastal Marine Strategy, which is expected to be finalized in 2024.





# FOSSIL FINANCE & INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

**The climate crisis is directly linked to colonization**, especially in Canada. That means climate (and biodiversity) solutions can be found by recognizing Indigenous rights and implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The financial sector plays a key role in the climate crisis by funding the expansion of fossil fuels and other extractive projects without any regard for Indigenous rights, as part of their broader role of pricing risk through their business operations. While the sector is catching on to the realities of the climate crisis and the importance of recognizing Indigenous rights, it still has a long way to go. That's why West Coast's work analyzing and communicating legal and financial risks is so crucial at this key moment for climate action in Canada.

This year, we put more focus on the role of the big five Canadian banks – RBC Royal Bank, TD Bank, BMO Bank of Montreal, CIBC, and Scotiabank – which continue to fund the oil and gas sector at record rates. The Royal Bank of Canada was the #1 funder of fossil fuels in the world in 2022, while the other four are all in the top 20 globally.

In partnership with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, we filed shareholder resolutions at the big banks' annual meetings, calling on them to follow through on their commitments to reconciliation by operationalizing free, prior and informed consent into their business practices.

In October 2022, we published a report with economist Robyn Allan on the Trans Mountain Expansion after diving deep into their public financial records. The report found that Trans Mountain is hiding its full financial picture from Canadians by using shell corporations and accounting wizardry. We projected that the federal government was likely going to forgive \$17 billion in debt owed back to the Canadian public – a prediction that experts and news headlines have backed up as new information comes to light. With the project's updated \$30.9 billion price tag, that debt forgiveness will likely be even higher.



Along with our 2022 report on Trans Mountain's finances, we released a short video detailing the "Trans Mountain Illusion"



Staff Lawyer Eugene Kung (second from right) with UBCIC Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Na'moks, and others ahead of the RBC AGM / Photo: Eugene Kung



Photo: Tamsin Lyle

# PADDLING TOGETHER

## INDIGENOUS LAW AND CO-GOVERNANCE IN THE LOWER FRASER

In the region surrounding the Lower Fraser River, many communities and ecosystems are still feeling the impacts of the devastating floods of November 2021. Recovery efforts have been underway, but looking toward the future, it's clear that there are no easy answers for the Lower Fraser floodplain and the people who live there.

Together with a number of like-minded organizations, West Coast Environmental Law has been supporting dialogue around a new, principled and strategic way of building resilience for people and other species in the Lower Fraser floodplain, focusing on Indigenous-led and nature-based approaches.

This cross-cutting work involves staff from our RELAW (Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land, Air & Water) team as well as West Coast's Liveable Sustainable Communities program. Working closely with Lower Fraser First Nations, we take time to learn the visions they hold for their territories, support Crown governments in understanding these views, and work towards solutions and better decision-making when it comes to water, fisheries and infrastructure.

Creating space for Indigenous law in decision-making requires ethical and inclusive discussions, and public legal education with federal and provincial regulators. It also requires us to shift the way we think to better consider nature in long-term planning – for example, looking at how Indigenous-led, nature-based solutions like protecting coastal blue carbon ecosystems can help reduce flood risk while also mitigating climate change.

In 2022-2023, our work in the Lower Fraser has involved bringing together diverse voices and perspectives to advance solutions like these, and to chart a path forward for flood resilience and ecosystem abundance in the region.



Photo: Roxanna Fraser



*For the Love of Fish Youth Gathering brought young people and Guardians from Lower Fraser First Nations together to discuss the importance of Indigenous law and fisheries governance, looking seven generations into the future / Photos: Sharon Desnomie, Sts'ailes Nation*



**Mar 2023:** The Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance (LFFA) and RELAW brought young people and Guardians from Lower Fraser First Nations together to discuss the importance of Indigenous law and fisheries governance – looking seven generations into the future.



**Jun 2023:** Staff Lawyers Deborah Carlson and Rayanna Seymour-Hourie co-authored a chapter titled “Indigenous Law and Coastal Ecosystems, a Relational Approach to Blue Carbon,” which was published in a national report by WWF-Canada about the importance of two-eyed seeing in nature-based solutions.





Photo: Jesse Stewart/Unsplash

# TRANSFORMING THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

**West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation** leverages legal research, analysis and dialogue to secure lasting gains for ecosystems, communities and the climate. Our legal experts work collaboratively to research, design and implement innovative legal strategies grounded in federal, provincial and Indigenous law.

This includes:

- Solutions for collaborative environmental governance that braid together Canadian and Indigenous laws;
- Strong laws for healthy oceans and marine ecosystems;
- Partnerships and co-learning to support the revitalization of Indigenous laws for land, air, water and communities;
- Legal tools to hold global polluters and governments accountable for climate change; and
- Collaborative legal solutions to build resilient communities and ecosystems.

# COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

## STRONG CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

In December 2022, Canada hosted the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, also known as COP15 or NatureCOP. Held in Montreal, COP15 resulted in a new Global Biodiversity Framework that sets out four overarching goals for 2050, and 23 targets that countries like Canada must reach by 2030.

As mentioned earlier in this report, five West Coast lawyers attended COP15, where we joined thousands of other delegates from around the world in calling for ambitious, measurable targets for halting and reversing nature loss. Our staff lawyers presented at events, met with officials, and supported and amplified calls from Indigenous peoples for better recognition of Indigenous rights and authority.

In addition to our biodiversity work, we have continued to push for federal impact assessment processes to be implemented in a manner that respects Indigenous rights and authority, fosters sustainability, helps Canada meet its climate and biodiversity commitments, and enables meaningful public participation. We also defended the *Impact Assessment Act* at the Supreme Court of Canada.



**Oct 2022:** We organized and chaired a gathering of impact assessment experts, participants and thought leaders in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia to discuss how to best ensure robust implementation of the federal *Impact Assessment Act*.



**Dec 2022:** West Coast lawyers attended COP15, where we applauded a proposition made by the federal environment minister that Canada adopt a biodiversity accountability law, which West Coast has been advocating for.



