

SEATTLE AQUARIUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



We are honored

to be responsible guests
on the traditional and
contemporary territories of the
Coast Salish people, who have
stewarded these lands and
waters since time immemorial.



**WITH YOUR SUPPORT,
WE ARE GROWING—
OUR SERVICE TO
OUR COMMUNITY,
OUR IMPACT, OUR
CAMPUS AND MORE.**

A stroll along the waterfront will tell you instantly that the Aquarium is growing. And the Ocean Pavilion is just the beginning of the many ways we're expanding, sustainably, on our conservation mission. Together, we're making a difference for the one world ocean we all depend on.

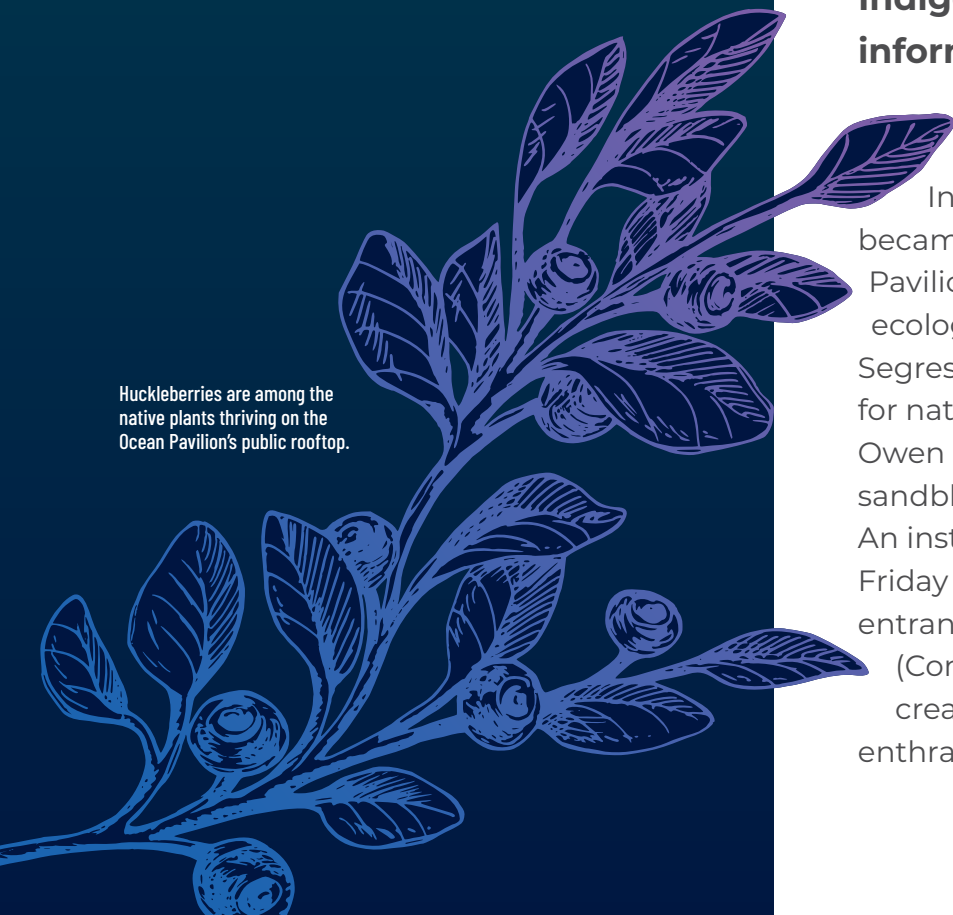


Our expanded campus nearing completion at the heart of the city's revitalized waterfront.

GROWING EXCITEMENT: building the Ocean Pavilion experience

As our expansion came closer to completion, teams from across the Aquarium and the community worked to prepare its spaces for extraordinary animals and eager guests.

Huckleberries are among the native plants thriving on the Ocean Pavilion's public rooftop.



Milestones and bio balls

Big, visible changes were the norm as we prepared to open the Ocean Pavilion. Walls went up, windows went in and Alaskan yellow cedar siding—Forest Stewardship Council-certified and procured from an Indigenous-owned company—was installed.

Inside was a hub of activity too. An exciting milestone was the arrival of salt water, pumped from Elliott Bay into the Ocean Pavilion's habitats to recirculate in the closed-loop system.

Soon after, we began building biological filtration: a population of beneficial bacteria to keep the Ocean Pavilion's animals thriving. The bacteria live on surfaces, so we jumpstarted the process with about half a million bio balls—small life-support components that optimize surface area for the bacteria to populate. The balls helped create an environment rich in beneficial bacteria in the new habitats.

Indigenous knowledge and artistry inform design inside and out

Integral since the beginning of our expansion, co-creation with Indigenous community members became more visible as the Ocean Pavilion neared completion. Traditional ecological knowledge-keeper Valerie Segrest (Muckleshoot) provided guidance for native plantings on the public rooftop; Owen Oliver (Quinault/Isleta Pueblo) led sandblasted images to complement them. An installation by glass artist Daniel Joseph Friday (Lummi) took shape at the building's entrance. And visual artist Paige Pettibon (Confederated Salish and Kootenai) created a Salish Sea migration wheel to enthrall guests inside.



The team gathering beneficial bacteria-building bio balls for the Ocean Pavilion's habitats.

