



# 2023 Annual Report



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Dear Friends,

I am delighted to present our 2023 Annual Report. This year has been one of significant progress and impact, and we are proud to share the milestones we have achieved in our mission to protect marine life.

In 2023, our dedicated team and passionate volunteers worked tirelessly on various conservation initiatives. Our beach cleanup programs expanded their reach. We conducted over 300 beach cleanups and removed over 100,000 pieces of litter from New England beaches. These efforts not only improved ocean health, but raised awareness about the critical issue of marine debris.

Our marine mammal research programs have also seen remarkable advancements. We have successfully tracked and documented the behavior and health of whales and conducted several highly impactful survey cruises. These findings helped shape conservation strategies and policies that protect these magnificent animals. We also launched a new participatory science program and piloted an app for boaters and fishermen to report whale and marine debris sightings. By involving the public in data collection and research, we foster a deeper connection to our oceanic ecosystems and promote a culture of conservation.

Education is key to solving many of the challenges facing our ocean. This year, we reached thousands of students through our interactive programs. By engaging the next generation in marine conservation, we inspire young minds to become stewards of the ocean, ensuring a brighter future for our planet.

Our partnerships with local schools, communities, and other environmental organizations have been instrumental in amplifying our research and education initiatives.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors, sponsors, and volunteers. Your generosity and commitment enable us to pursue our mission with vigor and determination. Together, we are making a tangible difference in the fight to protect our ocean.

With gratitude and optimism,



Jennifer Kennedy  
Executive Director



Michael Sterling Photography



To our Volunteers and Supporters,

On behalf of the Blue Ocean Society Board of Directors, I would like to thank you for your interest in the Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation. Our organization is committed every day to protect marine life in the Gulf of Maine through research, education, and inspiring action. Our staff, board members, and corporate and community partners are enthusiastic about achieving this mission, and we could not do this without the generosity of our volunteers and donors. Together, we create a better environment for marine life and visitors to the Gulf of Maine and area beaches.

We focus our efforts on creating a positive impact in three primary areas – research, education, and inspiring action. To accomplish these aims we are thankful to you as part of our growing donor base to support us financially. Your generosity has allowed us to expand our footprint in these areas while highlighting community engagement. This year we established several new corporate partnerships that resulted in notable impacts to our programs and visibility. Likewise, our significant volunteer base, often one and the same with our donors, has provided the resources and stability to expand our reach into these focus areas. In total, our volunteers donated over 5,600 hours of service to BOS sponsored events ranging from beach cleanups and marine debris research to symposiums and whale research. We were fortunate to receive grants to fund Gulf of Maine marine and environmental research, as well as to continue to sponsor beach cleanups at local beaches from Maine to Northern Massachusetts. We have witnessed first-hand, the wonderful work that individuals and organizations do in support of Blue Ocean Society.

Over the past year we added new board members, further expanding the Board's knowledge depth and diversity – a key aspect to both supporting the environment and better reflecting the makeup and support of area communities. Our staff includes individuals who exhibit the passion and expertise to achieve both our strategic goals as well as the day-to-day operating requirements of the organization.

Achieving our mission takes continuous support, and we hope that you will reach out to us with any questions, feedback, or to explore new ways for us to work together to enhance the precious resources of the Gulf of Maine and surrounding area.

With sincere gratitude,



Chris Brouillard  
Blue Ocean Society Board Chair



# 2023 Board of Directors

Christian Brouillard *Chair*  
Anne M. Crotty, Esq. *Secretary*  
James Boos *Treasurer*  
Christine Campanella  
Colleen Durkin-Blackburn

Stephen Giannetti  
Nadine Stewart Lysiak, PhD  
Tyler O'Brien  
David Schleyer  
Todd West, JD

## Staff

Jennifer Kennedy *Executive Director & Co-Founder*  
Dianna Schulte *Director of Research & Co-Founder*  
Niki Sullivan *Education Programs Coordinator*  
Nikki Tenaglia *Community Engagement Coordinator*  
Angela Sames *Office Coordinator*  
Kaela Preston *Data Coordinator*

*Research Associates  
aboard M/V Granite State*  
Jonathan Gwalthney  
Melanie White  
Susan Conant Wilson

*Blue Ocean Discovery Center  
Summer Staff*

Julia Popson  
Emerson Babyak  
Riley Levesque  
Lauren McNamara  
Emma O'Brien

*2023 Whale Research Interns*  
Hannah Brown  
Julia Collum  
Graham Piercey  
Avery Settele  
Hannah Stairs



**Our mission is to  
protect marine life  
in the Gulf of Maine  
through research,  
education and  
inspiring action.**

# 2023 Major Funders

The Brook (RMH NH, LLC)  
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program  
Horne Family Foundation  
New Hampshire Charitable Foundation  
The Grey Rocks Foundation, Inc  
The Schleyer Foundation  
Gulf of Maine Association / Gulf of Maine Council  
Beane Family Foundation  
Kennebunk Savings  
The Bangor Savings Bank Foundation  
Rye Historical Society  
Howell Conservation Fund  
Altria Group  
Hampton Beach Village District  
LeMay Family Goodworks



HORNE FAMILY FOUNDATION



NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



LeMay Family Goodworks



# Research

**Our leading research on the behavior and populations of fin, humpback and minke whales is used to protect marine life in the Gulf of Maine. Collaborating with the broader scientific community to document human and environmental impacts allows us to develop programs to better protect marine life in the future.**

A stylized graphic of a microscope in shades of yellow and light blue, positioned on the left side of the page. The microscope is tilted, and its components like the eyepiece, objective lenses, stage, and base are represented by simple geometric shapes.