**Mar 2023:** West Coast, representing ourselves and Nature Canada, intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada in Alberta's legal challenge against the *Impact Assessment Act*. During the hearing, we argued that the court should recognize federal jurisdiction to take a careful look at the potential risks of projects that could harm health, climate, and the environment.

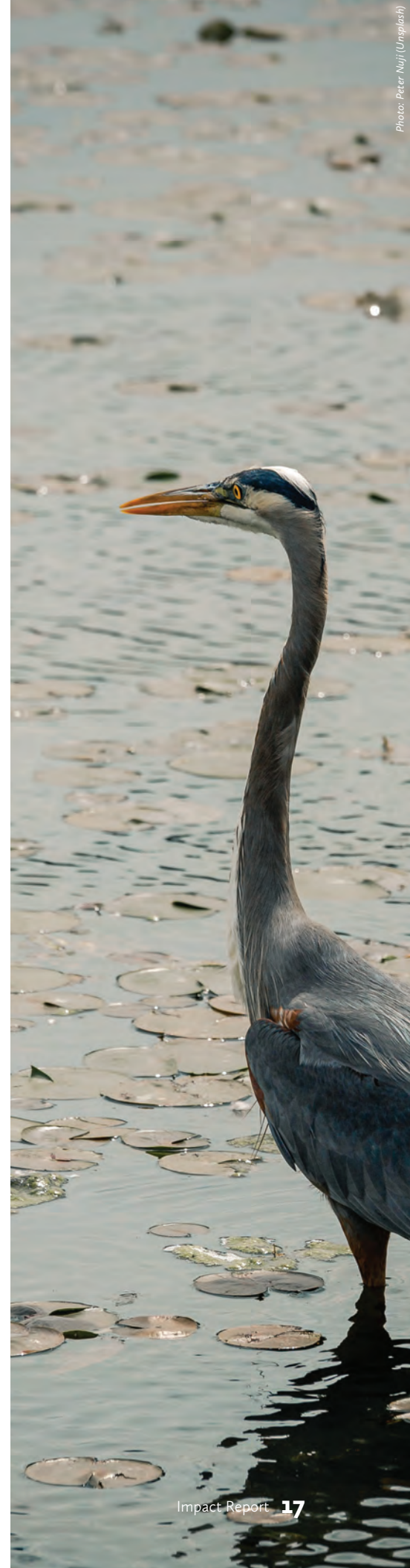


Photo: Peter Nuyt (Unsplash)



## STANDING WITH GITXAAŁA NATION FOR MINING JUSTICE IN BC

It was a busy year for West Coast lawyers representing the Gitxaala Nation in its legal challenge over BC’s granting of mineral claims on *Lax k’naga dzol*, or Banks Island. This precedent-setting case established that the BC government is breaching its Constitutional obligations by granting mineral claims without Indigenous consultation or consent. It was also the first case to substantively interpret BC’s *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

West Coast and co-counsel at Ng Ariss Fong argued Gitxaala’s case before the BC Supreme Court in a lengthy 14-day hearing between April–May 2023, alongside a similar case filed by the Ehattesaht First Nation. Momentum for the case grew significantly prior to the hearing, as many chose to stand with Gitxaala in Court. Following a two-day hearing in December 2022, several parties were granted leave to intervene in the case, including:

- four Indigenous nations;
- three Indigenous political organizations comprising the First Nations Leadership Council;
- the BC Human Rights Commissioner;
- a coalition of six environmental and community groups;
- two mineral exploration companies that support free, prior and informed Indigenous consent; and
- a coalition of three mining associations.

With the exception of the mining associations, all intervenors made arguments supportive of Gitxaala’s case.



Although the BC government fought Gitxaala vigorously in Court, shortly after Gitxaala filed its case BC did promise to modernize the *Mineral Tenure Act* (under which mineral claims are granted). In June 2023, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit both passed resolutions, moved by Gitxaala, demanding that BC entirely repeal and replace the *Mineral Tenure Act* and setting out a platform for reform. West Coast continues to assist Gitxaala in this law reform work, in addition to the litigation.



From L-R: Staff Lawyers Whitney Lafreniere Vicente, Georgia Lloyd-Smith, Rayanna Seymour-Hourie and Stephanie Hewson on the ground at COP15 (Not pictured: Anna Johnston)

## LEGAL SOLUTIONS FOR BC BIODIVERSITY

**In 2022-2023, West Coast lawyers** delved more deeply into our work to sustain biodiversity in BC, through innovative legal solutions grounded in both Indigenous and Canadian law.

This year, we achieved an important benchmark when the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) launched engagement sessions regarding the development of a new provincial legal framework to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health. West Coast lawyers have been active participants, sharing our ideas for developing new biodiversity and ecosystem health legislation with provincial officials, Indigenous nations, and allies. We also presented to MLAs on the need to follow through on their commitments to implement new legislation.

In addition, this year we have focused on bridging our work supporting Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and Indigenous-led conservation with the biodiversity and ecosystem health legislation campaign. As part of this work, we presented an interactive webinar, “A Law for Thriving Ecosystem Relationships” for our RELAW co-learners in June 2023. In August and September, we released a series of blogs on Indigenous law in language, interviewing language speakers about how they express the idea of ecosystem relationships and the collectivity of all beings, which we might refer to in English as biodiversity and ecosystem health.

At a federal level, together with Wildlife Conservation Society Canada we drafted a major report on biodiversity conservation in impact assessment for the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, and continued to advocate for federal biodiversity accountability legislation.

Finally, this past year also put biodiversity front and centre in the global context, with the COP15 UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal in December 2022. As mentioned, West Coast was there, participating in several panels and holding BC accountable to their provincial commitments around biodiversity. While we were disappointed with the lack of participation by BC in these events, we were impressed by initiatives highlighted at COP15 that are led by BC Indigenous Nations.



# REVITALIZING INDIGENOUS LAW

Through the **RELAW** (Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land, Air & Water) Program, West Coast works alongside Indigenous partners to revitalize, express and enforce their Indigenous laws to address environmental challenges in their territories. Our RELAW Program has two major components:

## RELAW PROJECTS

RELAW lawyers offer pro-bono legal services to support Indigenous partners in strategizing ways to express the worldviews taught by their stories and knowledge holders, through written laws, plans, declarations and other legal instruments.

