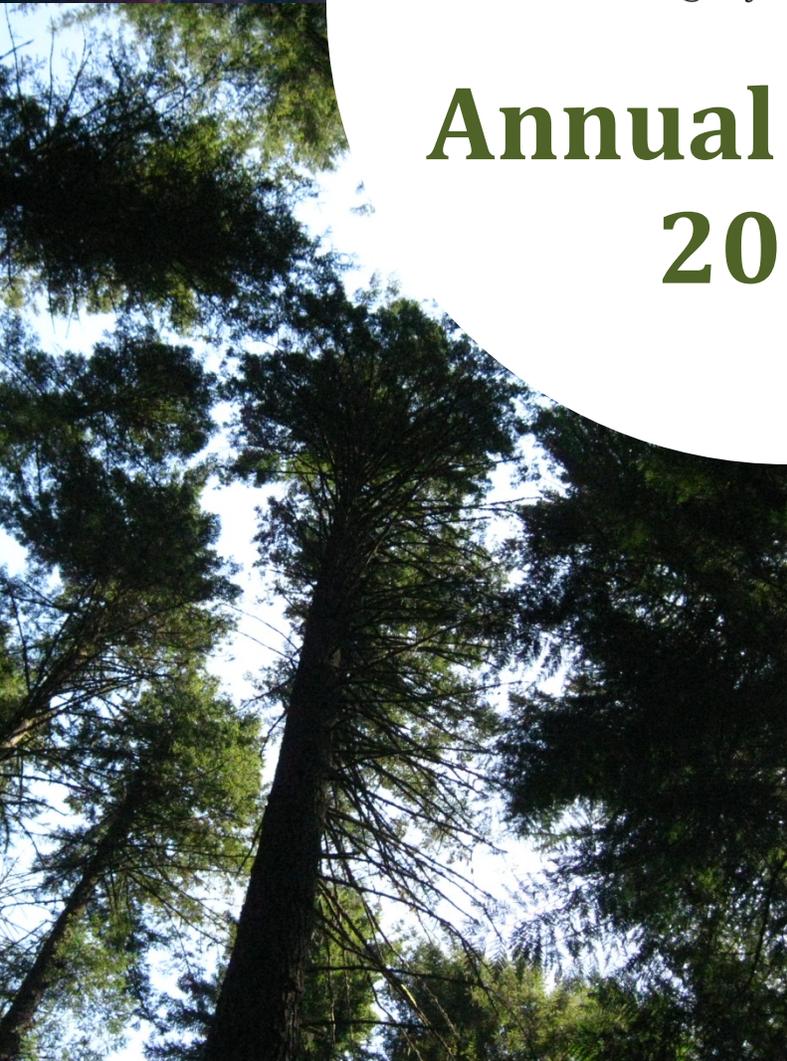




**Watershed  
Watch**  **SALMON  
SOCIETY**

*Watching out for BC's Wild Salmon*

# Annual Report 2013





## About Watershed Watch

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For nearly 16 years the Watershed Watch Salmon Society has advocated for better care for wild salmon. Maintaining diverse wild salmon populations and their habitats provides many benefits—to salmon, ecosystems, and people. By exposing threats and calling for conservation action, Watershed Watch has played a leading role in reducing—even reversing—impacts of overfishing, habitat destruction, aquaculture, irresponsible hydro development, and government indifference.

Watershed Watch’s “hybrid” approach to salmon conservation is a blend of fact-and-values-based advocacy, scientific expertise, fiscal responsibility, and a recent transition to engagement organizing. This approach is encompassed by our Theory of Change, where we seek to “better protect wild salmon and their habitat by engaging, organizing, and galvanizing our supporters, earning their trust, respect and help, by marshaling evidence of threats and championing solutions.”

As the task of saving salmon gets ever more challenging, Watershed Watch is pushing ever harder to put our Theory of Change in play throughout British Columbia; through our ongoing work and earned position; through our special advisory roles and partnerships (academic, First Nations, ENGOs, public); through earned and social media; by gathering evidence of threats on the ground and on the water; holding governments and others to account; championing solutions to the public, policy-makers, and industry; and by engaging the help of our growing list of supporters.