Inspiring conservation action in a compelling new space

Pre-opening preparations also included planning for what our staff and volunteers do best: inspire our guests through in-person interpretation, with vibrant new habitats and animals as the starting point. Diver presentations, empathy framing, immersive digital experiences and conversations about artifacts representing hope for the future—all come together to tell the story of Earth's one ocean, and that each of us has a role in protecting it.

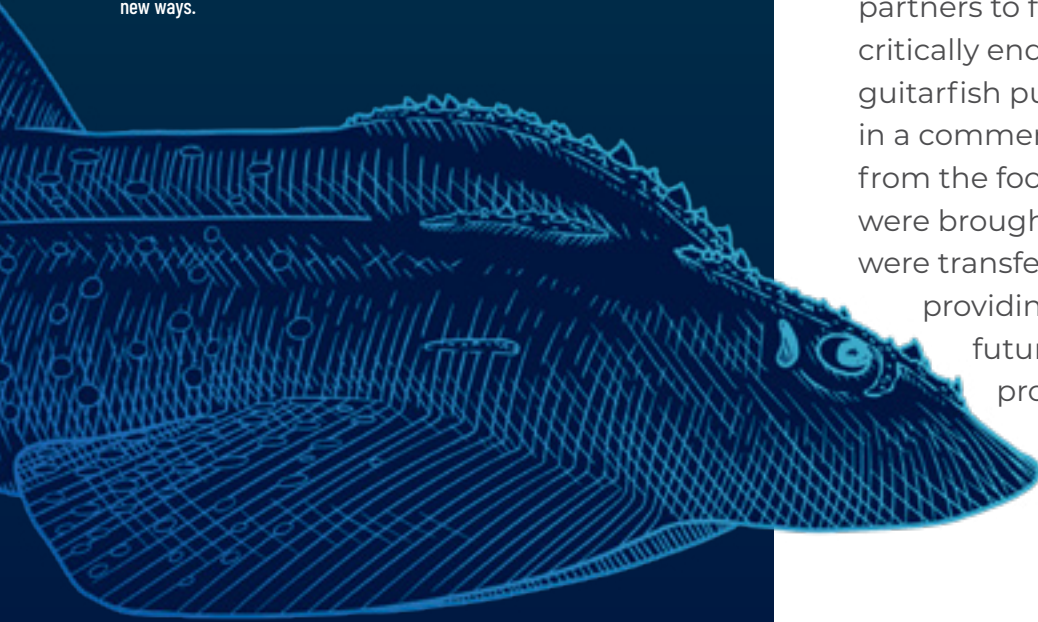
” FIFTY YEARS AGO, I LOOKED OUT AT THE WATERFRONT AND DREAMED OF WHAT IT COULD BE. THE AQUARIUM AND THE NEW WATERFRONT WITHOUT THE VIADUCT WILL REVEAL, IN REAL TIME AND FORM, WHAT THAT DREAM HAS BECOME.

—DOUG NORBERG,
GENEROUS SUPPORTER OF THE
ONE OCEAN, ONE FUTURE CAMPAIGN

GROWING WELLBEING: welcoming and caring for new animals

At the Aquarium, it all starts with the animals—even behind the scenes, as we prepared to bring our guests face to face with sharks, rays, reef fish, corals and more

Amazing animals like bowmouth guitarfish help us tell our conservation story in exciting new ways.



Bringing the Animal Care Center to life (literally)

Our off-site Animal Care Center (ACC) kicked into high gear in the months leading up to the opening of the Ocean Pavilion. The base for our pinto abalone nursery (see page 10), sea turtle rehabilitation and microplastics research—and a transport hub for the ReShark program (see page 10)—this state-of-the-art facility also provided essential space for new animals and plants to acclimate and quarantine before settling into their future habitats in the Ocean Pavilion.

Goatfish, spotted eagle rays, blue-spotted rays, mangroves and more arrived at the ACC in 2023. Our coral propagation program made the move from a back-of-house area at the Aquarium to a spacious setting in the ACC as well. These important months allowed our teams to get to know all the animals—and plants—before their moves to the Ocean Pavilion.

Safe homes for a species facing extinction

In 2023, we worked with conservation partners to find safe homes for nine critically endangered bowmouth guitarfish pups, born to a female caught in a commercial fishing net—and diverted from the food market. After the pups were brought to the ACC for care, eight were transferred to other U.S. aquariums, providing the foundation for a potential future conservation breeding program. One has remained with us, an inspiring ambassador for her species.



Target training with the Indo-Pacific leopard shark in our care at the Animal Care Center. He has since moved into The Reef habitat, where the training continues—delighting all who witness it.

Adding expertise for the expanded Aquarium

Increasing the number of animals in our care also meant making meaningful increases to the number of staff who care for them—and their habitats. In addition to new, dedicated animal care roles, we expanded our water quality team and added a new executive role: chief conservation officer, held by former vice president of conservation programs and partnerships Dr. Erin Meyer.