# We increased protection for whales in the Gulf of Maine by expanding our research in 2023

By expanding our study of microplastics on beaches and embracing groundbreaking new technology to study whales and more - we have made proven impact.



# 2023 Research Highlights

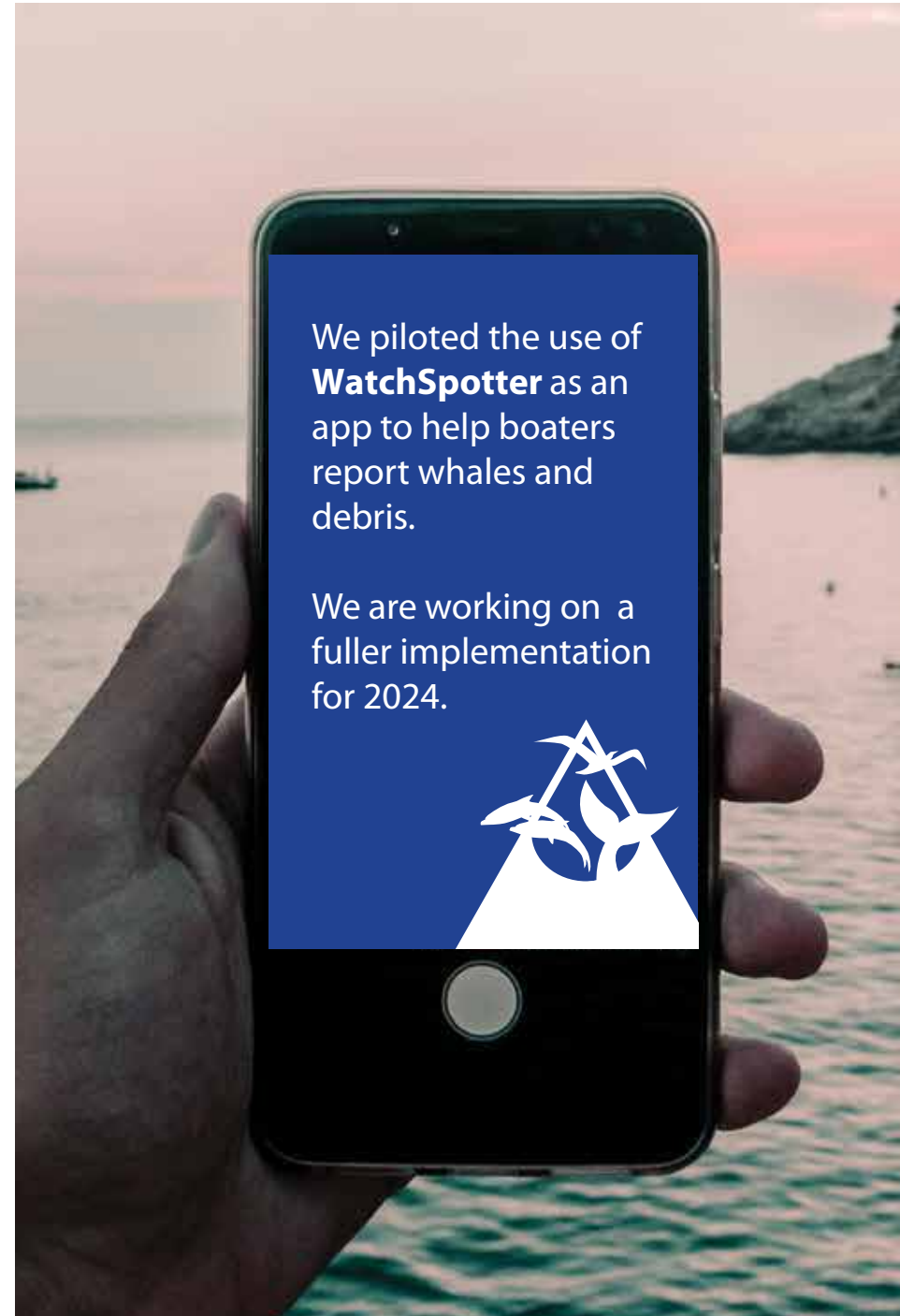
In 2023, we continued our long-term whale research. Using a unique software program called **Mysticetus**, we collected data on 155 trips this year.

This included 5 whale scouting trips. During these dedicated all-day trips, we spotted 22 whales that weren't seen on our regular whale watches. Through the season, we identified 90 individual humpback whales.

Mysticetus allows us to collect data quickly and process it more easily. Thus, we can share our sightings with other researchers around the Gulf of Maine and inform management actions to protect these magnificent animals.



Mysticetus



Our continued sampling of microplastics involved volunteers in participatory science.

We worked with Shaw Institute to start analyzing our microplastics samples, and NH Sea Grant in developing an interactive website to visualize microplastics data. *(Scan the QR Code below to visit the interactive dashboard.)*


Studying microplastics on NH beaches will protect marine life by removing harmful litter from their environment and help us identify sources so we can prevent future litter.