## Staff

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Executive Director, Dr. Craig Orr

Ecologist, Aaron Hill

Biologist, Stan Proboszcz

Communications Coordinator, Trish Hall

Administrative Coordinator, Jace Haramati

Fraser Voice Organizer, Lina Azeez

# Message from Craig Orr, Executive Director

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As an ecologist and wild salmon advocate, I'm a staunch supporter of Canada's Wild Salmon Policy. The WSP, as us acronym-loving humans dub it, sets out a blueprint for maintaining the diversity and adaptive capacity of Canada's rich-but-fragile wild salmon. Maintaining salmon diversity is the best way to ensure that salmon—as a whole—can adapt and persist in a world of changing climate, habitat loss, overfishing, and other human-related pressures.

As a member of the animal kingdom I strive to remember that I'm part of nature, not apart from it. That means not only is my well-being linked to that of healthy ecosystems, but also that, like salmon, it behooves me to maintain my personal and professional adaptive capacity. Changing conditions require that we adapt to and not resist change. Or, as the guru of adaptive management, Buzz Holling puts it, "conserving the elements we have is not the goal for a search for what is enduring. Otherwise, we would still be blacksmiths and buggy-whip makers."

Yet, much of the way we do advocacy these days is rooted in outdated assumptions and models. Traditional organizations tend to be single-focus (e.g. environmental protection) groups that work "mainly through Enlightenment-style truth telling, deep issue expertise, and direct access to decision makers who seemed ready to listen."<sup>1</sup> We research the issues, try our best to alert people to threats and government inaction, and attend lots of meetings trying to enlist support and influence the occasional decision-maker to do the right thing.

On occasion this may result in progress, as we've seen in changes to the operations of BC Hydro with respect to fish; a more modern Water Act; improved awareness and pressure to protect wild salmon from impacts of open net-cage salmon farms; the revealing evidence, testimony, and recommendations emerging from Canada's first federal sockeye inquiry; and slightly more sensitive salmon fisheries informed by improved by-catch monitoring.

Overall, though, we often feel like we are beating our heads against a wall. Increasingly it seems that going to yet another meeting with a fisheries bureaucrat is simply not worth the squeeze—especially with a federal government seemingly singularly focussed on weakening Canada's environmental protection regulations at the expense of Canada's environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt Price and Jon Stahl. 2012. Engagement Organizing: The Culture and Technology of Building Power.





Dr. Craig Orr  
Watershed Watch Salmon Society



In the current environment, truth-telling no longer drives law and policy outcomes, since political “truth” is now more a matter of mobilizing voters than mobilizing facts.<sup>2</sup> Citizens increasingly despair that government has abandoned evidence-based decision-making.<sup>3</sup>

So, as an organization—as this report outlines—Watershed Watch is adapting and trying another approach, an approach that seeks to engage and expand our base of support for conservation.

Indeed, 2013 was an especially major shift for us in terms of how Watershed Watch is now attempting to protect wild salmon. We’ve hired new staff to organize and engage supporters in the Fraser Valley, and worked hard to expand our “list” of supporters. We’ve attempted to rally supporters to push government to disallow recycling of toxic chemicals near the Fraser River, and to adopt the thoughtful recommendations around saving Fraser sockeye stemming from the ambitious and costly Cohen Inquiry. We’ve worked hard to engage support for a new plan for the Coquitlam watershed that links ecosystem health with important measures of human well-being. We’ve organized new “boots on the ground” and “no expansion” campaigns to better deal with habitat and harvest threats, along with those posed by open net-cage salmon farming. And staff have been extremely active in reshaping themselves and Watershed Watch into a new “hybrid” using new tools designed to advance our “Theory of change.”

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<sup>2</sup> Matt Price and Jon Stahl. 2012. *Engagement Organizing: The Culture and Technology of Building Power*.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Turner. 2013. *The War on Science: Muzzled Scientists and Wilful Blindness in Stephen Harper’s Canada*. Greystone Books Ltd.

## Message from Aaron Hill, Staff Ecologist

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Bearing witness is a powerful thing, and as a conservation charity whose motto is “Watching out for BC’s wild salmon”, it is one of the most important things we can do.

Watershed Watch is one of BC’s leading advocates for sustainability in our salmon fisheries, whether they’re commercial, recreational, or aboriginal. We chair the Pacific Marine Conservation Caucus—the official consultative body between the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and conservation groups—and we participate in numerous advisory processes that shape salmon fisheries in BC. But sometimes going to meetings and writing letters just isn’t enough to deal with problems and advance solutions in our salmon fisheries.