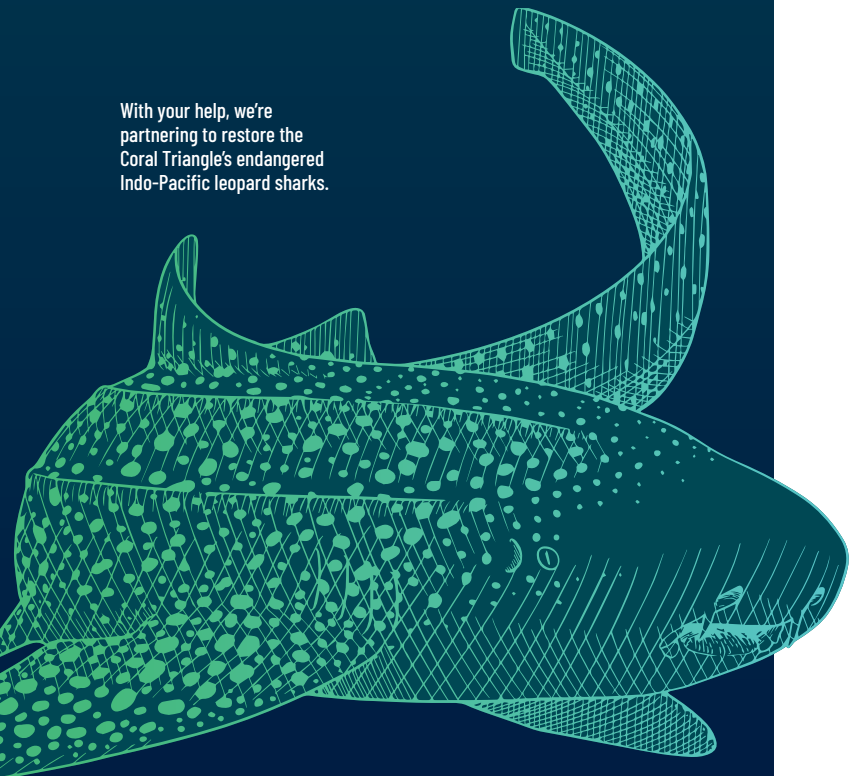


The expanded water quality team. From left: Juliette Horn, Keenan Wong, Tobias Brown, Angela Smith, Hannah Mewhirter.

GROWING IMPACT: making a difference for species around the world

With your partnership, we're making significant progress in our collaborative work to help recover at-risk animals and habitats here at home—and across the ocean.

With your help, we're partnering to restore the Coral Triangle's endangered Indo-Pacific leopard sharks.



Exciting moves for endangered pinto abalone

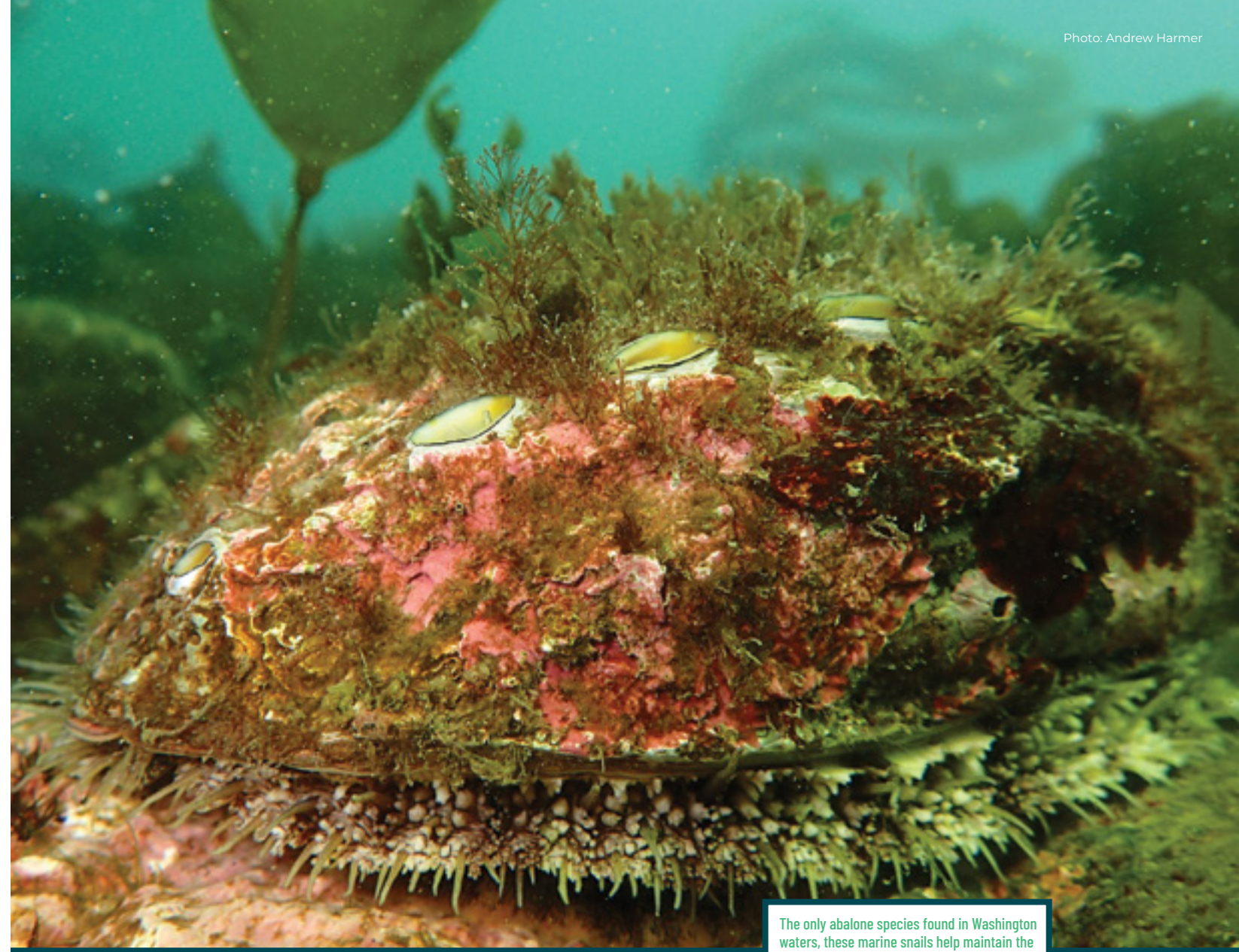
xʷč'itq̓s, pinto abalone in the Lushootseed language, were listed as endangered in Washington state in 2019. These marine snails play a critical role in kelp forest and rocky reef ecosystem health and are culturally important to Indigenous peoples. Since 2021, we've been partnering to help restore their populations, with some notable milestones in 2023.

