Working on conservation amidst a nature crisis can feel like two steps forward, one step back. What keeps us going – and should keep you going – is that it is still one step forward. One step closer to our 20-year goal to Regenerate Canada. One step followed by another and another as we keep ramping up our fight against climate change and biodiversity loss by expanding habitats, reducing atmospheric carbon and lowering industrial impacts while also advancing reconciliation.

This annual report, covering the July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 fiscal year, lays out the stories behind these steps. You’ll learn about:

• Indigenous-led ecosystem restoration efforts in Katzie, K’ómoks and Secwépemc territories;
• The announcement of our Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) Support Fund and advancements on the Aviqtuq IPCA in Nunavut;
• The rejection of Baffinland’s Arctic iron mine expansion and relinquishment of West Coast oil and gas exploration permits;
• The plan to double marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Great Bear Sea and the tripling of wild tiger numbers in Nepal;
• How your voices led to improved MPA standards and how our peer-reviewed research and tech challenges make our efforts more impactful; and
• The steps we took forward globally – we attended international summits that produced monumental treaties to protect a third of the planet by 2030.

Yes, we have all endured another year of climate-fuelled disasters and accelerating wildlife loss. But I hope that you, too, feel hope as you read this report counting our steps. This progress, of course, is made possible through your donations, your advocacy and your actions. Together, we will keep stepping toward that future where nature and people thrive.

Thank you for everything,

MEGAN LESLIE
WWF-Canada President and CEO
Thanks to your generous support, we are making strides in our mission to create a better future for our planet.

As we wrap up the third year of our 10-year strategic plan, Regenerate Canada, we want to celebrate some of the successes and acknowledge the challenges we have faced along the way. We are delighted to report that we are making good progress towards our objectives of stewarding 100 million hectares of nature, storing 30 million tonnes of carbon and restoring 1 million hectares of lost habitat.

Even though the global economy can be unpredictable, you have proven that you are passionate about our cause. Your steady support and our prudent financial management means we are investing even more in conservation.

The outcomes are remarkable, especially when it comes to protecting and stewarding critical habitat. It’s clear that society is coalescing behind the knowledge that our future depends on protecting our remaining natural havens.

Amid significant progress, we still have a lot of work ahead of us. This year’s catastrophic wildfires have shown us that safeguarding nature is not enough; we must also restore it. We know from experience that restoration projects can be expensive, that’s why our approach — building a whole-of-society plan to meet our restoration targets by 2030 — is so critical.

In the coming year, we will be scaling up our efforts to reach more people and places with our vision. I hope we can count on your continued support as we work to ensure a Canada with abundant wildlife, where nature and people thrive.

MEENA BALLANTYNE
WWF-CANADA CHAIR OF THE BOARD
THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF NATIVE TREES, shrubs, plants, flowers, grasses and seeds planted in 2023 through programs such as Nature and Climate Grant Program, seed orchards, In the Zone and regrow and with partners such as the Secwepemcúl’ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society, Katzie First Nation, and the cities of Brossard and Saint-Constant, Que.

>75

THE NUMBER OF SPECIES AT RISK IMPACTED BY OUR WORK LAST YEAR, INCLUDING:

**Mammals** – Canada lynx, barren-ground caribou, humpback whale, southern resident killer whale, tricoloured bat, Atlantic walrus

**Fish** – sockeye salmon, chum salmon, lake sturgeon, redside dace

**Birds** – peregrine falcon, rusty blackbird, bobolink, bank swallow, barn owl

**Reptiles** – leatherback sea turtle, wood turtle, loggerhead sea turtle, northern map turtle

**Plants** – American chestnut, butternut, dense blazing star, ginseng, Vancouver Island beggarticks

**Invertebrates** – Hine’s emerald dragonfly, monarch butterfly, rusty-patched bumblebee, yellow lampmussel

~35,276,000

THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF NATIVE TREES, shrubs, plants, flowers, grasses and seeds planted in 2023 through programs such as Nature and Climate Grant Program, seed orchards, In the Zone and regrow and with partners such as the Secwepemcúl’ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society, Katzie First Nation, and the cities of Brossard and Saint-Constant, Que.

$20.5 MILLION

THE AMOUNT OF MONEY WWF-Canada invested in conservation efforts.

$3,467,251

THE VALUE OF GRANTS and other funding that WWF-Canada provided to various charities, Indigenous organizations, local conservation groups, academics and our WWF colleagues in Nepal, Mexico and other national offices to support work protecting monarch butterflies, tigers and other at-risk wildlife.

1,330,702

THE NUMBER OF TRACKED CONSERVATION ACTIONS resulting in on-the-ground impact — restoration activities, submitting study data, biodiversity monitor training, petition signing — taken by our teams, partners, grantees and individual supporters in FY23, up 123% from FY22’s 597,487 actions and up 265% over FY21’s 364,289 actions.