One of the main problems with many of our salmon fisheries is the unintended catch of non-target stocks. Most of the catch in our commercial fisheries takes place in coastal areas where dozens—sometimes hundreds—of various salmon runs migrate and mix together. These “mixed-stock” fisheries are usually sustainable for the healthy, abundant salmon runs they are targeting, but can have big impacts on the depleted or endangered runs that get caught as “by-catch”. In order to keep these impacts as low as possible, fishermen are required to return non-target species to the water with the “least possible harm”. Studies have shown that when commercial fishermen make a real effort, educate and encourage their crew, and have necessary equipment like revival boxes on board, combined with effective enforcement and third-party oversight, the survival rate can be reasonably good for the prohibited fish they put back in the water. But when you have a competitive derby-style fishery, no enforcement, no incentives, and ineffective third-party oversight, the results are predictably awful. That’s what was happening last year in the north coast seine fishery for pink salmon; the largest salmon fishery on Canada’s west coast at the time.

For years we had been getting reports from fishermen who were disgusted with what they were seeing on the fishing grounds: crews not making any effort to get prohibited fish species back into the water alive, with no consequences from DFO or the bosses at the companies that own the boats and buy the fish. For several fishing seasons in a row we joined our colleagues at SkeenaWild Conservation Trust and





**Aaron Hill**

Watershed Watch Salmon Society

Raincoast Conservation Foundation in demanding that DFO enforce their own rules in the commercial fishery, and we were consistently ignored, until last year.

I planned a recreational fishing trip during my summer vacation to coincide with a seine fishery near the entrance to Douglas Channel, 140 kilometres south of Prince Rupert. Armed with a high-quality video camera from our allies at SkeenaWild, I set out for a few days of coho fishing with my wife and father. When we arrived on the fishing grounds on August 4, it didn't take long for us to find what we were looking for. On each of the three boats we filmed, crews were blatantly mishandling the prohibited by-catch species that they were required to keep alive—mostly chum salmon from severely depleted north coast rivers. One crew in particular was essentially waiting for the large-bodied chum to die on deck before throwing them back.

We immediately reported what we'd seen to the "charter patrolman" who was in the area—an independent contractor charged with monitoring the fishery, but with no enforcement powers. Once back in cell phone range we contacted DFO fishery managers, and again demanded that they either halt the illegal fishing practices that appeared to be widespread in the fleet, or shut down the fishery. DFO chose to maintain the outrageous status quo, and so we went public with our video ([YouTube: A Fishery Out of Control](#)). And then, finally, after widespread media coverage implicating both DFO and the Jim Pattison Group (which controls the majority of the seine fleet), DFO sent enforcement officers to monitor the largest commercial salmon fishery on Canada's west coast.