During 2022-2023, our RELAW Co-Learning Program Cohort included representatives from Nuuchahnulth, sm̓əlxm̓ix / syilx, Puntledge/K'ómoks, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Scw'exmx Tribal Council, Tsal'alh / St'át'imc, Lytton / Nlaka'pamux, Lax Kw'alaams, Woodland Cree, Stó:lō (Leq'á:mel, Seabird), Anishinaabe, Nuxalk, Kwakwaka'wakw and Haida territories.

This year's Co-learning Program kicked off in November 2022 with Retreat 1 ("Indigenous Law in Story") at the headwaters of the Similkameen and Tulameen Rivers. Retreat 2 was held online, focusing on "Indigenous Law in Dialogue" to learn trauma-informed facilitation and process design for hosting dialogues and gatherings. The third

## RELAW CO-LEARNING PROGRAM

We host three retreats each year with a cohort of approximately 20 co-learners focused on Indigenous Law in Story, Dialogue and Action. The program offers training and co-learning opportunities for Indigenous individuals and allies to strengthen their toolkits for Indigenous law revitalization and hosting trauma-informed gatherings.

retreat (“Indigenous Law in Action”) was held in June 2023 in Tla-o-qui-aht territory (Tofino, BC) and highlighted Indigenous law enforcement strategies.

In addition to the Co-Learning Program, this year we celebrated several exciting milestones with RELAW Project partners, including:



**Dec 2022:** RELAW partner Lower Similkameen Indian Band (sməłqmíx) and West Coast lawyers travelled to Montreal for COP15 to raise the profile of the nʔaysnúlaʔxʷ íʔ kʔluxʷnwxʷmntət (Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected Area) on the international stage.



**Apr 2023:** The sməłqmíx celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected Area Declaration, protecting the Ashnola watershed in the Similkameen Valley under sməłqmíx law.



**Mar 2023:** RELAW Partner Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance (LFFA) organized its first ‘Young Peoples’ Gathering to update youth from Lower Fraser Indigenous nations on the LFFA-RELAW project, hosted by Tsawwassen First Nation.



**Ongoing:** RELAW Partner Gitanyow Nation is continuing to assess the proposed Eskay Creek mining project – the first Indigenous-led assessment under their own Wilp Sustainability Assessment Process (WSAP).



*Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs, staff and representatives of Skeena Resources at the launch of the GWSAP. The Gitanyow WSAP is undertaking its first assessment, reviewing the Eskay Creek Revitalization Project / Photo: Camus Photography*



From L-R: Staff Lawyers Deborah Carlson, Michael Bissonnette, former Staff Lawyer Linda Nowlan and Stephanie Hewson at the Marine Guide book launch (Not pictured: Georgia Lloyd-Smith & Erin Gray) / Photo: Alexis Stoymenoff

# MARINE PROTECTION

**This year was an exciting year** for ocean conservation. Long-standing policy and legal reforms that West Coast’s marine team has been working towards were finally realized – including new or strengthened legal protections to improve marine protected areas (MPAs), reduce cruise ship pollution, develop a BC Coastal Marine Strategy, and protect the Great Bear Sea.

The marine team has been working hard towards these changes for several years, through strategic legal analysis, political advocacy and public education, and through collaboration with Indigenous nations and environmental organizations.

Two major international agreements that will have far-reaching implications for ocean conservation were also negotiated this year: the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework commits signatory countries to protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030; and the new High Seas Treaty provides a framework for environmental protection in the high seas, which make up two thirds of the world’s ocean. The marine team is focused on ensuring that these commitments are implemented in Canada in a way that meaningfully advances ocean conservation and protection.

Finally, this year we published a new, peer-reviewed version of our marine law guide with UBC Press. The updated edition – *Protecting the Coast and Ocean: A Guide to Marine Conservation Law in British Columbia* – is available in open access digital format as well as in hard copy. This publication has allowed us to highlight the importance of legal protection and law reform in marine conservation.



**Dec 2022:** BC released its Policy Intentions Paper for a provincial Coastal Marine Strategy, co-written with representatives from coastal Indigenous nations. The Intentions Paper reflected many of the priorities of our Blueprint for the Coast campaign, discussed in greater detail on p. 11.



**Dec 2022:** West Coast lawyers attended the COP15 Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, where Canada committed to protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030 through the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Agreement.



**Feb 2023:** Our marine law experts attended and presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver. During IMPAC5, Canada made several commitments to further marine protection in areas where West Coast has been heavily involved in advocacy and legal analysis:

- Coastal Indigenous nations, British Columbia and Canada released the Northern Shelf Bioregion/Great Bear Sea MPA Network Action Plan, which outlines the proposed sites that will make up the network;
- Canada released guidance on minimum standards prohibiting oil and gas, bottom trawling, mining and dumping in new MPAs, which it had promised since April 2019;
- Canada announced its pathway to protecting 25% of the ocean by 2025, and announced two new protected and conserved areas: Tang.gwan — ḥačxwiqak — Tsigis MPA, to be co-managed with the Haida Nation, Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, Pacheedaht First Nation and Quatsino First Nation; and a federal marine refuge to close harmful fisheries in the Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala Indigenous Protected & Conserved Area, which was declared by the Mamalilikulla First Nation in 2021;
- Canada announced an effective moratorium on deep sea mining in Canadian waters; and
- Parks Canada released a new policy framework for national marine conservation areas.