~41,860

THE NUMBER OF SQUARE KILOMETRES OF OCEAN that will benefit from the enhanced vessel discharge restrictions that tens of thousands of our supporters helped make happen via our No Dumping advocacy campaign.
Regenerate Canada is our 10-year plan to reverse wildlife loss and fight climate change by using one of the most effective tools around — nature. Drawing on scientific research and Indigenous guidance, all our conservation efforts are driving toward three ambitious goals that will move us toward a future where nature and people thrive.

Long-lasting, meaningful change doesn’t happen overnight, and short-term planning can focus on the trees and miss the forest. By setting a 10-year plan with shorter three-year milestones, we can think big while checking in periodically to assess our progress and adjust our tactics.

Here’s where we’re at — and where we’re going:

**Our Mission, As Ever, Is to Create a Canada with Abundant Wildlife, Where Nature and People Thrive.**

With these ambitious Regenerate Canada goals laying out the path forward, and with your steadfast support, we have been able to think bigger and aim higher. Together, we will reverse what once seemed irreversible.

**Restoration**

Achieved and in Progress: 19,196 hectares

Large-scale complex ecosystem restoration is challenging but creates tremendous benefits for both nature and climate — so WWF-Canada has been busy bringing together the knowledge and partners needed for success.

To ensure that we’re prioritizing the right places, our peer-reviewed Restoration Analysis identified 39 million hectares of connected lands that offer the greatest post-restoration impact for cost, value, and carbon storage. We are also working to understand the role of degraded lands in restoration and advocate for the core definition.

To address the shortage of native plants needed to conduct major ecosystem restoration, we launched a seed-based program to produce the millions and millions of required seeds. We’re ensuring our efforts advance reconciliation by building partnerships with Indigenous communities to help reverse their territories. In 2022 in this effort, we launched our Nature and Climate Grant Program, which supports smaller-scale restoration projects and expertise, a native planting platform for individuals and groups to restore nature at home and in their communities.

Restoration work is most often measured in metres, targeting small areas of critical habitat such as riverbanks or wetlands, and requires significant effort, time and resources. But with the stage now set, more partnerships in the pipeline and an upcoming major restoration initiative — you’ll read more about it in next year’s annual report — we anticipate exponential growth toward our 2070 goal of regenerating one million hectares of lost complex ecosystems that provide essential wildlife habitat and sequester carbon in nature.

**Stewardship**

Achieved and in Progress: 102.9 million hectares

WWF-Canada has been working for years to ensure that Canada not only achieves its goal of protecting large areas of lands and oceans, but that those areas are protected to the highest standard, in a way that is consistent with the priorities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We’re also working to reduce industrial impacts on wildlife so populations can recover.

The announcement of new marine protected areas (MPAs) and a new BAP protection standard, in addition to progress on other initiatives, including plans for Indigenous-led MPAs and networks, are some of the results of our efforts. We spent a decade involved in the development of the Natural Land Use Plan, submitting science-based recommendations and Inuit-led analysis while supporting community participation. Our outreach also led to mandatory ship slowdowns by Bollard Iron Ore Mine Corps in the 20-million-hectare Tatlurutiup Incpaka National Marine Conservation Area as well as the expansion of the existing, proposed Phase 2 expansion. And our lawsuit against Chevron Canada and Exxon Mobil led to the relinquishment of oil and gas permits off the coast of B.C.

These and other areas benefiting from protections advocated by WWF-Canada and our supporters contribute to the goal of stewarding 100 million hectares which helps reduce carbon emissions from development and is focusing our restoration efforts on increasing the potential of ecosystems to sequester even more carbon.

**Reduce Carbon Emissions**

Achieved and in Progress: 19.83 million tonnes

Our conservation efforts not only safeguard species but also fight climate change by leveraging the power of nature to capture and store carbon by both increasing forests’ sequestration and avoiding the release of what has already been sequestered.

Our groundbreaking national carbon map confirmed that Canada is home to some of the world’s largest carbon stores. But when habitats that help store carbon are degraded or converted, we risk releasing vast amounts of that carbon into the atmosphere. That’s why WWF-Canada is using the knowledge gained to the carbon mapping process to protect these terrestrial carbon stores from development and by focusing our restoration efforts on increasing the potential of ecosystems to sequester even more carbon.

We are two-thirds of the way towards our 30-million-tonnes goal, which we reached by measuring the carbon stored in watersheds that we are working to protect and steward, such as the assigning, DNV, and Willstit watersheds, as well as acquiring key areas within the watersheds currently working to restore, such as fire-impacted forests on Secwépemc territory.

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KUS-KUS-SUM RESTORATION COLLABORATION IMPROVES CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

When chinook salmon fight their way into the K’ómoks Estuary near Courtenay, B.C. and up the Courtenay River and Puntledge headwaters to spawn, they’re helped by a confluence of factors: cool, oxygen-rich fresh water that allows them to conserve energy; healthy aquatic habitats with lots of bugs and crustaceans to eat; and sheltered nooks that protect their eggs.