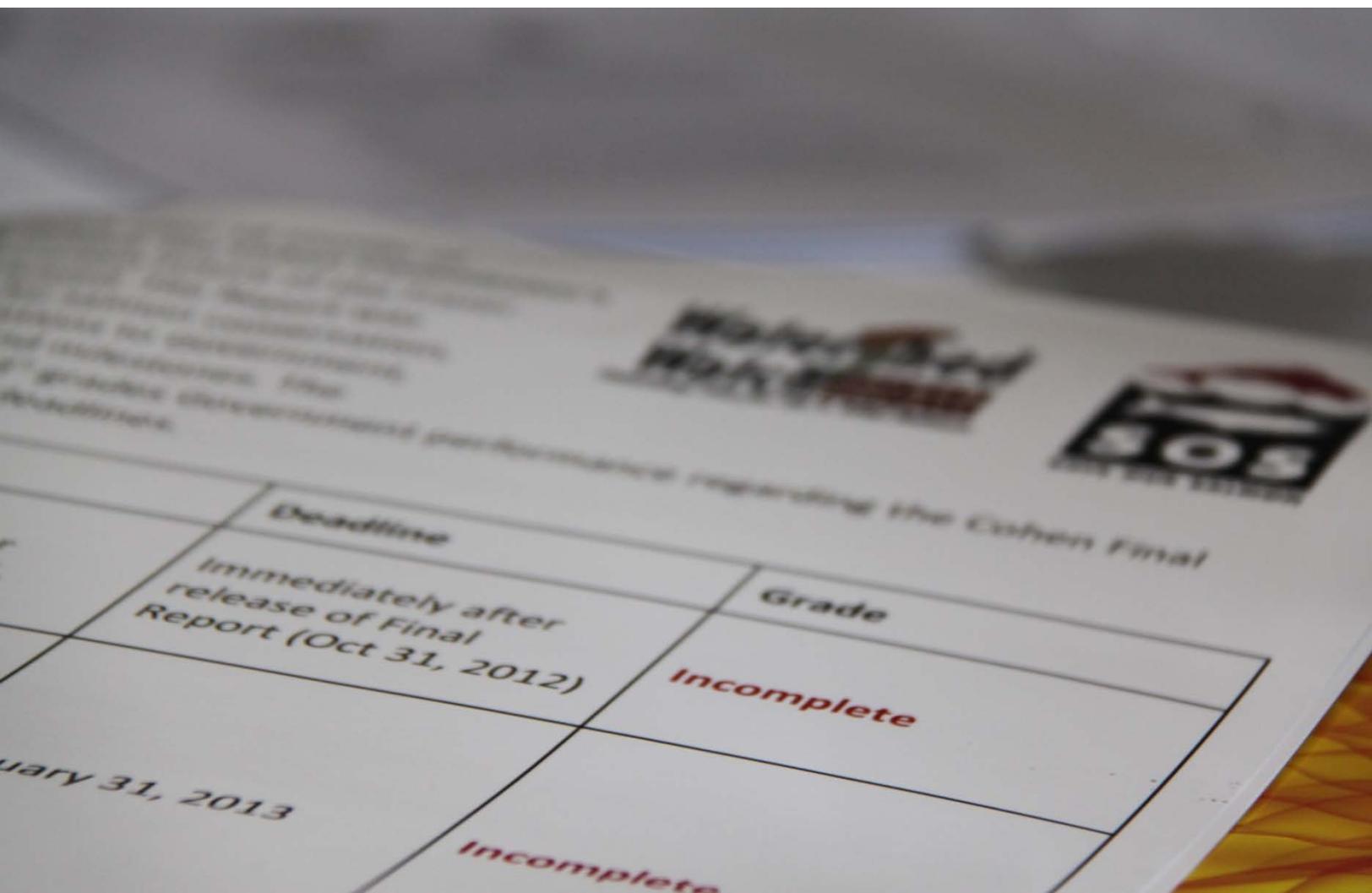
The story doesn't end there. Our exposure of illegal fishing practices and DFO's lack of oversight have led to commitments from industry leaders to clean up their act. But old habits die hard, oversight of the fishery is still too weak, with no incentives for good behaviour. We are continuing to monitor problem fisheries in 2014, and expanding our Boots on the Ground approach to address other threats to wild salmon, including pollution and other forms of habitat destruction.

## Message from Stan Proboszcz, Staff Biologist

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It's been a busy year following-up on the Cohen Inquiry into the Decline of Fraser River sockeye. At first, along with other Watershed Watch staff, I was skeptical of participating in the Inquiry. We thought the process might lack rigor and independence, like so many other government initiatives, but we soon changed our minds after cooperating with the many people joining together to work on the Inquiry. It was an inspiring experience.

One incident in particular was memorable. Both Alexandra Morton and I submitted affidavits arguing for the release of primary sea lice and disease data from salmon farms to participants of the Inquiry. Before the Inquiry, the province guarded this information dearly and fought hard for years against releasing it to public interest groups. We managed to convince Justice Cohen to release the sea lice and disease information to us to examine. An extremely validating moment for me during the hearings was the day when Justice Cohen began making this information available to the public. It was an incredible moment to witness, partly because arguments the province used for years to guard against releasing the data didn't seem to even evoke Justice Cohen to bat an eyelash. The minute the first sea lice data file was released—which meant the disease data would soon follow—the lead communications person from the BC Salmon Farmers Association headed for the hearing room exit with cell phone in hand and a distressed look. For good reason, this release started to open the floodgates on disease issues surrounding salmon farms and the risks they pose to wild salmon. This was a huge win, but looking forward, the battle isn't over yet.