# Education

With our educational whale watches, interactive Blue Ocean Discovery Center, annual symposium, our life-sized, inflatable whale and more, we taught more than 35,000 adults and kids about Gulf of Maine marine life and human impacts to cultivate a growing community of informed, passionate advocates.





# We taught 10,455 whale watch passengers about the ocean + how to protect it

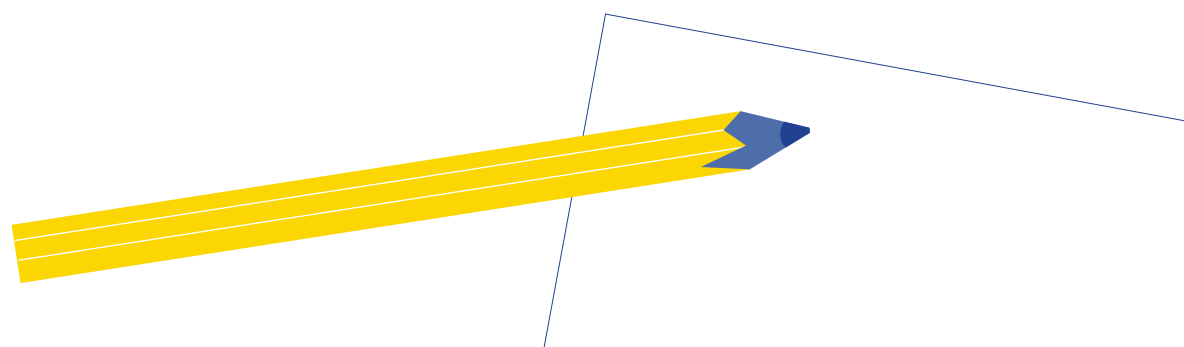
In alignment with our stated strategic education goals—to increase awareness, appreciation for and protection of marine life—2023 was a year of continued impact through our various and robust programming.

We taught thousands of whale watch passengers about the ocean and how to protect it. We also hosted five amazing student interns to assist with research and education.

We also welcomed thousands of visitors at our Blue Ocean Discovery Center, and our inflatable whale visited hundreds of students. We are working on an exciting redesign of our educational programs for 2024!

# 2023 Education Objectives

- Present our research in compelling ways and increase ecological literacy.
- Teach students about whale biology, behavior and conservation using hands-on, virtual and in-person programs. Increase the accessibility of our education programs to underfunded schools and expose a larger, more diverse student population to marine science and ocean stewardship.
- Help beach cleanup participants learn about human impacts on the environment.
- Develop engaging exhibits for our Blue Ocean Discovery Center.
- Work with whale watch businesses to offer whale watches that use our research for effective education.
- Host annual symposium and teacher workshops to provide professional development and scientific information to fellow educators, volunteers and other interested parties.
- Collaborate with organizations and businesses to increase our program offerings and disseminate our research.
- Help boaters learn more about whales through establishing a participatory science reporting program where they engage with our research staff and receive information on reported species.
- Ensure all programming reflects relevant current events and aligns with appropriate learning standards.



# Education Highlights

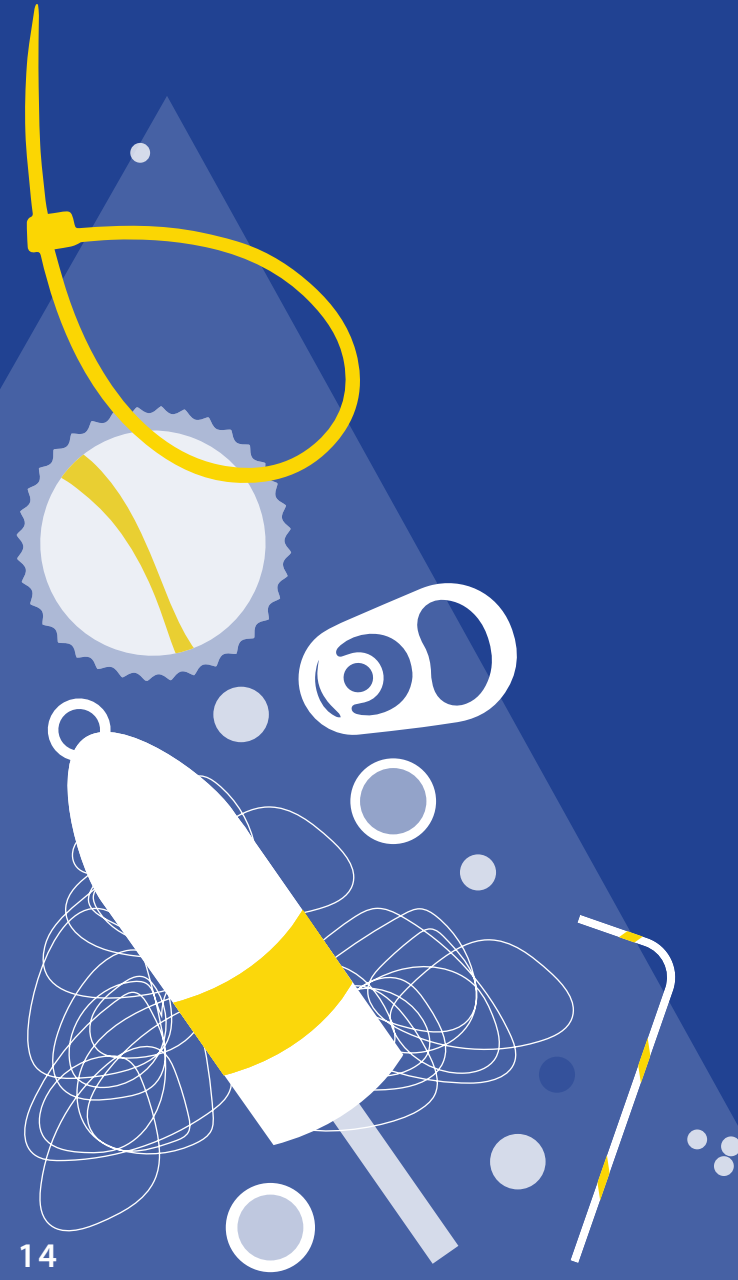
- ✓ We **taught 10,455 whale watch** passengers about the ocean and how to protect it. We also hosted five amazing student interns to assist with research and education.
- ✓ We had more than **10,000 visitors** to the Blue Ocean Discovery Center
- ✓ More than **4,000 volunteers** participated in over **348 beach cleanups**
- ✓ We lent out **microplastics educator kits to teachers** around New England, updated our **Discovery Center exhibits**, and offered **engaging virtual and in-person programs** for audiences of all ages.
- ✓ Our annual **2023 Blue Ocean Symposium** was held on March 17 at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, NH and featured numerous speakers discussing rare whale species, seabirds as dynamic ocean management tools, blue crab impacts on local species, UNH's sustainable aquaculture program, and more.