That’s how it’s supposed to work. But for 50 years, a sawmill operated at the juncture of the river and the sea, and its concrete pads quashed native vegetation while its corrugated metal wall narrowed the migration route. The mill closed in 2006, but surrounding habitats remain degraded, compromising the interconnected conditions on which the chinook rely.

It’s fitting, then, that the restoration of this chinook salmon habitat is also a team effort. A coalition of dedicated locals are working to restore the site, now known as Kus-kus-sum, by de-paving and regrading the property and repopulating it with native plants and trees. This is not only improving habitats — it also stores more carbon and protects against flooding.

A joint effort of the Comox Valley Project Watershed Society, City of Courtenay, and K’ómoks First Nation, on whose traditional territory Kus-kus-sum sits, this is just one of six projects supported by our Nature and Climate Grant Program (NCGP).

Funding local and Indigenous-led efforts to enhance habitats, sequester carbon and improve climate resilience since 2021, NCGP participants across Canada have restored more than 465 hectares of habitats, benefitting 57 local populations of species at risk.

The Nature and Climate Grant Program is presented in partnership with Aviva Canada.

HOW WE’RE IMPROVING HABITATS FOR BUGS, BIODIVERSITY AND SUGAR BUSHES

The Windsor–Quebec City corridor is the most densely populated part of Canada — and one of the most degraded and fragmented landscapes due to human activities such as agriculture and urban development. It’s also a priority region where WWF-Canada and a network of collaborators are restoring green spaces and improving their connectivity.

On Montreal’s South Shore, we’re working with the cities of Brossard and Saint-Constant, Que., to restore 42 hectares of municipal lands with native plants while advancing the implementation of nature-friendly management practices. We’ve already seen positive impacts on local biodiversity — our pilot year reported almost twice the diversity of insect species in habitats that we’ve restored, with 101 different species on average compared to 60 in “non-restored” habitats. And we began developing partnerships with potential municipalities and conservation authorities in Ontario to expand the Quebec pilot program.

We also launched a maple forest biodiversity restoration and climate resilience collaboration with local foresters, conservationists and sugar bush owners in Quebec — including training, carbon monitoring and partnership development — to improve sugar bush management.

This work in Ontario has been made possible by the Echo Foundation.
Since nearly 200,000 hectares of Secwépemc territory near Kamloops, B.C. burned over three months in the 2017 Elephant Hill wildfire, followed by the Flat Lake and Sparks Lake fires in 2021, WWF-Canada has been supporting the Secwepemcúl’ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society (SRSS) in a multiyear reforestation partnership.

This past year, WWF-Canada has helped SRSS plant 450,000 trees and restore 250 hectares—and we’re just getting going. SRSS will scale up to a million trees a year by 2026 and 10 million in the ground annually by 2030. Thanks to the help of our partners and donors, WWF-Canada will continue to support SRSS’ work to restore more than 1,000 hectares of land and sequester 13,500 tonnes of carbon by 2026.

Following Canada’s worst wildfire season on record in 2023, restoring Canada’s forest ecosystems is now more important than ever. SRSS’s efforts offer a blueprint for how to build more climate-resilient forests by using Indigenous knowledge to select the right mixture of tree species while protecting traditional medicines, food sources and wildlife habitats.

This work is supported by Lowe’s, Natural Resources Canada, the Peter Gilgan Foundation and the Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation.

The Upper Pitt watershed, a glacier-carved valley northeast of Vancouver, is home to all five Pacific salmon species—a fish so important to Katzie culture and prosperity that they’re considered “family.”

As this Indigenous-led, WWF-supported habitat restoration effort in unceded Katzie territory approaches the midpoint of its 10-year workplan, we’re addressing threats from past and present to ensure a future for this keystone species, which sustains the community, wildlife and even fertilizes the forest itself.

A project to restore Blue Creek, a chinook spawning ground that was blocked by a landslide after a forestry culvert collapsed, began in 2019 as a partnership between Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, DFO and others. But the ambition for this region soon grew as the challenge of dramatically declining Pacific salmon populations became apparent.

Work on the Blue Creek culvert started in 2019, and by 2022, approximately 1,700 sockeye were observed in this new spawning habitat. (Ongoing monitoring of year-over-year usage will determine if the channel is supporting increased numbers of salmon.)

Summer 2022 saw the completion of the 700-metre Sθqəy Channel, doubling available habitat by adding 8,270 square metres lined by 290 new native hardwood trees and 3,600 shrubs to stabilize banks and reduce rising water temperatures. Through September, approximately 1,700 sockeye were observed in this new spawning habitat. (Ongoing monitoring of year-over-year usage will determine if the channel is supporting increased numbers of salmon.)