With your support, we opened a state-of-the-art rearing facility in the Animal Care Center (ACC), now hosting thousands of juvenile pinto abalone. With help from our partners, we also had our second successful outplanting to sites in the San Juan Islands—nearly 3,500 pinto abalone are now growing and thriving in their new homes. We're currently in the process of exploring potential restoration efforts for another endangered local species: sunflower sea stars.

The ReShark collective earns its name (and then some!)

What a year 2023 was for the StAR Project—the inaugural effort of the ReShark collective, of which we're a founding member. In January, the first two Indo-Pacific leopard sharks were released to great fanfare in Indonesia, even receiving coverage by *National Geographic*. Over 90 million people worldwide learned about the groundbreaking work to restore these endangered animals to their home waters via the article.

Since then, more eggs have arrived to our care at the ACC—with eight transported to hatch in Indonesia and one remaining with us to hatch and, ultimately, inspire our guests.



The only abalone species found in Washington waters, these marine snails help maintain the health of rocky reef and kelp forest habitats by grazing on surfaces and clearing space for other animals and plants to attach.

Helping kelp with research and advocacy

Furthering our efforts to monitor kelp in 2023, we continued our kelp research with the Port of Seattle and initiated a new EPA-funded project to study how ROVs can contribute to kelp conservation. Our research has generated publicly available analytical tools and software that are being used by our tribal partners. We also mobilized support for the Help Our Kelp Act in Congress, which would authorize new funding for wild kelp forest recovery.



Research Technician Megan Williams and Research Scientist Dr. Zachary Randell using the ROV to monitor kelp along Seattle's urban waterfront.

GROWING ENGAGEMENT: reaching out to our communities

As part of our ongoing focus on access and inclusivity, our expansion helps us connect with even more people—at the Aquarium and in the community.

Meeting people on local shorelines and rivers helps foster empathy for wildlife in the moment.



Classrooms spreading the word about the importance of coral

In a true grass-roots effort, elementary school students around the region participated in our coral conservation contest in late 2023. After learning about the importance of corals to marine ecosystems and how to help them, students shared their newfound knowledge and encouraged positive action within their communities through a variety of creative projects.

The winning entries included art made by children in kindergarten and 1st grade and displayed at their school's entrance; a set of bilingual books written by 3rd- and 4th-graders; and a website developed by 4th- and 5th-graders. In all, 17 classes participated, reaching over 8,000 people with messages of positivity and hope about ocean health.

Breaking records on local shorelines

Our free Beach Naturalist and Cedar River Salmon Journey programs are offered at local beaches, the Cedar River and the Ballard Locks. As naturalists talk with people of all ages and backgrounds, they also inspire conservation action with entirely new audiences.

In 2023, beach naturalists had 62,528 conversations at 11 sites on 22 days. And the Cedar River Salmon Journey broke records with 30,444 people engaging with naturalists at events, the Locks and the river.



Creativity inspires positive action in this entry, created by 2nd graders, from our coral conservation contest.

An Aquarium for all

With your support, 2023 saw the full implementation of our Community Days series—when we co-build celebrations of diverse cultures with meaningful activities, performances, language interpretation during our daily presentations and more. Held during heritage months, holidays and awareness days, these events are offered at no or low cost for people supported by our Connections program partners.

Throughout the year, thousands of guests joined us to recognize Asian American and Pacific Islander Community Day, ¡Vamos al Acuario!, Queer Community Day and Indigenous Peoples Community Day. We also held space for Eid celebrations. We look forward to continuing to refine and enhance this important series in the future.



A performance by the group Tlalokan was a highlight of our Indigenous Peoples Community Day celebration.



Thank you for partnering with us to foster one-of-a-kind experiences that inspire conservation action.

GROWING LEADERSHIP: YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

The following pages highlight just some of the ways your partnership made a difference in 2023. Together, we're advancing our conservation mission—at the Aquarium as well as in our city, in local communities and around the world—working to protect the ocean that sustains us all.



DRAWING EVER-MORE PEOPLE TO OUR WATERFRONT NEIGHBORHOOD

The Aquarium and Nintendo's Animal Crossing: New Horizons—a perfect pair

For fans of the popular Nintendo Switch™ game, the chance to connect with their favorite characters while exploring our habitats was a dream come true. Running from October through December, the partnership featured photo opportunities, stamp rallies, costumed characters, a scavenger hunt and more.



An irresistible combo: Engaging with beloved video game characters and learning about marine animals.

In the first month alone, 62,367 people visited the Aquarium (a record for October!) and exit surveys revealed that many were first-time visitors.

This was Nintendo's first such promotion in North America—and an exciting new way to connect more people to our conservation mission.