**Stan Proboszcz, M.Sc.**  
**Fisheries Biologist**



Since the Inquiry wrapped-up, we've been working to press the federal government to take action on the Inquiry's final recommendations. Unfortunately, they've been pretty quiet despite us tracking their lack of action and filing Access to Information Requests and Environmental Petitions to the Auditor General of Canada. Despite warnings arising from the Cohen Inquiry about the disease risks of salmon farms, it's shocking to see the federal government opening the doors to a salmon farm expansion in BC. Two new farms are being proposed at the north end of Vancouver Island and this is just the beginning.

It's a critical time for BC and its iconic wild salmon. In response to the lack of action on the Cohen Inquiry and salmon farm expansions, we recently launched a new initiative to build a network of people through our Citizen's Petition to show MPs they need to do the right thing and stand up to protect salmon. Once we build our petition to 5000, we'll present it publicly to 4 British Columbian MPs (one from each federal party) and demand action to protect wild salmon and action on the \$26 million Sockeye Inquiry Recommendations Canadians paid for. Stand up for wild salmon and help us get the word out about our No Expansion Campaign.

# Message from Lina Azeez, Fraser Voice Organizer

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There is a bold new movement sweeping North America. It's a movement meant to enable people to come together and pool their resources to make real change at all levels, at any scale. At Watershed Watch we see the power in this movement and have changed the way we work to bring this tool, called Organizing, in to our very core operations. We recognize that power is in the local and want to support, mobilize and engage people disillusioned with the status quo towards action!

We are excited about this turning point for Watershed Watch and have been taking training courses, webinars and reading books on the ideologies, the psychologies and the practical aspects of engaging people through organizing. We learnt about "snowflakes" and "pyramids of engagement" and are customizing these models to best fit the work we do. We've had the opportunity to learn from and grow with an Organizing community across the country which provides support as we rebuild the way we approached issues and current projects.

One of the beautiful things about our new trajectory is the opportunity to reach out to people who you would traditionally not consider environmentalists or conservationists. These are people who know deep down that our current rate of over consumption, disregard for and destruction of natural spaces are economically short-sighted and want to do something about it. Naturally we are nothing without our long-time supporters and hope they continue to support us through this great transition. Working together across traditional divisive lines will bring us closer to our common goal: a resilient ecosystem left better than when we found it.

As the newest member to Watershed Watch, I fell right in to the midst of this evolution. What a great time to join any organization. My goal is to build relationships in communities with those concerned about our current trajectory as a society. Through an initiative called Fraser Voice, I am focused on supporting and building momentum around local environmental issues that impact salmon and salmon habitat. Depending on the community and the issue it can take many different turns.

Two campaigns have dominated Fraser Voice. Being a new program, I took Fraser Voice on the road and introduced myself and the program to different community groups and organizations such as the First Nation's Fisheries Council. Through follow up discussion it was brought to my attention that there were plans to build a hazardous waste recycling facility on the banks of the Fraser River in Chilliwack. The process seemed unfair; residents had not been given proper notice and were misled by the public announcement to believe the facility was a recycling facility (paper, plastic etc). I was asked to become involved and help bring a voice to the situation. This issue fit our Watershed Watch mandate in many ways. It was an opportunity to build awareness of and mobilize people towards action to stop the steamrolling of process over common sense and popular consensus. With a coalition of over 20 organizations from the international to the grass roots and a dedicated groups of concerned citizens we worked to build public awareness, hosted an Open House attended by over 100 people, and asked City Council to make the right choice. Unfortunately, council voted unanimously to rezone the property for hazardous waste.



Undeterred, the fight continues. One member of the Coalition, a resident of Chilliwack, is taking the City to court to bring back the rezoning process to the public hearing stage to give people an opportunity to register their concerns. The message is clear: we are not opposed to a recycling facility for hazardous wastes, in fact it is much needed; however, its location in a flood plain on the banks of the Fraser River is irresponsible. Watershed Watch was successful in moving the dialogue and drawing attention to the issue, even receiving a written statement from a downstream MLA concerned for the well-being of his constituency, calling the location “fraught with hazard.” The campaign continues with a court date set for September 17, 2014 which provides another opportunity to galvanize people in to action, to show support and become involved in a local issue that has repercussions that could very well be felt downstream.

Another campaign quite different in flavour and urgency is the Storymapping pilot project. Partnering with the Canadian Freshwater Alliance and armed with an iPad to record stories, I had some great conversations with people about the deep connection they have to waterways and natural places in the Fraser Valley. By collecting these stories, we are able to galvanize the link between personal well-being and ecosystem health, developing relationships with people who want to see these areas protected.