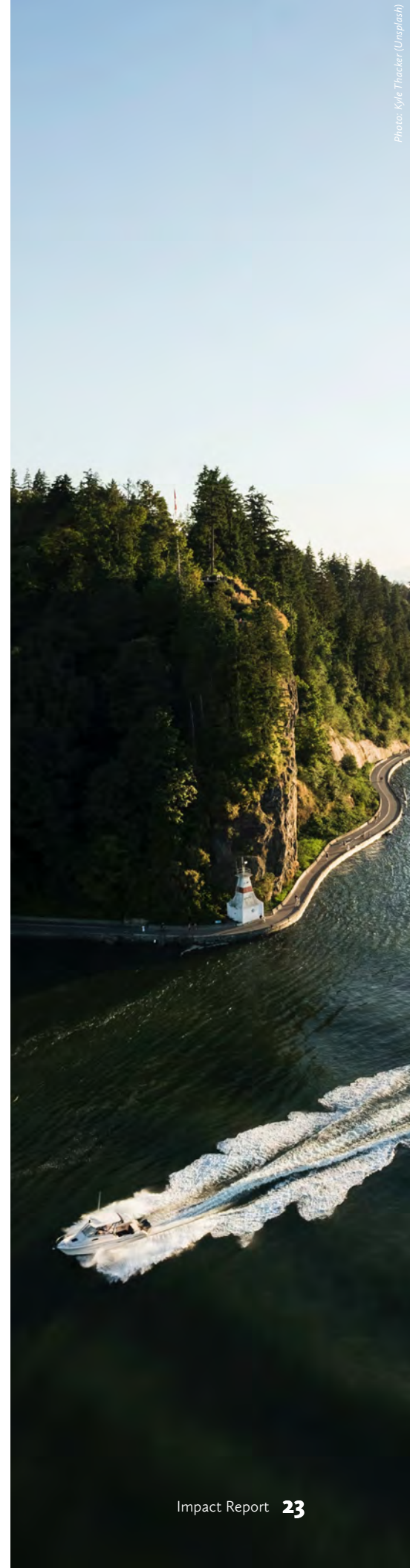
**Mar 2023:** Following advocacy by West Coast and ocean lovers around the world, the international High Seas Treaty was finalized and endorsed by nearly 200 countries, including Canada. The treaty enables the international community to protect the high seas, by establishing MPAs and conducting environmental impact assessments. The treaty was formally adopted by the UN's member states in June 2023.



**Jun 2023:** Transport Canada introduced new mandatory measures to address cruise ship pollution, in response to West Coast's 2021 report on this issue with Stand.earth.



**Jun 2023:** West Coast published *Protecting the Coast and Ocean: A Guide to Marine Conservation Law in British Columbia*, the first marine conservation law textbook in Canada. We celebrated with a book launch during international Ocean Week.







# CLIMATE CHANGE

## SUE BIG OIL: YEAR ONE

**It's been a little over a year** since West Coast and allies launched the Sue Big Oil campaign, calling on BC's local governments to work together to bring a class action lawsuit against the largest global fossil fuel polluters. BC communities face billions of dollars in costs to prepare for and deal with climate change impacts, and it's unfair (and bad economics) to let global fossil fuel companies pocket massive profits without taking responsibility for at least some of the climate costs that their products cause.

In its first year, Sue Big Oil has been endorsed by over 30 organizations, and thousands of British Columbians have signed the Sue Big Oil Declaration. Sue Big Oil local teams are active in over a dozen BC communities from Vancouver Island to the Kootenays, and in response, local governments have started signing on.

Together, we're continuing to build momentum – urging local governments across the province to seize this opportunity to protect our communities while holding fossil fuel companies accountable.



**Jun-Jul 2022:** The Sue Big Oil campaign was launched. Shortly after, the City of Vancouver voted to set aside \$1/resident in its 2023 budget to sue Big Oil. However, following the municipal election in October 2022, the new council voted against doing so.



**Feb 2023:** The Sue Big Oil campaign hosted a virtual talk with noted journalist Geoff Dembicki about his book, *The Petroleum Papers*, which highlights the role of fossil fuel companies in delaying action on climate change for decades.



**Feb 2023:** West Coast worked with Shake Up the Establishment, a youth organization and Sue Big Oil partner, to launch the Sue Big Oil Party Kit – a collection of games, menus, play-lists and activities that allow you to celebrate our power to take on Big Oil with your friends and neighbours.



**Mar 2023:** Gibsons Council voted unanimously to work with other local governments to bring a class action lawsuit against global fossil fuel companies.



**Jun 2023:** View Royal Council voted to join Gibsons and work to bring a class action lawsuit, and to write to other local governments to encourage them to do the same.



## FEDERAL CLIMATE LAW

West Coast has been hard at work helping to secure strong federal climate laws that ensure we meet our emissions targets. Having played a central role in the enactment of the *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, this year we tracked its implementation to make sure that this flagship climate law holds the federal government to account for meeting our 2030 and 2050 climate goals.

We also turned our attention to the proposed oil and gas emissions cap, which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised in 2021 but that has since seen numerous delays. This cap is critical to ensuring that the oil and gas sector (Canada’s greatest source of emissions) does its part in bending our emissions curve as far as we need it to go.