After several years of environmental surveys, spring 2023 saw work begin on Red Slough. The intertidal waterway was cut off from the Pitt River by forest service roads back in the 1920s, reducing flow so much that the iron ore that gave the slough its colourful name also deoxygenated the water, killing salmon that found their way in. The Lower Red Slough reconnection involved a series of sediment-capturing pools and a new intake pipe to reintroduce historic freshwater flows. Soon, water will move downstream even during high tide, keeping dissolved oxygen levels high enough for the waterway to act as habitat.

Work also continued on Boise Channel, an ongoing project delayed to protect a nearby den of wolf pups. With controllable flow piped over from nearby Boise Creek, the new gravel-bottomed channel was expected to be full of spawning salmon by summer’s end.

This work is made possible through contributions by the H. John McDonald Foundation, Indigenous Watersheds Initiative (delivered by MakeWay and Watersheds BC, with financial support from the Province of British Columbia), Real Estate Foundation of BC, Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation, W.C. Kitchen Foundation and an anonymous donor.

All of us at REFBC are excited to support Katzie First Nation-led watershed restoration in the Upper Pitt River basin. We acknowledge the sacred relationship between the Katzie people and salmon, and how Indigenous leadership and knowledge is essential to re-establishing healthy watersheds so salmon can thrive. Water underpins the economic, ecological, physical, cultural and spiritual well-being of us all. The collaborative work being done by Katzie First Nation and their partners, including WWF-Canada, is a shining example of how we can work together for the benefit of land, water and people.”

HEDY RUBIN, GRANTS PROGRAM MANAGER, REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION OF B.C.

HELPING SECWÉPEMC TERRITORY RISE FROM THE ASHES BY PLANTING 450,000 TREES

SALMON HABITAT RESTORATION IN KATZIE TERRITORY SPAWNS MEASURABLE IMPACTS
Canada shouldn’t call an area “protected” if ships are allowed to dump harmful waste within it. That’s what 23,000 of you told the federal government last year after WWF-Canada released our groundbreaking National Vessel Dumping Assessment — and the government heard you.

In February 2023, a new MPA Protection Standard was unveiled, fulfilling a promise to prohibit oil and gas activities, bottom trawling and mining in all MPAs established after April 25, 2019. It also included a comprehensive definition of dumping and enhanced restrictions on dumping greywater, scrubber washwater, bilge water and sewage. Transport Canada introduced non-mandatory measures for cruise ships that prohibit dumping greywater and sewage within three nautical miles from shore.

More than 23,000 people join our No Dumping advocacy campaign.

PROTECTING THE FUTURE OF THE GREAT BEAR SEA

Tens of thousands of supporters join our call for no oil and gas in MPAs.

Canada promises new minimum standards for MPAs that restrict oil and gas activities, mining, bottom trawling and dumping.

Species are left waiting for Canada to define the standards and the rules for their implementation.

WWF-Canada releases its National Vessel Dumping Assessment, making the case for a comprehensive definition of dumping that includes greywater, scrubber washwater, bilge water and sewage.

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Species are left waiting for Canada to define the standards and the rules for their implementation.

Canada announces new MPA Protection Standard. Transport Canada cruise ship measures become mandatory.

More than 23,000 people join our No Dumping advocacy campaign.

2021–2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

After more than a decade of leadership from federal, provincial and First Nation governments — plus input from coastal communities and marine stakeholders like WWF-Canada — an action plan for a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Great Bear Sea was adopted in February 2023. Doubling MPA coverage in this 100,000-square-kilometre region to 30 per cent, it will guide the creation of what will become the world’s largest Indigenous-led and collaboratively developed MPA network.

While this is a big step forward, there remains much work to be done between now and 2025 to designate and establish these MPAs and make the plan a reality. WWF-Canada will continue engaging in the implementation process.

This work is made possible by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation through its commitment to sustainable shipping.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2023
LNG terminals under development in Kitimat, B.C. are expected to dramatically increase shipping traffic and our models indicate that whale-vessel encounters will increase 30 times for ships more than 180 metres in length by 2030. According to a peer-reviewed study in Endangered Species Research by WWF-Canada, North Coast Cetacean Society, University of St. Andrews, Fisheries & Oceans Canada and other collaborators, this could result in ship-strike deaths of up to 18 humpbacks (a 390 per cent increase) and two fin whales (a 230 per cent increase) annually.

The study’s projections highlight the critical need for mitigation measures such as speed reduction and seasonal restrictions to reduce ship strikes and prevent unsustainable losses.

The 1,100-person Nunavut hamlet of Taloyoak has been working for decades to protect Aviqtuq, the Arctic lands and waters they share with caribou, polar bear, muskoxen, Arctic char, narwhal and beluga — and progress on establishing a nearly 90,000-square kilometre Aviqtuq Inuit Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) sped up this year.