# Action

From meaningful hands-on experiences and marine debris cleanups, to pollution prevention campaigns and introductions to simple behavioral changes that benefit marine life, we work to inspire others to support our mission and to take action to protect our Gulf of Maine marine environment.





**Together, we collected**

**162,005**

***debris items***

***weighing over***

**7,500 pounds**

In 2023, we conducted **348 cleanups** at **44 different** cleanup sites with the help of **4,145 volunteers**.

Together, we collected **162,005 debris items** weighing over **7,500 pounds!**

*We have cleaned beaches with the community since 2001 to reduce litter entering the ocean and protect marine life.*

*Volunteers of all ages tally items as they collect them from the beach, and this data helps us better understand marine debris on our beaches and is used to prevent future pollution.*



# 2023 Action Highlights

- Picked up more than 162,000 pieces of litter from Portland, ME to Boston, MA. Over 7,500 lbs.



- We secured one of our largest marine debris grants to date and look forward to using the funds to clean up derelict fishing gear in the region over the coming 3 years. We also continued our successful partnership with Howell Conservation Fund to study microplastics and started working with Shaw Institute to find the source of these tiny pollutants.



- We've closely followed news and actions related to climate change and developments such as offshore wind and commented on actions when appropriate. Our data helps us document important whale habitats and will assist in monitoring whale populations as new developments occur.



- We've expanded our Adopt-a-Beach Program by adding six new Adopt-a-Beach groups in Portland and Saco, ME and Newington, Rye, Hampton and Seabrook NH. We also installed more fishing line recycling bins.



## MORE ON MICROPLASTICS:

A recent analysis of microplastics on NH beaches revealed that the most common type of microplastics are foams. A second round of analysis revealed that the majority of these foam pieces are made of polystyrene, more commonly known as Styrofoam.

We are working with Shaw Institute on further analysis. This is the first study of its kind in New Hampshire. By learning more about these small but significant bits, we can identify their likely sources, spreading this message to create an informed community and reduce microplastics in the Gulf of Maine.

# Community

In 2023 more than 4,000 volunteers came together to support our mission, clean beaches, learn, teach and share our dedication to the health of the ocean environment in the Gulf of Maine.



*Beach cleanup volunteers, Blue Ocean Society Staff*



“

The initial training and continued support from BOS is outstanding. The positive feeling I get from volunteering is increased by the general public's response as well. People always ask why I'm picking up trash and they offer to help. It's rewarding to feel like I'm teaching at the same time.

”

*Adopt-a-Beach  
program volunteer*

“

I enjoy learning everything about the environment & how small common sense changes can really make a difference. The instant gratification of knowing I made a difference is rewarding. It has truly opened my eyes and I want to continue to learn how this work impacts the world. It's also inspiring & encouraging to know many people are curious about beach cleaning & have a genuine interest when they come ask me questions.

”

*Adopt-a-Beach  
program volunteer*

“

[What I enjoy most about volunteering is] understanding what's going on in my community, doing something about it, and knowing that the information will be used to make positive change.

”

*Beach clean-up  
program volunteer*

“

I could write a whole essay on how I've benefited from my internship with the Blue Ocean Society. My ideal career incorporates research and conservation, and this experience allowed me to do both. I gained professional skills like fieldwork, working on a boat, data collection, and scientific communication. I also saw lots of potential career paths in marine sciences, which has been extremely helpful and hopeful to a college senior who is unsure of her steps after graduation. I deeply appreciate that my curiosity was encouraged and not ignored. Most importantly, I met so many wonderful people.