These two projects highlight some very local relationship building work I am involved with that directly relate back to Watershed Watch’s goals to create a movement from the local up. Building strong connections locally, with people who understand their responsibility to each other and to the future makes us a stronger organization capable of advocating for change at every level. We watch out for salmon and salmon habitats but we cannot do it alone.

## Message from Trish Hall, Communications Coord.

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As soon as I tell anyone I work for Watershed Watch, they assume it's a field position where I'm taking water samples and physically watching over salmon and their habitat. My real role involves a lot more time in an office at a computer with spreadsheets, reports, and website updates – or in other words, the behind the scenes work that helps ensure Watershed Watch can be effective in our mission of protecting BC's wild salmon.

As you've read in the rest of this report, 2013 focused on transitions and upgrades. Working closely with my teammate – Administrative Coordinator, Jace Haramati – we've been busy behind the scenes making sure we're best equipped to handle these changes. The most significant improvement in 2013 was the implementation of Salesforce as our Constituent Relationship Management software. Now, that may sound about as exciting as watching paint dry, but what it means for Watershed Watch is a significant improvement in our ability to track contacts, increase effectiveness and tracking of our communications, and improve measurability of our campaigns to know if we're on the right track, or if we should adjust our plan.

This improved tracking is an essential component of our transition to engagement organizing. Communications, especially social media, is a constantly shifting landscape as we try to figure out the most effective way to connect with people. Throughout 2013 all Watershed Watch staff worked on moving outside our comfort zone, of the typical quick web and social media posts, and stretched our creative muscles with the development of memes, YouTube videos and investigating new channels of getting our message out to new people who share our vision of healthy salmon and ecosystems.

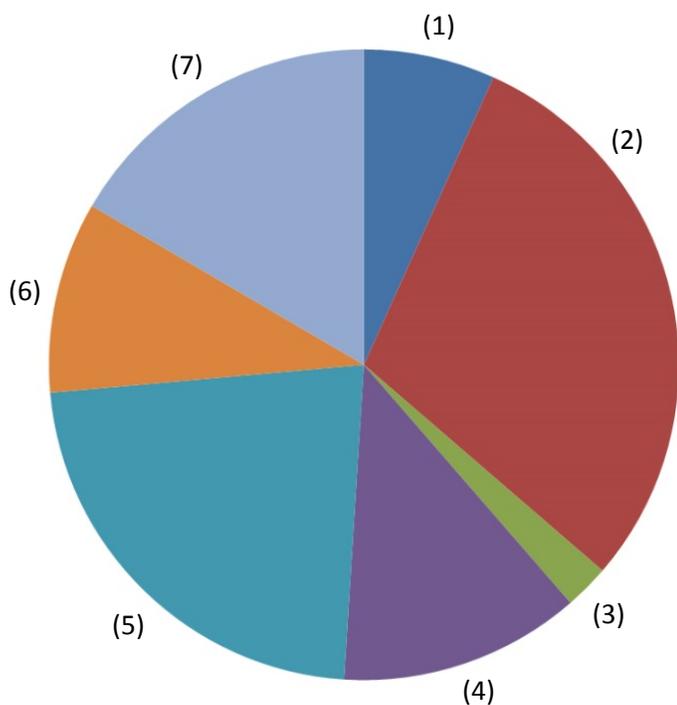
Admin-types like us may work behind the scenes, but every spreadsheet prepared or report created is done with the same ultimate goal of protecting the salmon we love!





## 2013 Financial Summary

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Aquaculture (1)	\$ 32,966
Capacity & Engagement (2)	\$ 144,565
Consulting & General (3)	\$ 11,231
First Nations & KFN (4)	\$ 60,551
Harvest (5)	\$ 110,399
Water & Energy (6)	\$ 48,005
WSP / Habitat / Cohen (7)	\$ 81,111
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 488,828</b>

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# Thank you to our supporters!

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Watershed Watch's efforts to protect B.C.'s wild salmon are only possible thanks to our generous supporters. Our 2013 conservation campaigns were funded mainly thanks to the following:

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Bruce P. Dancik

First Nations Fisheries Council

Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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One Percent for the Planet

Preet Pall

Richard Ronyecz

SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

SOS Marine Conservation Foundation

Victoria Foundation

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