Compelling programming and new elements

Nearly 860,000 people came through our doors in 2023, activating the waterfront and supporting local businesses along the way. Summer brought opportunities to engage with our mission through free programming on Pier 62 in partnership with Friends of Waterfront Park. At the Aquarium, three stunning new murals and a private nursing/pumping



Free, public programming brings our conservation mission to people beyond our front doors.

pod made for even more rewarding visits—in addition to our regular diver and feeding presentations, interpretive talks, puppet shows and more.

Summer campers and students on the rise

We welcomed over 350 kids to our marine summer camp program in 2023—more than ever before—and, with your support, awarded a record 42 scholarships. Our on-site school programs also saw a pandemic-rebound increase in 2023, with nearly 20,000 students and chaperones visiting us for self-guided field trips and classroom programming, over 10,000 of them via scholarship.



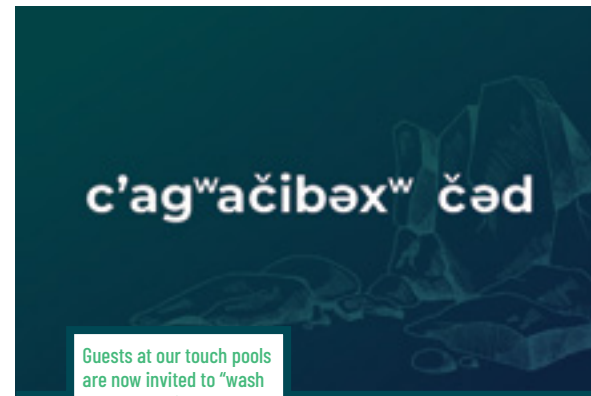
Hands-on exploration is one of the most popular activities for the future marine advocates in our summer camp program.

CHAMPIONING AND SUPPORTING LOCAL WATERS AND COMMUNITIES

Advancing our equity work inside and beyond our walls

Our equity work advanced in 2023 through, among other initiatives, 150+ hours of DEI training across the Aquarium and a system-wide change to hiring, retention and recruitment.

Guests also saw increased integration of our Honoring Place value—through signage in Lushootseed, talks about our relationship with Makah waters during presentations and more.



Guests at our touch pools are now invited to “wash your hands” in the Lushootseed language.

Expanding the circle of marine conservation advocates

Serving more people and increasing access are key elements of our mission—and we furthered that work in 2023 in many ways. For example, our Marine Science Club for high school students grew to include middle schoolers with support from The Boeing Company. We held two DreamNight events, welcoming people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, sensory and other accessibility needs, and their families, to explore the Aquarium. And we enlarged our Empathy Fellowship cohort to four fellows.



Free DreamNight events offer chances to explore the Aquarium to people who might not otherwise visit.

Gathering knowledge and partnering to understand sea otter populations

We completed our 24th year of sea otter conservation projects in 2023—including our 14th year of sea otter foraging research. Our data on local sea otter status, range expansion and when this population may reach equilibrium helps inform government agencies managing them.

In March, we hosted the 13th biennial Sea Otter Conservation Workshop, the largest meeting of sea otter biologists in the world, with over 160 participants and 68 talks. We also met with all four outer coast tribes—Makah, Quileute, Hoh and Quinault—to discuss sea otter research and future collaborations.

Gathering sea otter data on Washington's outer coast to share and help inform management.

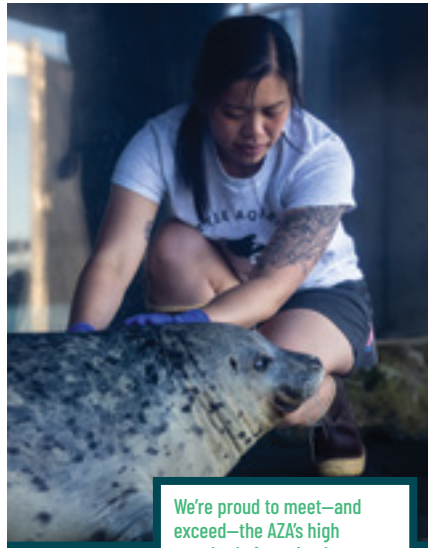


STEWARDING AND ADVOCATING FOR MARINE LIFE

AZA accreditation renewed: “You and your team are doing a fantastic job”

Every five years, the Seattle Aquarium undergoes a rigorous process to renew our accreditation with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)—the independent accrediting organization for zoos and aquariums that meet the highest standards for animal care and welfare.

We’re happy to report that we passed with flying colors—with the quote above as just one example of the feedback we received. We thank teams across the Aquarium for their hard work throughout the process!



We're proud to meet—and exceed—the AZA's high standards for animal care.

Staff expertise benefiting animals in our care—and beyond

Our staff continue to share their expertise with the broader community through AZA leadership roles, field research efforts and more. Closer to home, Veterinary Technician Lindy McMorran became the second person in the continental U.S. to earn the new Certified Aquatic Veterinary Technician (AqVN/T) credential from the World Aquarium Veterinary Medical Association.

Raising our voice to protect ocean health

Working hard to advance science-based policies to protect our marine environment, our policy and advocacy team celebrated some big wins in 2023.

Highlights from the state legislative session included making tangible reductions in three sources of plastic waste: single-use water bottles, mini hotel toiletries and foam-filled dock floats. Consistent surveys of shoreline conditions will enable targeted efforts to recover small schooling fish and salmon. And our local endangered orcas will have a 1,000-yard buffer from small vessels as of January 2025.