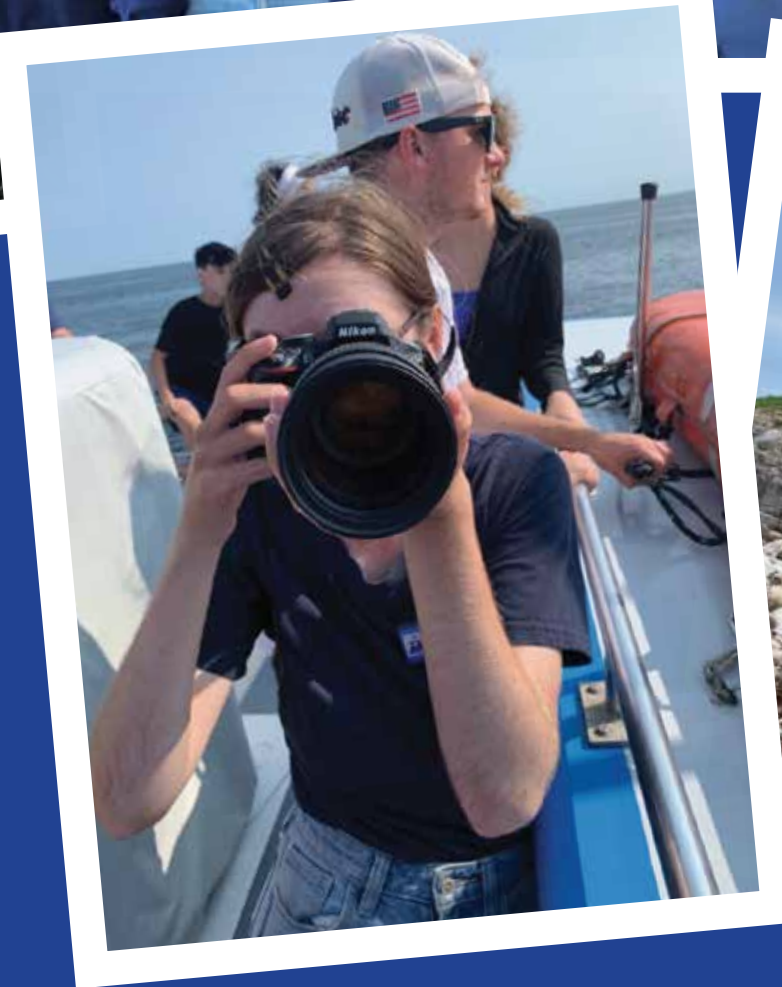
”

*~ Julia Collum*

*2023 summer intern from New Jersey who attends George Washington University*



# 2023 Interns





“

We visited the Discovery Center last week and I wanted to share my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for everything that you shared with us. Niki and Riley did an amazing job sharing information about the tide pool creatures, lobster, and whales. The kids thoroughly enjoyed learning about these animals and both touching and seeing the displays. We were happy to do the beach clean up as well, and were saddened by the amount of trash we found. At the end of the week, we held a Student showcase for the parents. The kids were able to share their knowledge with their families. The excitement and enjoyment was evident during their presentations. This was an incredible experience for these kids, one they will never forget.

”

*~Tammy Thomson  
Teacher at Seabrook Elementary School*



# 2023 Visiting students





# 2023 Beach Cleanup Groups

Advantage Truck Group  
Aland Realty  
Amadeus  
Amphenol Ardent Concepts  
Apple  
Bangor Savings Bank  
BankW Staffing  
Berwick Academy  
BMS Northern New England District  
Bow High School  
Brewers Collective  
Chinburg  
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP  
Coastal Waters Chartered Public School  
Coe Brown Northwood Academy  
Community Church of Durham  
Connection Inc.  
Deltek  
Dover High School National  
Honors Society  
Dover Middle School  
Eli Lilly and Company  
FedPoint  
FinancialForce  
First Citizen's Bank  
GE Aerospace

Girl Scout Troop 30787  
GMO GlobalSign, Inc.  
Great Bay Charter School  
Greenland Central School  
Hampton Cub Scout Pack 177  
Heronfield Academy  
HOPEww Scouts  
Impax  
John Hancock  
Jordan Park  
Laborie Medical Technologies  
Liberty Mutual  
Little Harbour School  
Londonderry High School  
Lonza  
MARMON Aerospace & Defense  
Merchant's Fleet  
Messiah Lutheran Church in Amherst  
NCAB Group, USA  
New Hampton School  
Newfields Elementary School  
NEXTERA Energy Seabrook  
NH Climate Action + Friends Forever  
International  
NH Coastal Adaptation Workgroup  
Northeast Color

Nottingham Elementary  
Novocure  
Parker Hannifin  
Penacook Elementary School  
Phillips Exeter Academy  
Pierce Atwood LLP  
Pinkerton Academy  
Planet Fitness  
Point32Health  
Portsmouth High School  
PrimeAsia Leather Company  
Prospect Mountain High School  
Ralph Lauren  
Trillium Flow Technologies  
Santander  
Seacoast Board of Realtors  
Seacoast Financial Planning  
Seascope Capital Management, LLC  
Sheehan Phinney  
SmartBear Software  
SNHU  
Solari Salon & Spa  
Stonyfield Yogurt  
TD Bank  
Technology Business Research  
The Rye Beach Club - Swim Team

The Simon Group  
Timberland  
University of New Hampshire  
UNH Biology Club  
UNH Seacoast Alumni Network  
Unitarian Universalist of Newburyport  
Voya Financial  
Westinghouse  
Weston & Sampson Engineers  
Whole Foods  
Wilson Language Training  
Windham High School  
World Affairs Council of NH