Thanks in large part to advocacy by Jimmy Ullikatalik and the Taloyoak Umaruliririgut Association (TUA), with WWF support, the final draft of the Nunavut Land Use Plan prohibits industrial resource exploration and development in Aviqtuq’s terrestrial area.

WWF-Canada also helped secure $3.53 million in federal funding to expand TUA’s pre-existing terrestrial Guardians program with marine Guardians. Announced in Iqaluit by Ullikatalik and then-Fisheries and Oceans Minister Joyce Murray, it provides employment via Inuit-led ecological monitoring and will identify sustainable economic opportunities for the IPCA’s future management plan. WWF-Canada also helped TUA secure Environment and Climate Change Canada funding for Inuit-led biodiversity monitoring and management (caribou, migratory birds, polar bears and wolverines) in southern Aviqtuq via the Community-Nominated Priority Places program.

Ullikatalik also joined WWF to advocate for Aviqtuq at the December 2022 COP15 global biodiversity summit in Montreal and the February 2023 Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver, where he spoke on panels, conducted interviews and met with cabinet ministers at WWF events.
When advocacy and negotiations fail, we may turn to the courts to ensure the protection of nature. Lawsuits have been an effective tool, especially when it comes to offshore oil and gas exploration. This past year we reached a resolution on one such lawsuit and continued an ongoing appeal to protect sensitive marine areas.

On the west coast, Ecojustice lawyers, acting on behalf of WWF-Canada and the David Suzuki Foundation, challenged technically expired (but legally active) oil and gas exploration permits in and around the Scott Island Marine National Wildlife Area and the Hecate Strait/Queen Charlotte Sound Glass Sponge Reefs Marine Protected Area. In early 2023, we dropped the lawsuit after ExxonMobil and Chevron relinquished the 20 permits in question.

Over on the East Coast, we again worked with Ecojustice as well as Sierra Club Canada Foundation and Ecology Action Centre to appeal a court decision that upheld a regulation exempting future exploratory drilling projects off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador from necessary federal impact assessments. We believe this decision will prevent the adequate consideration of the many risks of drilling to offshore habitats and the species that use them. We await a decision on this appeal.

This work is supported by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

WORLD’S BIGGEST LAND USE PLAN AWAITS GREEN LIGHT

Following years of consultations, submissions, drafts and reviews, the Nunavut Land Use Plan (NLUP) determining how the territory’s 3.3 million square kilometres of lands and waters can be used finally entered the homestretch. NLUP’s goal is to balance potential benefits of industrial development with the risks that mining, oil and gas, and shipping could have on Arctic wildlife and areas Inuit rely on for food security, cultural continuity and economic prosperity.

WWF-Canada has been actively engaged in this process for more than a decade — providing scientific and Inuit-led analysis and data sets from research supported by our Arctic Species Conservation Fund; facilitating community involvement in NLUP consultations, upon request, with technical assistance and funding to support and amplify local concerns; and submitting our own community-informed recommendations and comments for consideration.

In fact, we’ve been the only environmental NGO at the table during this lengthy development process, headed by Lead Arctic Specialist, Paul Okalik, who also helped negotiate the NLUP requirement into the 1999 Nunavut Agreement.

In this final draft, all caribou calving grounds remain “Limited Use” areas prohibiting exploration and development. It also includes additional calving grounds in the Qikiqtani region (thanks to a joint submission from Qikiqtani Inuit Association and the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board that was financially supported by WWF-Canada) and year-round protections for freshwater crossings (which WWF-Canada assisted local communities to identify and map) and key access corridors, as well as seasonal restrictions on ice breaking specific to each location.

We also supported year-round protections for terrestrial walrus haul-outs and stronger seasonal protections for polar bear denning areas, both mapped in part from WWF-submitted data. And we amplified territory-wide concerns over protection of community-identified lakes, rivers and coastal areas to ensure clean water and healthy fish, recommending these areas be off-limits to industrial development.

This guarantees the constitutionally protected right of Inuit to fish for food and allows local fisheries to create sustainable alternative economic opportunities.

This work is made possible by The Elpis Foundation, Alan and Patricia Koval Foundation, and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

A WIN FOR WILDLIFE, A WIN FOR POND INLET

Following years of submissions and testimonies to the Nunavut Impact Review Board by Pond Inlet community members and other rightsholders as well as WWF-Canada — and opposition by Inuit organizations at all levels — the federal government rejected Baffinland’s proposed Mary River iron mine expansion. Doubling production would have had an unavoidable impact on narwhal, fish and seal — species that Inuit depend upon — so we commend the government for listening to the facts and respecting the clear wishes of Inuit.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023
Measuring and monitoring the amount of carbon stored in nature can be costly and time consuming, making it a challenge to evaluate how effective our conservation efforts are at mitigating climate change. We needed a cheaper, faster and more user-friendly approach to get proper before-and-after comparisons of restored and stewarded landscapes. Enter WWF-Canada’s Nature x Carbon Tech Challenge.