Photo: Ricky Osborne

Teens in our Youth Ocean Advocates volunteer program raise their voices for action in Olympia.



Lindy McMorran, second in the continental U.S. to earn the new AqVN/T credential.

DRIVING MARINE CONSERVATION EFFORTS AROUND THE WORLD

Recognizing conservation leaders who protect our ocean

In 2024, our Sylvia Earle Medal and Conservation Research Award were bestowed, respectively, on two global partners working to restore marine life in the Coral Triangle: Rili Djohani, co-founder of the Coral Triangle Center, and Dr. Christine Dudgeon. We've presented these annual Ocean Conservation Honors awards to leaders working to protect the marine environment since 2004.



From left: Sally Jewell, Bob Davidson, Rili Djohani, Martha Kongsgaard, Michael Guidon.

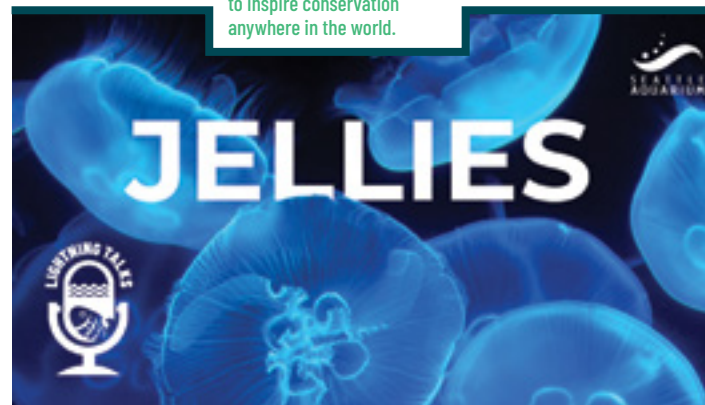
Research initiatives to protect waters near and far

Our research benefits the animals in our care—and also makes a difference for animals and habitats in the wild.

Microplastics, for instance, are found in waters worldwide, including Elliott Bay and our habitats. This ubiquity helps us make the case for policy change. In 2023, our microplastics research program continued to document microplastics and other human-caused debris flowing through our filters from the waters below our pier.

We also completed our 15th year of research in Hawai'i—documenting fish, collecting coral cover data and more—and shared data with the Division of Aquatic Resources to help with management.

Our popular Lightning Talks events are offered online to inspire conservation anywhere in the world.



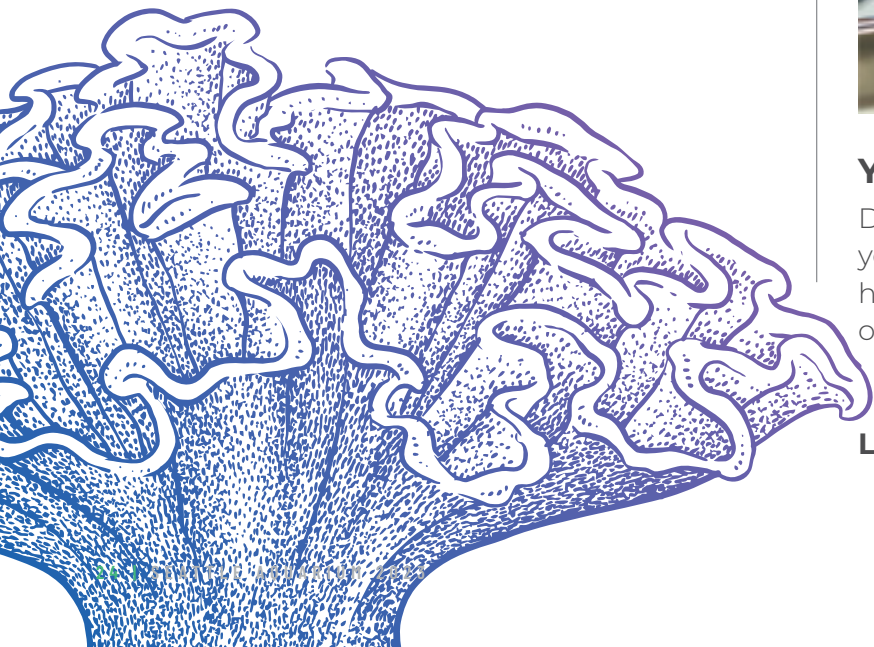
Documenting fish and collecting coral reef data in Hawai'i to share and help inform management.



YOUR SUPPORT MAKES THE EXTRAORDINARY POSSIBLE

So many remarkable milestones achieved this year! And so many more to come. With your partnership, we made great progress on the Ocean Pavilion—along with every facet of our conservation mission—in 2023.

Thank you for your commitment and passion. We wouldn't be here without you.



Total 2023 giving: \$3,592,874.63

Our deepest thanks to you and the 1,908 individuals, foundations, tribes and corporations who generously supported our programs, initiatives, campaign and mission throughout the year.

June 2023: Splash! returns in person

Over 600 guests made our first in-person Splash! gala since 2019 an incredible success—thank you! Held at the Aquarium and reimagined to amplify our mission, the event focused on the incredible animals, programs and people that inspire conservation action.

Co-chairs Andrew Bleiman and Marcus Trufant led a committee that, along with staff from across the Aquarium, created a truly magical evening filled with meaningful conversations and opportunities to learn.