# 2023 Beach Cleanups





## **Adopt-a-Beach Groups**

Aimee & Acadia Gelineau  
Allagash Brewery  
Always in Motion to Save the Ocean  
Bill Hall  
Christine Ward  
Chucky's Fight  
Club Finz Parrothead Club of Southern ME & Seacoast NH  
Community Partners  
Eastman Family  
First Unitarian Universalist Society of Exeter / Phillips Exeter Academy  
Good Shepherds Foundation  
Jennessa and Chris Albers  
League of Conservation Voters  
Linda Rickenbach  
Lisa Tilluckdharry  
Mainely Conservation  
Marcy Ghirardi  
Mersisters  
NextEra Energy  
NH DES Coastal Program  
Nicole Santley & Madison  
Riley Levesque  
Rod Mattson  
Seacoast Paddleboard Club  
Slacktide Maine  
Stephanie Burrows  
Tides of Life SUP Yoga

## **Volunteer Beach Cleanup Leaders**

Jess Blasko  
Lesia Borninski  
Christine Campanella  
Joe Carroll  
Kat Couree  
David Gilman  
Joe Leverone  
Mike Paige  
Pam Perreault  
Charlie Raeburn  
Mike Toepfer

## **Fishing Line Recycling Program Coordinator**

Stephanie Burrows

## **Microplastics Sampling Leads**

Christine Campanella  
Tim Palen  
Cheryl Parker  
Pamela Perrault  
Charlie Raeburn

## **Microplastics Sorting Volunteers**

Sophie Casa  
Vivian Raynolds  
Abigail Sargent  
Avery Settele  
Pam Shaw

## **Office and Event Support**

Molly Amiss  
Nancy Anderson  
Ann Birner  
Christine Campanella  
Sophie Casa  
Bette Garrett  
David Gilman  
Tatiana Iwanesco  
Joe Leverone  
Debbie Manning  
Greg Manning  
Krissy Mitchell  
Noelle Needham  
Barb Nugent  
Rebecca Potter  
Susan Scott  
Patti Sullivan  
Michael Toepfer



# Sustaining

To sustain and expand our organization and achieve our vision, we must have the necessary resources and a balanced financial portfolio. In this effort, our diverse Board of Directors is active, engaged and well-qualified.



*Breaching Humpback whale, Blue Ocean Society Staff*





## **Integral partnership: *New England Regional Fishing Gear Response and Removal Team***

**\$2.7 million  
to battle  
ghost gear**

In 2023, the **Center for Coastal Studies** was awarded **\$2,718,532** from the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's** Marine Debris Program to partner with **Blue Ocean Society** for Marine Conservation, **Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation**, **OceansWide**, **Rozalia Project for a Clean Ocean**, and **Net Your Problem** to form *The New England Regional Fishing Gear Response and Removal Team* to remove and document abandoned, lost, discarded or end-of-life fishing gear in New England.

The **Blue Ocean Society** was awarded **\$100,000** to join in the effort.