This year, we awarded $100,000 contracts to three award recipients whose new technologies will help identify which conservation approaches have the best outcomes and validate return on investment in the fight against climate change.

“Volunteers and local communities can struggle to raise funds and awareness for their conservation work,” says Sean Rudd, founder and CEO of award recipient Korutu Technology. “Our tech helps tell their story and get the support they need for their important work.”

Innovatree Carbon Group Ltd. was awarded a contract to work directly with Indigenous groups, including the Secwepemcúl’ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society (SRSS), while the Digital Forest Lab at Laval University will work with community partners in Quebec.

“Understanding the impact that the recent wildfires have had on the forest ecosystem in the interior of B.C. is critically important to successful restoration and future ecological adaptation to climate change,” says SRSS CEO Angela Kane. “Our forest carbon monitoring is building a justification for increased biodiversity across the landscape, particularly as it applies to culturally important trees and plants.”

WWF-Canada’s Nature x Carbon Tech Challenge is supported by founding partner RBC Tech for Nature and national technology sponsor Microsoft.
Canada boasts the world’s longest coastline, stretching more than 240,000 kilometres, and these coastal and ocean ecosystems—seagrasses, salt marshes and kelp forests—are important to Indigenous and other coastal communities.

On World Oceans Day in June, WWF-Canada celebrated the launch of a milestone collaborative report on understudied coastal blue carbon ecosystems in Canada. The global evidence that the report compiled suggests these ecosystems have tremendous value both ecologically and in the fight against climate change, as some coastal ecosystems can absorb more carbon per unit area than tropical forests.

But we also know we’re losing them quickly. Globally, 19 per cent of seagrass cover has been lost since 1880, and as much as 70 per cent of B.C.’s salt marshes have disappeared.

To address the lack of knowledge on these disappearing ecosystems, WWF-Canada convened more than 40 experts from academia, NGOs, government and other sectors to write and review the first Canadian state-of-knowledge report on blue carbon.

Covering topics such as the carbon dynamics of coastal ecosystems, conservation finance, Indigenous Law, and policy and legislation, the report provides blue carbon practitioners and decision makers with a comprehensive reference to guide their work going forward. WWF-Canada will continue to convene and grow a national community of practice, bringing together organizations and researchers working on this topic.

“Operating in Canada, which has the world’s longest coastline, we respect the urgent need for action — and it’s critical that we continue our work with WWF-Canada on solutions that create a future where both people and nature can thrive.”

JOE MCMAHAN, VICE PRESIDENT SUSTAINABILITY AND SHARED VALUE, MAPLE LEAF FOODS

Nearly 50 million hectares of land in Canada — about half the size of Ontario — have been converted into agricultural lands, roads, energy infrastructure and other human uses. This footprint can destroy habitats that wildlife use for shelter, food and raising their young. It also prevents plants and soils from efficiently sequestering carbon, which means they cannot help to mitigate climate change, and may even contribute to it. And there are even more habitats that have not been converted but are considered “degraded” and therefore unsuitable for wildlife and less effective for carbon sequestration.

The federal government has committed to restoration through several international agreements and WWF-Canada is working toward our own goal of restoring at least one million hectares of lost ecosystems. But to maximize the effectiveness of these restoration efforts, we need more data.

We started by mapping converted lands in Canada and then analyzing which of those areas have the greatest potential benefits for both wildlife and carbon sequestration. Our resulting Restoration Analysis identified up to 3.9 million hectares (a total area a little larger than Vancouver Island) of priority regions that, if restored, would simultaneously provide blue carbon benefits for both wildlife and carbon sequestration. These results will help decision-makers, partners and funders maximize the impacts of their ecological restoration efforts.

This analysis is supported by Maple Leaf Foods.
GOING BEYOND TARGETS: A NEW APPROACH TO CANADA’S PROTECTED AREAS

As part of international commitments, Canada has set an ambitious goal to protect 30 per cent of its land, freshwater and oceans by 2030. As of the end of 2022, 13.6 per cent of terrestrial and freshwater areas had been protected. However, not all protections are created equal. Progress shouldn’t be measured only by the amount of area set aside for conservation, but whether we protect the right places, in the right ways, for the right reasons as we work toward halting and reversing nature loss by 2030.

To date, the establishment of protected areas has resulted in islands of conservation, at times without consideration for how these areas connect to one another, what kinds of ecosystems they represent, their carbon storage potential or their ability to support wildlife in a changing climate. A plan for longstanding maintenance and stewardship of these lands — the burden of which disproportionately lands on Indigenous communities — has also often been overlooked.