May and November 2023: GiveBIG and Giving Tuesday

An outpouring of generosity affirmed your commitment to our mission in big ways during the year's two community giving days.



Year-end giving

Deep gratitude to everyone who made a year-end gift to the Seattle Aquarium—helping us gather speed for the excitement of the year ahead.

Learn more at SeattleAquarium.org/donate.



Clockwise from left: Guests enjoying the return of in-person Splash!; co-chairs Marcus Trufant and Andrew Bleiman; the evening's magic continues on the back of the pier.

One Ocean, One Future The Campaign for the Seattle Aquarium

We're profoundly grateful for the generous private and government funding that brought our \$160M campaign ever-closer to completion. At year-end, the campaign was 81% to goal, with giving from people, foundations, tribes and corporations at \$71,604,526, and government funders providing \$57,425,000.

The campaign ends on December 31, 2024—thank you for considering a pledge that will help us reach the finish line! Please contact philanthropy@seattleaquarium.org to learn more.



Workers install Alaskan yellow cedar on the west face of the Ocean Pavilion (read more on page 6).



SEATTLE AQUARIUM BY THE NUMBERS

≈50,000 pounds = weight of each steel beam in the Ocean Pavilion's rooftop

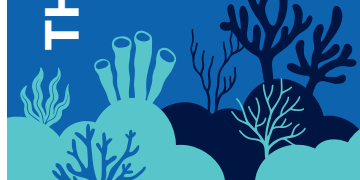
≈500,000 bio balls used to jumpstart the growth of beneficial bacteria in the Ocean Pavilion's habitats



511 organizations partnering in our **Connections program**



THIRTY+ coral species headed for the Ocean Pavilion



60,125 TICKETS for free Aquarium admission distributed

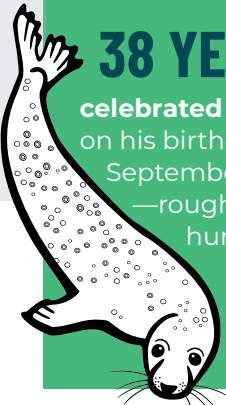


96% of seawater recirculated in the Ocean Pavilion to conserve energy

3,500+ individual plants and animals headed for the Ocean Pavilion



38 YEARS celebrated by Barney on his birthday on September 14, 2023 —roughly 98 in human years!



70,000+ hours of service provided by 1,041 Seattle Aquarium volunteers



PRICELESS people giving the gift of time to volunteer with us (thank you!)



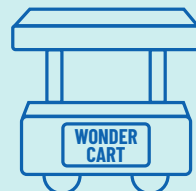
871 DIVER PRESENTATIONS provided to Aquarium guests



3,791 interpretive talks available for Aquarium guests (10 per day!)



490 HOURS of engaging activities offered via our "wonder carts" to Aquarium guests



TWENTY EIGHT state comment letters signed onto by our policy and advocacy team (including five led by them)



55 FEDERAL LETTERS signed onto by our policy and advocacy team



1,908 People like you supporting our mission through much-appreciated **GIFTS OF SUPPORT**



2023

Assets

Cash and investments	\$ 15,279
Receivables & prepaid expenses	11,833
Long-term debt reserve	7,088
Facility expansion project costs	123,088
Right-of-use lease assets	5,488
Property, plant and equipment	10,373
Total assets	\$ 173,149

Liabilities and net assets

Payables and other liabilities	\$ 12,259
Long-term debt	55,127
Lease liabilities	6,144
Total liabilities	\$ 73,530

Net assets

Without donor restrictions-undesignated	\$ 22,337
Without donor restrictions-reserve for expansion costs	2,000
With donor restrictions	75,282
Total net assets	\$ 99,619

Total liabilities and net assets

\$ 173,149

Revenues and expenses

Unrestricted revenue

Admissions and memberships	\$ 20,510
Concessions and other income	3,539
Contributions, grants, special events (net)	2,360
Restricted net assets released from restrictions	2,291
Transfer from reserve for expansion costs	3,000
Total unrestricted revenues	\$ 31,700

Expenses

Program expenses	\$ 23,525
Management and general	4,566
Fundraising	2,414
Total expenses	\$ 30,505

Change in net assets from operating activities **\$ 1,195**

Nonoperating activities

Temporarily restricted revenue	\$ 27,124
Restricted net assets released from restrictions	(2,291)
Transfer from reserves for expansion costs	(3,000)

Change in net assets from operating activities **\$ 21,833**

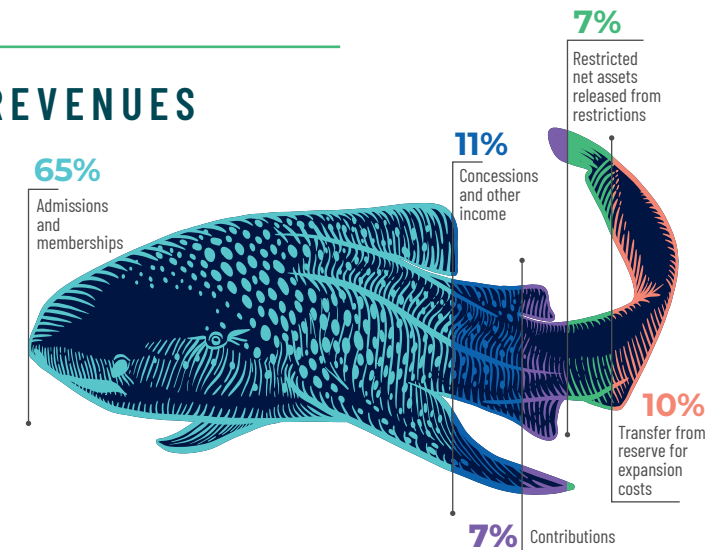
Total change in net assets **\$ 23,028**

