

What's the Problem?

Do you remember swimming safely in the Gorge Waterway or the Strait of Georgia? Do you remember fishing for halibut or lingcod in Saanich Inlet? Do you remember harvesting clams in Ucluelet Inlet? Do you remember free diving for abalone? Do you remember scooping herring roe from an eelgrass blade in Tod Inlet? Chances are, if you are under 30 years old, you probably don't remember, because these things aren't possible as they once were. Those of us who are older have witnessed [the passing of healthy bays](#) for swimming, abundant fishing and dinner harvesting on many beaches. It is all too easy to forget that by impacting the marine environment, we are impacting our own quality of life. Four years ago in Tod Inlet (near Victoria), the main visible feature of some parts of the underwater landscape was toxic brown slime. Local residents remember this place as once beautiful; plentiful birds, fish, oysters and eelgrass. In 2000, divers found only a few piddock clams living in the underwater sludge. SeaChange Marine Conservation Society is working to reverse these trends of spoiling our own marine backyard. We are working to recover the health of our seas – our source of food, recreation, and for many of us, the well for replenishing our spirits.



A catch from by-gone days
(Photo: BC Archives)

How Far Have We Come?

SeaChange's modest beginnings started in 1998 with eight volunteers, annual revenues of \$8,000 and, three pillars: [Conservation](#), [Education](#) and [Restoration](#). Since then, SeaChange has grown to 40 volunteers and annual revenues of \$162,000. More importantly, we have reached over 6,000 children in the greater Victoria region, bringing them to their local beaches to taste the salty air. Thirteen chilled saltwater aquarium systems are now installed in 13 schools, providing fun and integrated learning experiences of the marine world that surrounds Victoria. Our EcoRowing program adds adventure to science - young people row boats on a lagoon and test water quality.



Squid laying eggs in an eelgrass meadow (Photo: Jim Garten)

We have trained over 100 volunteers in marine life interpretation and completed seven restoration projects in Saanich Inlet, including planting 14,000 m² of eelgrass. As a result, SeaChange has begun to dramatically change the underwater landscape by restoring eelgrass beds in Tod Inlet. Now, the presence of spiny dogfish indicates a healthier ecosystem. Our successful pilot project in Tod Inlet serves as a model for the whole coast of British Columbia.

SeaChange is extremely successful, inspiring locally-based action for preserving and actively restoring the natural environment. From 2002-2004, SeaChange coordinated the BC Coastal Eelgrass Stewardship Project. One thousand volunteers from 20 communities mapped over 12,000 hectares of eelgrass from Boundary Bay to Haida Gwaii. Our work shows how the process of environmental restoration builds both biological and social communities.

In recognition of our achievements, SeaChange was honoured with the 2004 EcoStar Environmental Education Award by the Capital Regional District.

ecostar
AWARDS

What Makes SeaChange Unique?

SeaChange is a community-based non-profit society dedicated to the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems in British Columbia. Our mission is to protect and rehabilitate marine environments in coordination with local communities through education and advocacy.



Transplanting eelgrass
(Photo: Leanna Boyer)

But SeaChange is not simply an advocacy group leaning on government to make changes. We are affecting change by engaging and involving youth and communities in direct actions that bring hope, close to home. As one middle school student commented after one of our school programs, "*Finally, we get to do something.*" We believe that by investing in our young people, we can ensure that change is sustained for generations.

We are the only organization in southern Vancouver Island to provide year round watershed and marine field programs for schools.

SeaChange focuses on conserving and protecting eelgrass, which is among the richest, most productive of all marine communities. These emerald green undersea meadows provide habitat for a diversity of marine life, such as 80% of commercially important fish such as salmon and Pacific herring, and other marine life, such as birds, crabs and clams. These vital habitats are threatened by industrial, residential and recreational development.

Where Are We Going?

SeaChange is now ready to launch a [new](#), [ambitious](#) and [vital](#) phase. Our Five Year Strategic Plan sets the path.

From 2005 to 2010, we will:

- Provide over 500 marine and estuarine field programs for elementary and middle schools
- Install at least 2 more saltwater aquaria systems in schools
- Give 30 public presentations
- Plant more eelgrass in Saanich Inlet and elsewhere
- Continue monitoring restoration sites
- Install a floating Nature House as a stewardship and information centre for Gowlland Tod Provincial Park
- Centralize environmental education in a new Environmental Education Centre
- Develop and support a coast-wide network of 20 communities with five regional coordinators to continue the community mapping and restoration of eelgrass meadows



Sea aquarium
(Photo: Nikki Wright)