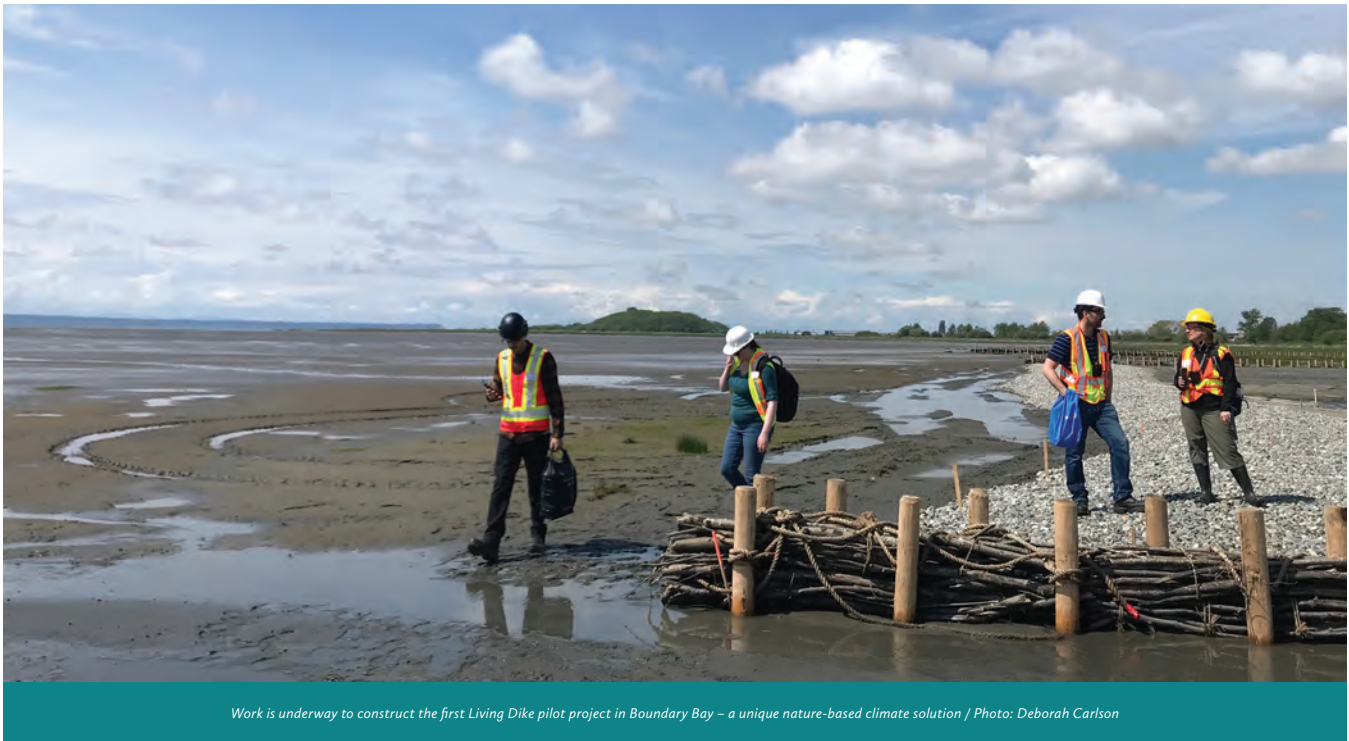
**Jul 2022:** We published a briefing note on legal options for an oil and gas emissions cap that would be within federal jurisdiction to enact, and shared this note with allies, government and the public.



**Sep 2022:** We submitted recommendations for securing a fair, effective and robust oil and gas emissions cap, in response to a federal discussion paper. Also, to counter false narratives about the cap being spread by industry and certain provinces, we produced a facts vs. fiction document outlining key myths about the cap, along with the facts.



**Aug 2023:** We met with officials to outline our recommendations for how the first progress report under the *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, due in December 2023, can meet the requirements and spirit of the Act and ensure Canadians have a clear picture of whether we are on track to meeting our emissions targets and if not, what government will do to course-correct.



*Work is underway to construct the first Living Dike pilot project in Boundary Bay – a unique nature-based climate solution / Photo: Deborah Carlson*

# LIVEABLE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

**During a summer of droughts and wildfires**, it sometimes seemed strange to be concentrating on flood management, which has been a strong focus of our climate change adaptation work on the Liveable Sustainable Communities program for years.

Yet the deeper we go into this work, with our partners and colleagues at the Emergency Planning Secretariat, the Living Dike Roundtable, and now the Lower Fraser Floodplains Coalition, the more it becomes apparent that the wet and dry cycles of water in the landscape are all part of the same whole – even if existing provincial and federal laws have failed to make that connection. The implications are obviously important for flood and floodplain management and adapting to climate impacts.

In June 2023, West Coast was part of a Lower Fraser Floodplains Coalition team that organized a second regional forum for First Nations and local governments in the region, along with Provincial Emergency Management Minister Bowinn Ma and staff, federal agency and farm association representatives. Approximately 150 leaders and staff discussed an action plan for floodplain resilience, emphasizing the need to build trust and relationships to foster respect and collaboration across jurisdictions. Many participants spoke of the importance of listening to and including First Nations knowledge in developing plans for action.

West Coast will continue to support important regional and sub-regional conversations like these in the Lower Fraser, while also providing resources and advocacy to implement new collaborations and projects for floodplain management.



**Nov 2022:** Canada released its National Adaptation Strategy. West Coast was a member of the Advisory Table on a Thriving Natural Environment, providing input to objectives regarding nature and biodiversity.



**May 2023:** West Coast helped coordinate a site visit to the construction and enhancement sites for the first two pilot phases of the Living Dike project in Boundary Bay – a unique nature-based solution for flood management. Project partners are City of Surrey, Semiahmoo First Nation and City of Delta. West Coast co-chairs, with Emergency Planning Secretariat, an interjurisdictional roundtable that supports the project.



**Jun 2023:** Staff Lawyer Deborah Carlson presented at the Commission on Environmental Co-operation 30<sup>th</sup> Session in Victoria, BC, speaking on a panel about Urban Climate Adaptation and Environmental Justice.



**Jun 2023:** West Coast and coalition partners hosted the Lower Fraser Floodplains Forum, a day-long gathering for leaders from First Nations, local and provincial governments, federal and provincial agencies, farm associations and stakeholders hosted at the Skowkale First Nation The'it:tsel'ya – S.A.Y Health and Community Building.



BC Emergency Management Minister Bowinn Ma, Stó:lō Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil and Chilliwack Councillor Jason Lum at the 2023 Lower Fraser Floodplains Forum / Photo: Dianne Garner



Participants in discussion during the Lower Fraser Floodplains Forum / Photo: Dianne Garner

“ As Former National Chief Shawn Atleo reminds us: There are two ways we can do this: the hard way or the harder way. The hard way is together. The harder way is alone.