Net assets, beginning of year **\$ 76,591**

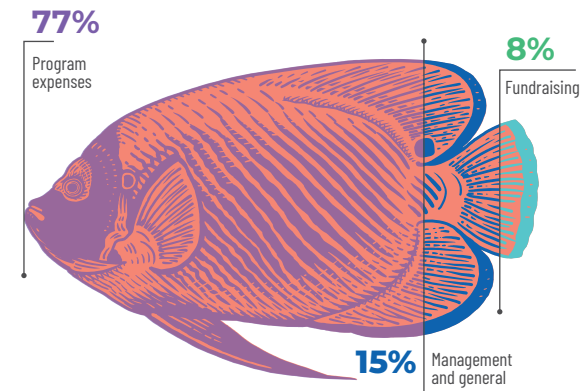
Net assets, end of year **\$ 99,619**

REVENUES

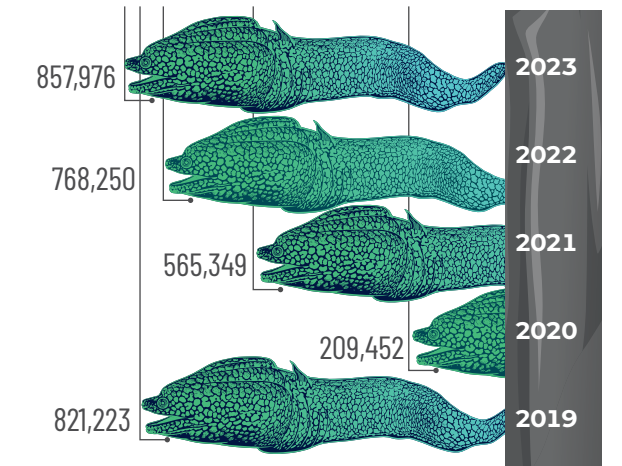
In thousands



EXPENSES



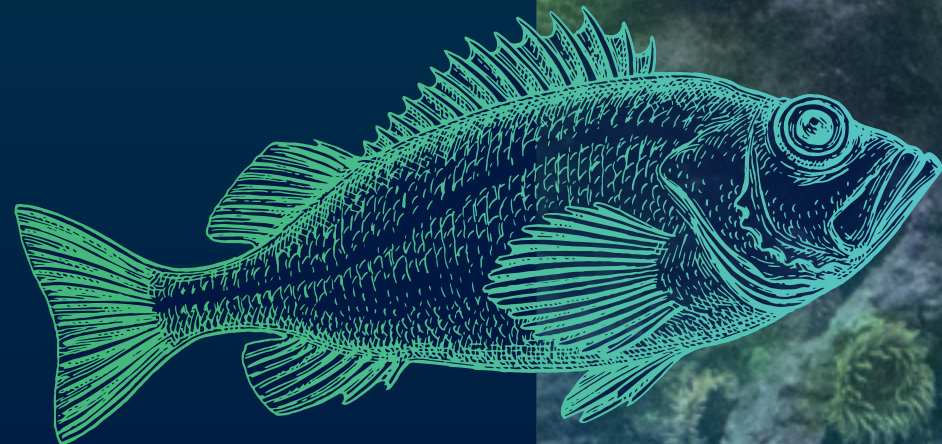
ATTENDANCE



The statements shown above are condensed versions of our audited financial statements and do not include footnote disclosures. Complete audited financial statements are available on the Seattle Aquarium website.

WE THANK YOU!

With our Ocean Pavilion expansion, we're stepping into a new era—and you have played a critical role in getting us to this point. Our deepest gratitude for your commitment to our conservation mission, programs, the animals in our care and the communities we serve.



Thank you for helping to make moments of wonder—like the always-popular diver high fives—possible.

Board and executive team members celebrate the beginning of a new era at the Seattle Aquarium.



2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As of December 31, 2023

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- *Melissa Mager
Immediate Past Chair
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- *Erin J. Letey
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- **Robert W. Davidson
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- †J. Terry McLaughlin
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- *Gary T. Smith
- Julie Syrdal
- *†Randy J. Tinseth
- Marcus Trufant
- Michael Trzupsek
- Carla C. Wigen
- Christopher Williams
(Parks Alternate)
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- *Charles Wright Jr.
- Susie Wyckoff

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- Lindsay Everhart
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- †Don Audleman
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- †Dan Hungate
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- *Executive committee
- **Ex-officio
- † Past chair





Your support helps make moments like these possible. Thank you!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE: make a gift to the Seattle Aquarium annual fund

This report offers a glimpse of what *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment* looks like at the Aquarium—your Aquarium! When you join us, you're fueling our programs and protecting the one world ocean we all depend on, while inspiring others to do the same.

Learn how your support advances our conservation mission at SeattleAquarium.org/donate.



SEATTLE
AQUARIUM

*Inspiring Conservation of
Our Marine Environment*



ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS

The Seattle Aquarium is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Make a gift by calling (206) 693-6284 or visiting SeattleAquarium.org/donate. Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.