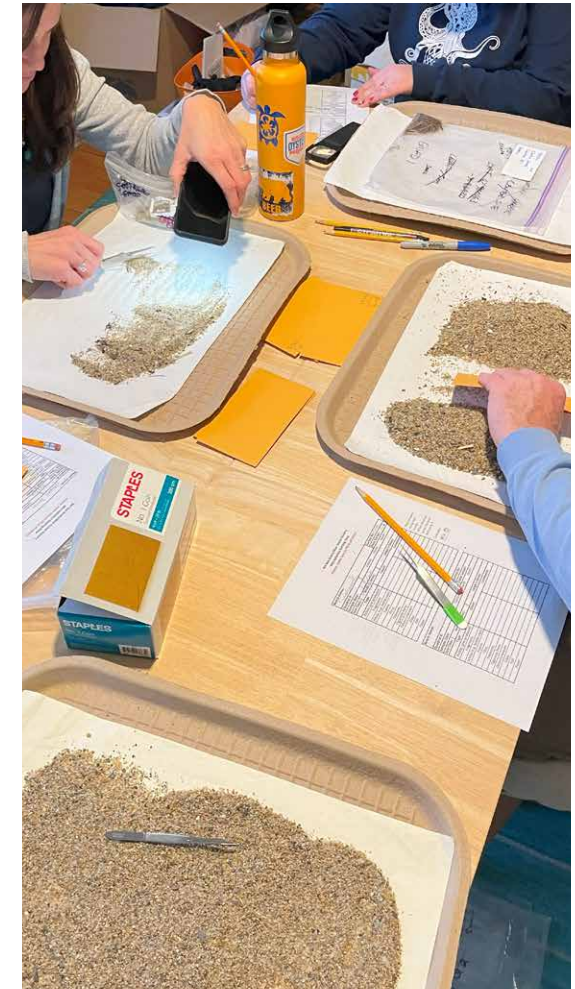


# 2023 Sustaining

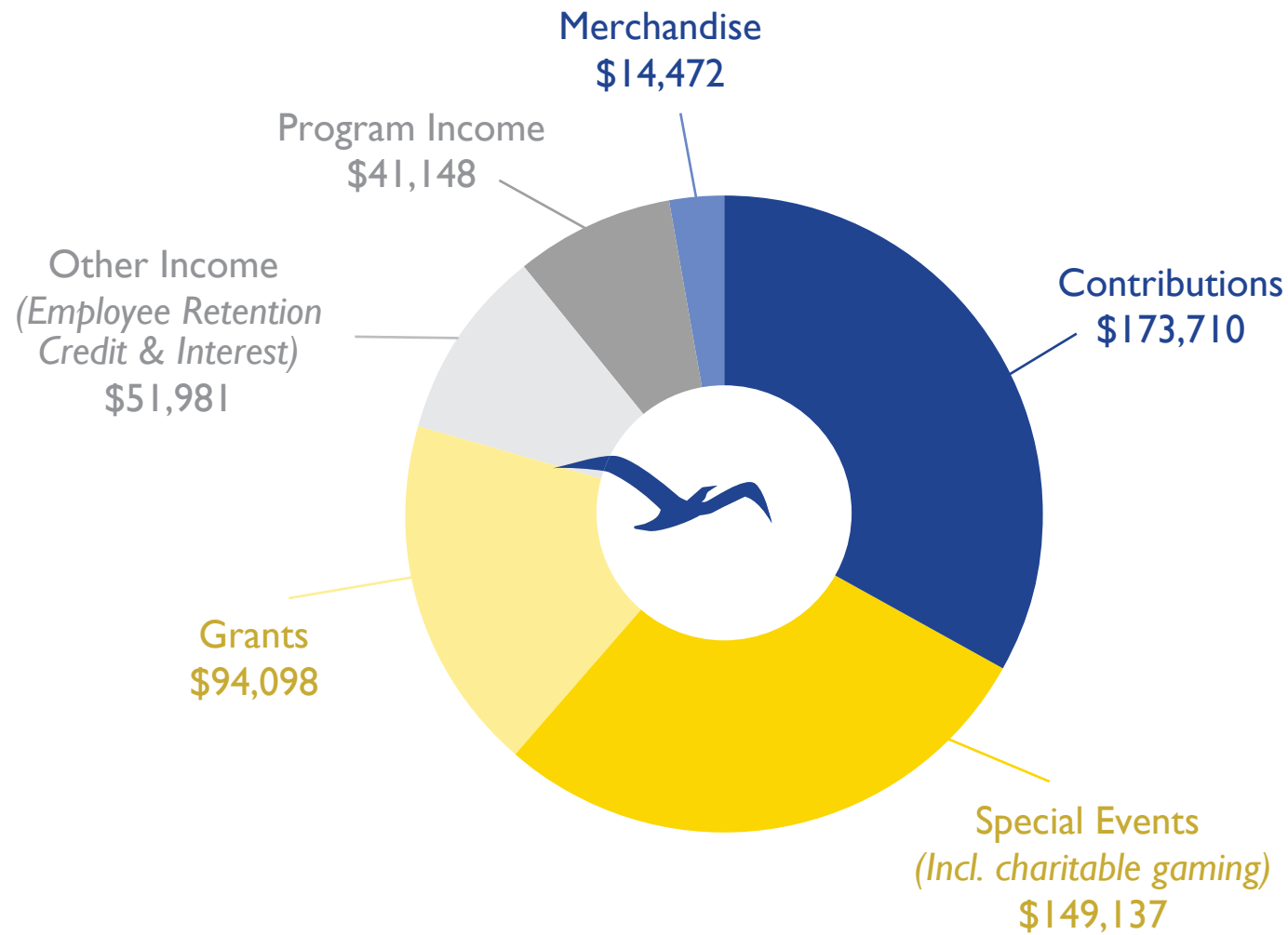
- We had a first-time fundraising event where a group of swimmers swam (either individually or as a relay team) from the Isles of Shoals, which was an 8-mile swim. They raised over \$20,000. The event was held in 2023 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Save Our Shores campaign, in which 3 women led local towns in successfully blocking an oil refinery from getting built in Durham/the Isles of Shoals.