**TYRONE MCNEIL**

**STÓ:LŌ TRIBAL CHIEF AND  
CHAIR OF THE EMERGENCY  
PLANNING SECRETARIAT**

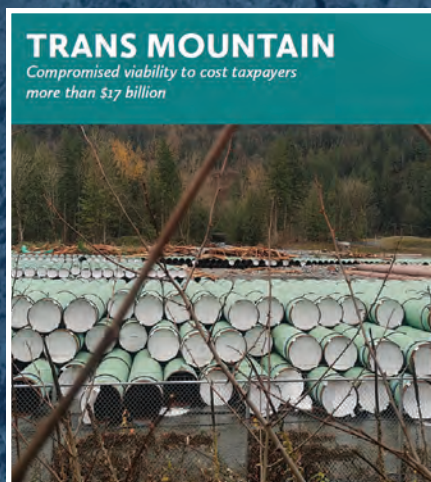
## SELECT PUBLICATIONS

# WEST COAST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION



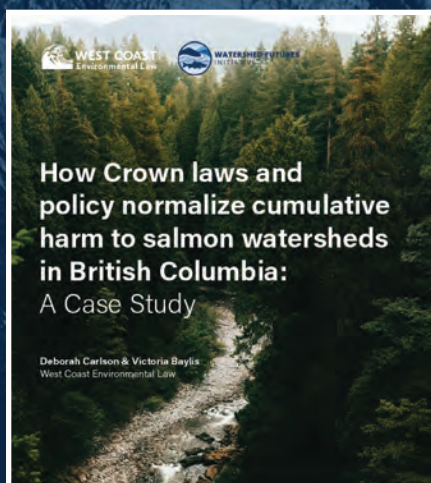
### FLOOD RECOVERY, RESILIENCE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE LOWER FRASER (September 2022)

In the wake of the November 2021 floods, West Coast joined the Lower Fraser Floodplains Coalition (formerly the Build Back Better, Together Collaborative) – a group of BC-based organizations and experts with the shared goal of helping BC’s flood recovery and management efforts achieve the best possible outcomes. This report summarizes collaborative discussions at a forum hosted by West Coast and our partners in July 2022, which brought together leaders and staff from 16 First Nations, 14 local governments, as well as federal and provincial agencies to discuss a better path forward for flood management in the Lower Fraser region.



### TRANS MOUNTAIN: COMPROMISED VIABILITY TO COST TAXPAYERS MORE THAN \$17 BILLION (October 2022)

Working with independent economist Robyn Allan, West Coast conducted in-depth research showing how Ottawa’s lack of transparency, unusual corporate structure, and accounting wizardry is creating the illusion that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is commercially viable. This widely-cited report outlines the project’s financial challenges, and shows how federal support continues to flow to Trans Mountain, despite the Finance Minister’s claim that “no additional public money” would be spent on the pipeline. The report projected the federal government will forgive \$17 billion in debt Trans Mountain owes to Canadians. This report was co-published with the West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation.



### HOW CROWN LAWS AND POLICY NORMALIZE CUMULATIVE HARM TO SALMON WATERSHEDS IN BC: A CASE STUDY (December 2022)

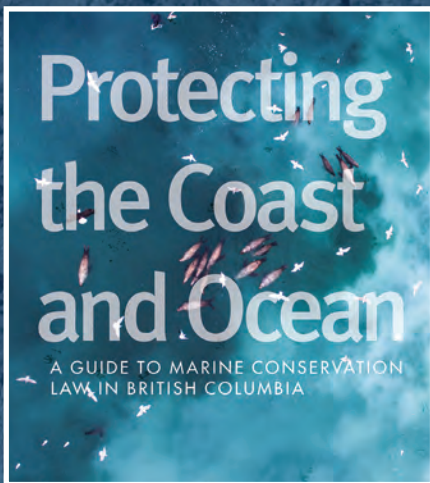
Addressing the “death by a thousand cuts” in BC watersheds is key for salmon stewardship. This report, co-authored by West Coast and the Watershed Futures Initiative, uses a case study on stream crossings to explore how Crown laws and policies are currently failing salmon, and what needs to change. The report focuses on the impacts of stream-crossing or stream-spanning structures from BC highways, forest roads and dikes, which are regulated and managed by federal and provincial authorities.

# WEST COAST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW RESEARCH FOUNDATION



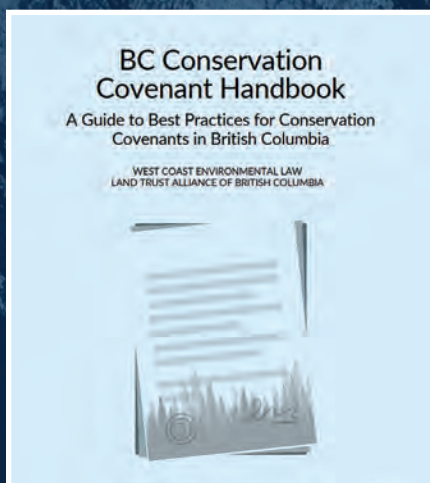
## CAPPING CANADA'S OIL & GAS EMISSIONS: FACT VS. FICTION (September 2022)

Since the federal government committed to introduce a cap on oil and gas sector emissions, this important proposed climate policy has received both praise and criticism. Many of the criticisms – especially from Alberta politicians and those close to the industry – are unfounded. In this document, we outline some key myths about a federal oil and gas emissions cap, along with the facts.



## PROTECTING THE COAST AND OCEAN: A GUIDE TO MARINE CONSERVATION LAW IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (June 2023)

Originally published in 2020, our *Guide to Marine Conservation Law in BC* is a comprehensive resource that covers the wide array of legal tools available to Indigenous, federal, provincial and local governments to protect the coast and ocean in BC. This meticulous work catalogues the laws and designations that governments in Canada can draw on, as well as the international treaties and designations that shape marine conservation and support collaboration. In June 2023, West Coast published an updated edition of the *Guide* via UBC Press, which is now available in hard copy and open-access digital format.



## BC CONSERVATION COVENANT HANDBOOK: A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR CONSERVATION COVENANTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (June 2023)

Originally published in 2000 and periodically updated, this handbook outlines the best practices associated with the use of “conservation covenants,” primarily focusing on using covenants for the protection of ecologically significant private land. Covenants can also be used to protect other special land attributes such as cultural and heritage values. The handbook canvasses many of the laws, regulations, policies and practices that apply when a landowner grants a conservation covenant to a conservation organization that agrees to protect the land in perpetuity. This Handbook is published by West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation and The Land Trust Alliance of BC.