This is why WWF-Canada conducted our national protected areas analysis, Beyond Targets, to identify areas with missing or inadequate protections and map out priority regions that would help to curb both biodiversity loss and climate change. The results were presented alongside interviews with Indigenous leaders about their expertise and plans for Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

As well, our Beyond Targets research provided a platform to speak, alongside Indigenous partners, at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, to advocate for protected areas that also protect the rights of Indigenous people across Canada.

“WWF’s Regenerate Canada strategic plan helps make such a huge issue a little more tangible with things you can do to make a difference in your own backyard. It helps connect rudimentary to larger change. I think this is what resonates with all the teams here at Holt Renfrew, which is why the whole company voted for WWF-Canada to be our national charity partner. We all want to be a part of making our world better for all living things, including all of us!”

ALEXANDRA WESTON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, BRAND & CREATIVE STRATEGY, HOLT RENFREW

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Over the past decade, WWF-Canada has supported Nepal’s efforts to double its wild tiger population. Together, we’ve piloted emerging technologies such as camera traps and SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) patrolling software, rolled out CA|TS (Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards), and funded efforts to reduce human-tiger conflict, restore habitat and provide citizen scientists with technical expertise to monitor the growing tiger population.

We’re happy to report Nepal exceeded its TX2 goal — nearly tripling its wild tiger population from 121 to 355. And the home of wild tigers in Nepal, the Terai Arc Landscape — a vast conservation region with a network of biological corridors linking 16 protected areas of Nepal and India— was recognized in 2023 by the UN as a “World Restoration Flagship.”

We also continued to address the interconnected threats of habitat loss and human-tiger conflict in and around Banke National Park by:

- Constructing a new watering hole in an area inhabited by tigers, rhinos and elephants to increase water availability and expand habitat for wildlife impacted by climate change.
- Offering conservation awareness courses to 52 community members alongside radio ads, posters, videos and murals promoting co-existence.
- Building 102 predator-proof pens to protect livestock and secure livelihoods.
- Supporting 86 households with income generating activities.
HOW WE ENGAGED & ADVOCATED

CULTIVATING HABITAT HEROES THROUGH NATIVE PLANT PROGRAMS

The effects of climate change have had devastating impacts on our planet, and as Canada’s food and planetary leader, Loblaw aspires to represent positive environmental change. We recognize our responsibility in the fight against climate change and are committed to being a part of the solution. That is why, for more than a decade we have supported the work of WWF-Canada’s restoration and Indigenous perspectives.

This past spring, our new national how-to hub, re:grow, joined In the Zone, which focuses on the Carolinian zone in southern Ontario, and our native plant sales partnership with Loblaw Garden Centres. Overall, participants planted 197,876 native plants during the 2022–2023 fiscal year, a more than 80 per cent increase.

At launch, re:grow offered three activities — create an action plan, plant native trees and plants, and start a seed garden — everyone to contribute. That’s why our native plant programs are empowering people across the country to restore wildlife habitat in their yards, balconies and shared community spaces.

To realize WWF-Canada’s vision of a future where nature and people thrive, we need to provide opportunities for everyone to contribute. That’s why our native plant programs are empowering people across the country to restore wildlife habitat in their yards, balconies and shared community spaces.

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While still a seedling, the program is off to a promising start inspiring participants to continue engaging for nature.

showcases actions being taken across the re:grow community, alongside step-by-step guides and multimedia resources. It also

PLANT PROGRAMS

WWF-Canada was active at international conservation summits, attending both the 15th UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal and the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver. At COP15, our staff were in attendance for the signing of the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). In order to halt and reverse nature loss and species extinction by 2030, the agreement included commitments to protect 30 per cent of lands and waters and restore 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems.

During the two-week summit in December 2022, WWF staff attended meetings, conducted media interviews, spoke at press conferences, participated in demonstrations, put pressure on policymakers and kept supporters informed via blogs, newsletters and social media posts from inside the Palais des congrès.

We also organized a press conference with Indigenous leaders from across the country who advocated for Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) and held three external breakfast events for COP attendees, government ministers, media and invited guests. These panels tackled crucial topics — Arctic marine conservation, ecosystem restoration and Indigenous perspectives on conservation — and featured the announcement of our IPCA Support Fund to help groups exploring potential IPCAs on their territories.

Subsequently, February’s IMPAC5 summit brought together the global ocean community to start tackling COP15’s formidable targets while sharing knowledge, experience and best practices for marine conservation. WWF-Canada staff participated in panels ranging from blue carbon and ship-waste dumping to Arctic MPA network planning centred around Inuit knowledge, guidance and experience. Our impact was palpable as Canada made several announcements that echoed our recommendations and advocacy, including an action plan for the world’s largest Indigenous-led and collaboratively developed MPA network in the Great Bear Sea, minimum standards for MPAs and a memorandum of understanding between the federal government and several Coastal First Nations on the proposed Tanganyiwaq/Tuigis marine protected area.

IMPAC5 not only pushed Canada and the world closer to the GBF goal of protecting 30 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2030, it also helped ensure it would be done right by supporting Indigenous-led conservation and advancing sectors such as blue carbon.
MAKING A FOOD FOREST FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

This year, 45 Go Wild Grants totalling $69,460 were awarded through our Living Planet @ School and Living Planet @ Campus community action programs. The funded projects are helping to restore wildlife habitat and connecting students with nature at primary, secondary and post-secondary schools across the country.

Students and teachers at Bert Fox Community High School in Fort Qu’Appelle, Sask., for example, created a “food forest” of edible and useful plants, including native species that benefit wildlife. In the process, students learned how to make coffee from dandelions and turn maple and plantain leaves into a medicinal salve.

“As we move toward greater land-based educational programming, this area will be accessed by students in environmental science, practical and applied arts, Cree/Dakota culture, food studies and commercial cooking,” said teacher Andre Boutin-Maloney.

Go Wild Grants are part of the Living Planet @ Schools and Living Planet @ Campus programs, which were made possible in part by Walmart Canada and Nissan Canada Foundation.

CELEBRATING THE FIRST 100 LIVING PLANET LEADERS

In 2022–23, the Living Planet @ Campus program awarded its 100th Living Planet Leader certification. To earn the certification, post-secondary students across Canada complete requirements that prepare them to tackle environmental and sustainability challenges in their lives and careers — something they can showcase on their resumes. We’re so proud of the 100 students who have reached this milestone with us.

REMEMBERING JULIAN BACKHOUSE

Julian Backhouse was an inspiration to all at WWF-Canada. The grandfather of four from Mississauga, Ont., lived with Wilson’s disease, a rare genetic disorder affecting his physical strength and coordination. Despite using a wheelchair to get around, Julian had previously climbed the CN Tower with WWF-Canada unassisted six times.

When Julian was diagnosed with Stage IV cancer in 2021, he said he wasn’t the type of person to go quietly. True to his word, he joined us at the 2023 CN Tower Climb for Nature to cheer on his family and give the eponymous Julian Backhouse Award to Liisa Ladouceur.

Julian will be remembered for his sense of humour, optimism and determination to overcome challenges, both physical and environmental. Thank you, Julian.

STEP BY STEP, YOU RAISED $1.4 MILLION FOR NATURE

WHAT A COMEBACK!

Over two days in April, you helped raise an incredible $1.4 million for conservation as part of our CN Tower Climb for Nature.

Among the nearly 5,000 supporters who took on the iconic tower’s 1,776 steps were TV host and WWF-Canada board member, Melissa Grelo; reality TV star and conservationist, Blake Moynes (The Bachelorette); mother-daughter fundraising powerhouses, Mikaya and Maria Flikkema; 30-time climber Doug Dorsey in his trademark headband; world-renowned tower racer, Shaun Stephens-Whale; and some of our largest corporate teams ever!

We also want to thank our 296 volunteers and premier sponsor, Nissan Canada Foundation.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023
In the face of uncertainty, WWF-Canada remains strong, bold and resilient. Inflation, rising interest rates and fear of recession has meant that some supporters are pulling back financially even as our costs are increasing. Still, donations from individuals make up 54 per cent of total revenue, providing dependable funding and the backbone of our financial strength.

While our $29 million in revenue was down from $31 million year-over-year, investment income and market value gains led to a bottom-line surplus of $2.4 million that brings our overall fund balances to $37 million.

WWF-Canada remains strongly committed to achieving our mission with $20.5 million in expenditures towards conservation efforts, which is $1 million more than last year. Continuing the momentum of our 10-year strategic plan, WWF-Canada is grateful to our donors and trust their support will keep advancing our efforts into the future.

Despite the potential for recession and lower revenue, we act boldly but prudently — tackling the urgent environmental crisis of our times, partnering with Indigenous groups, investing in technological environmental solutions, and expanding our engagement with supporters.

WWF-Canada is also wisely investing in our technology systems. During the year, we started the process of replacing our archaic legacy software with modern solutions, investing for our future to ensure efficient and effective processes.

Join us in working towards a better and more environmentally sustainable future.

David Cornfield
WWF-Canada Vice President, Finance & Planning
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Thank you to all our donors and supporters for making this work possible.

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Nature is beautiful and important — this is something I was taught by a former teacher of mine. Now that I'm older, I think about conserving nature for future generations of kids who will ask why we didn't take action to conserve habitats and wildlife,” says Ryan Mills on his decision to leave a gift to WWF-Canada in his will.

WWF-CANADA’S LEGACY CIRCLE

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8 anonymous donors

With gratitude, we are pleased to recognize those who have recently confirmed a gift for wildlife in their will or estate plan. More than 1,900 thoughtful individuals are members of WWF-Canada’s Legacy Circle, helping to safeguard the future for wildlife.
A Canada with abundant wildlife, where nature and people thrive.