## PEOPLE OF WEST COAST (2022-2023)

Jessica Clogg,  
Executive Director & Sr. Counsel

### LEGAL & PROFESSIONAL

Andrew Gage  
Anna Johnston  
Deborah Carlson  
Erin Gray  
Estella White – ĥinačachišt  
Eugene Kung  
Fiona Koza  
Gavin Smith  
Georgia Lloyd-Smith  
Larry Reynolds  
Maxine Hayman Matilpi  
Michael Bissonnette

Navjot Jassar  
Rayanna Seymour-Hourie  
Samantha Myran  
Shawn Smith  
Shelby Lindley  
Stephanie Hewson  
Whitney Lafreniere Vicente

### COMMUNICATIONS

Alexis Stoymenoff  
Alan Chou  
Hanna Araza  
Martine Panzica  
Summer Tyance

### DEVELOPMENT

Sambriddhi Nepal  
Faria Bhuiyan  
Georgia Beaty

### ADMINISTRATIVE

Carol Coffey  
Ceciline Goh  
Lillian Qiao  
Tom Beggs

### STUDENTS & INTERNS

Ibrahim Arif, Jenaya Copithorne,  
Jessica Frappier, Karla Froese,  
Sophia Sidarous, Romina Hajizadeh,  
Wynona Klemt

### 2022-2023 EDRF LAWYERS

Each year, West Coast works with talented lawyers across BC who represent clients through the Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund (EDRF), working at partial pro-bono rates. We would like to acknowledge the following lawyers who worked on EDRF cases in 2022-2023:

Alexia Mpidi Bitá  
Angela McCue

Anne Muter  
Anthony Ho

Ben Isitt  
Bill Andrews

Carla Conkin  
Charlotte Chamberlain  
Chris Tollefson  
David W. Wu  
Erica Stahl  
Eric Pedersen  
Ian Moore  
Jason Gratl  
Krista Vaartnou

Lilina Lysenko  
Lisa Fong  
Matt Boulton  
Matthew Nefstead  
Matt Voell  
Maya Stano  
Michael Welsh  
Morgan Blakley  
Myron Barr

Noah Ross  
Patrick Canning  
Rachel Ariss  
Rhys Volkenant  
Richard Pearce  
Ruben Tillman  
Ryan McCracken  
Sean Hern  
Toby Rauch-Davis

## OUR SUPPORTERS

### SUSTAINING PARTNER: THE LAW FOUNDATION OF BC

The Law Foundation of BC has been West Coast Environmental Law Association's Sustaining Partner since 1974. Funding from the Law Foundation enables us to provide environmental legal support for BC communities in every corner of the province. This funding helps us achieve success in our Access to Justice programs and allows us to leverage additional funds from other granting agencies, companies, and individuals.

### FOUNDATION FUNDING

West Coast is honoured by the longstanding and diverse partnerships of our foundation funders. Program support from private, community, and family foundations is a crucial component of West Coast's overall funding. In 2022-2023, we were supported by the following foundations and agencies from across Canada and beyond:

### RESEARCH FOUNDATION

- 444S Foundation
- Bullitt Foundation
- Catherine Donnelly Foundation
- Environment Funders Canada
- Gencon Foundation
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
- MakeWay Foundation
- McConnell Foundation
- Metcalf Foundation
- North Family Foundation
- Sitka Foundation
- Vancouver Foundation
- Wilburforce Foundation

The Research Foundation also received funds for legal and related work conducted through collaborations with Canadian Environmental Network and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

### ASSOCIATION

- Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Resilient Waters (MakeWay Charitable Society)
- WestWind Foundation

The Association also received funds for legal and related work conducted through collaborations with Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Oceans North Conservation Society, WWF Canada, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## REVENUES

	FOR YEAR ENDED APRIL 30, 2023				FOR YEAR ENDED
	Association	Foundation	EDRF	Total	APRIL 30, 2022
					Total
Law Foundation of BC	488,278	-	-	488,278	470,000
Allocation to EDRF	(153,577)	-	153,577	-	-
Donations	6,347	431,887	-	438,234	586,046
Grants & Contracts Earned	566,985	1,987,053	-	2,554,038	2,294,623
Other Income	328,696	140,087	21	468,804	276,139
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>1,236,729</b>	<b>2,559,027</b>	<b>153,598</b>	<b>3,949,354</b>	<b>3,626,808</b>

## GRANTS AND EXPENSES

	FOR YEAR ENDED APRIL 30, 2023				FOR YEAR ENDED
	Association	Foundation	EDRF	Total	APRIL 30, 2022
					Total
Personnel Related	945,867	1,512,887	-	2,458,754	2,178,941
Professional Services	8,947	10,859	-	19,806	10,708
Rent and Office Expenses	158,670	154,353	-	313,023	260,365
Amortization	18,610	13,194	-	31,804	25,610
EDRF Grants	-	-	153,577	153,577	176,423
Program Expenses	89,468	430,659	21	520,148	465,706
Fundraising	-	14,634	-	14,634	20,962
Administration Fee	-	324,882	-	324,882	209,561
<b>Total Grants and Expenses</b>	<b>1,221,562</b>	<b>2,461,468</b>	<b>153,598</b>	<b>3,836,628</b>	<b>3,348,276</b>
Excess revenue for the year	15,167	97,559	-	112,726	278,532

*Excerpt from the audited financial statements of West Coast Environmental Law Association, West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation, and West Coast Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund Society. Full audited financial statements available upon request.*

# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK

I have been at West Coast for one year now, and when I speak with my colleagues, I'm always struck by all of their knowledge and insights into the complexities of environmental advocacy. From legal experts to strategists and communicators, each of our staff members plays an integral role in shaping our work.

At West Coast Environmental Law, we firmly believe in environmental justice. We recognize that Indigenous, Black, and people of colour (IBPOC) and low-income communities disproportionately bear the burden of climate change and environmental stressors. We also acknowledge the interconnect- edness of social justice issues and the environment.

The unfortunate truth is that environmental harms have become distress- ingly "normal" in many communities. This normalization must end. We stand with the individuals who are courageously standing up for their land, air, and water. Our goal is to support them by providing direct support, but also by shaping our governments' policies to make sure the environment we rely on is protected.

This is where our donors and funders come in. Every donation we receive allows West Coast to remain responsive and act on emerging environmental challenges. The support we receive from dedicated foundations and individ- uals allows us to provide environmental legal aid, environmental law research and analysis, and education services, to promote protection of the environ- ment and public participation in environmental decision-making.

The information included in this report is just a sample of the work that we were able to accomplish this year. Our funders, donors, supporters and vol- unteers are all key players in these successes and many more.

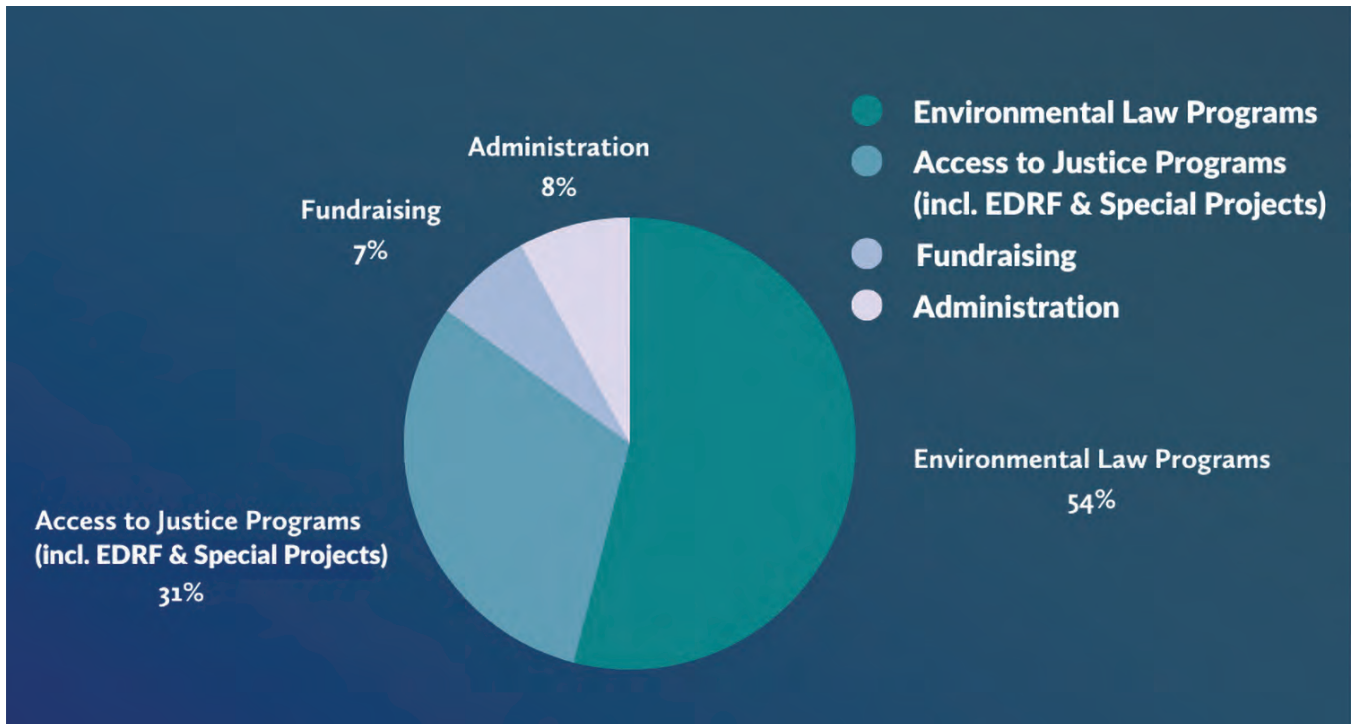
Now is the time to harness our hope for the future. Now is the time to take collective action. We need to do this for ourselves, our neighbours, and the generations that will come after us. Thank you for supporting our work. We're so grateful to have you on our side.



**SAMBRIDDHI NEPAL**

**DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT**

# WHERE YOUR DONATION GOES



At West Coast Environmental Law, your gift today, or in the future, is a significant source of support for our critical work, and is fundamental to preserving the environment now and in years to come. There are a number of ways you can support West Coast, and in so doing, make a lasting commitment to the environment and your community:

- **Become a West Coast Wavemaker:** Monthly donors are the backbone of our organization. This way of giving provides consistent, reliable support to West Coast’s programs with minimal effort. Even \$10 a month makes a big impact.
- **An Environmental Legacy – Yours to Give:** Protect the environment through law, for generations. By leaving a gift to West Coast Environmental Law in your will, you are making a significant contribution to the future sustainability of an organization working to protect what you value most.
- **Tribute or Memorial Gifts:** Make a gift on behalf of someone special, in celebration of a special occasion, or in memory of a family member, friend or colleague.
- **Gifts of Stocks or Securities:** Gifts of securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) enable you to make a big difference in ensuring that environmental protection is enshrined in law – while realizing great tax savings.

## LEGAL NAME:

West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation

## ADDRESS:

#700 – 509 Richards St., Vancouver BC V6B 2Z6

**REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER:** #11929 2451 RR0001

Donations can be made online at [wcel.org/donate](http://wcel.org/donate).  
Call 604-601-2509 for more information and other giving options.



## WEST COAST Environmental Law

West Coast Environmental Law harnesses the power of law to solve complex environmental challenges. We are transforming environmental decision-making and strengthening legal protection for the environment—through collaborative legal strategies that bridge Indigenous and Canadian law. By putting the law in the hands of communities and creating legal risk for those who would harm our land, air and water, we are building the collective power to achieve a more just and sustainable future for all.

#700 – 509 Richards St., Vancouver BC V6B 2Z6  
xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish)  
& səɫ ilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) Territories

**Phone:** 604-684-7378 or 1-800-330-WCEL

**Fax:** 604-684-1312

**Email:** [admin@wcel.org](mailto:admin@wcel.org) • **Web:** [www.wcel.org](http://www.wcel.org)  
Charitable Registration #11929 2415 RR0001

**Cover image:** An old-growth cedar during spring.  
Photo by [twigymuleford](https://www.instagram.com/twigymuleford)