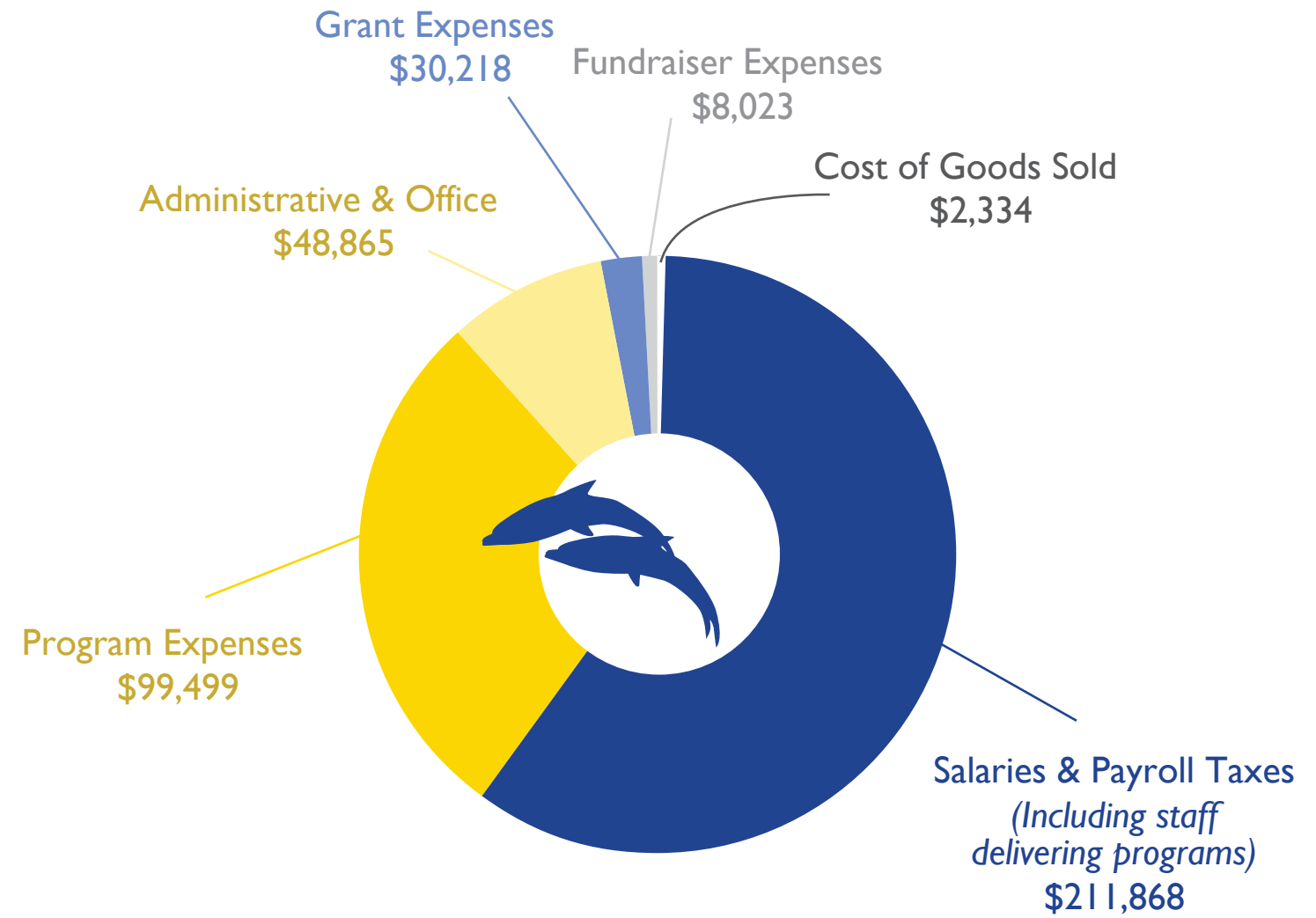
- We also continued our successful partnership with Howell Conservation Fund to study microplastics and started working with Shaw Institute to find the source of these tiny pollutants.



# 2023 Financials



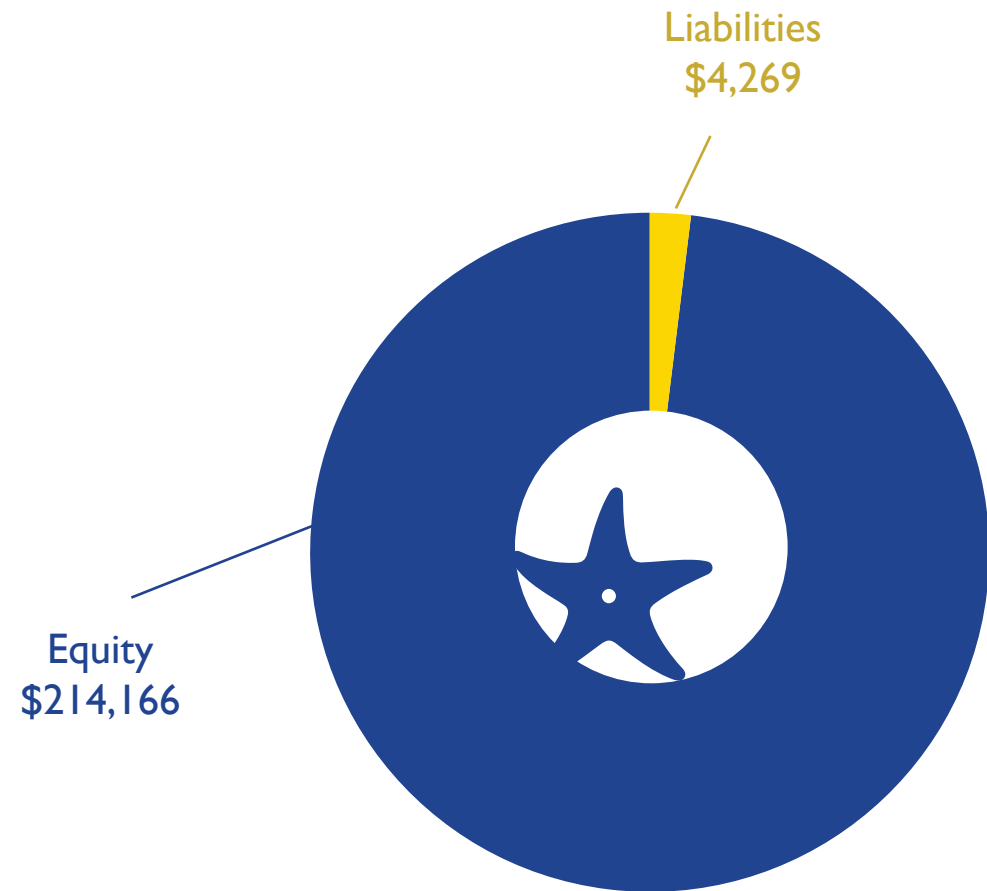
**INCOME: \$524,546**



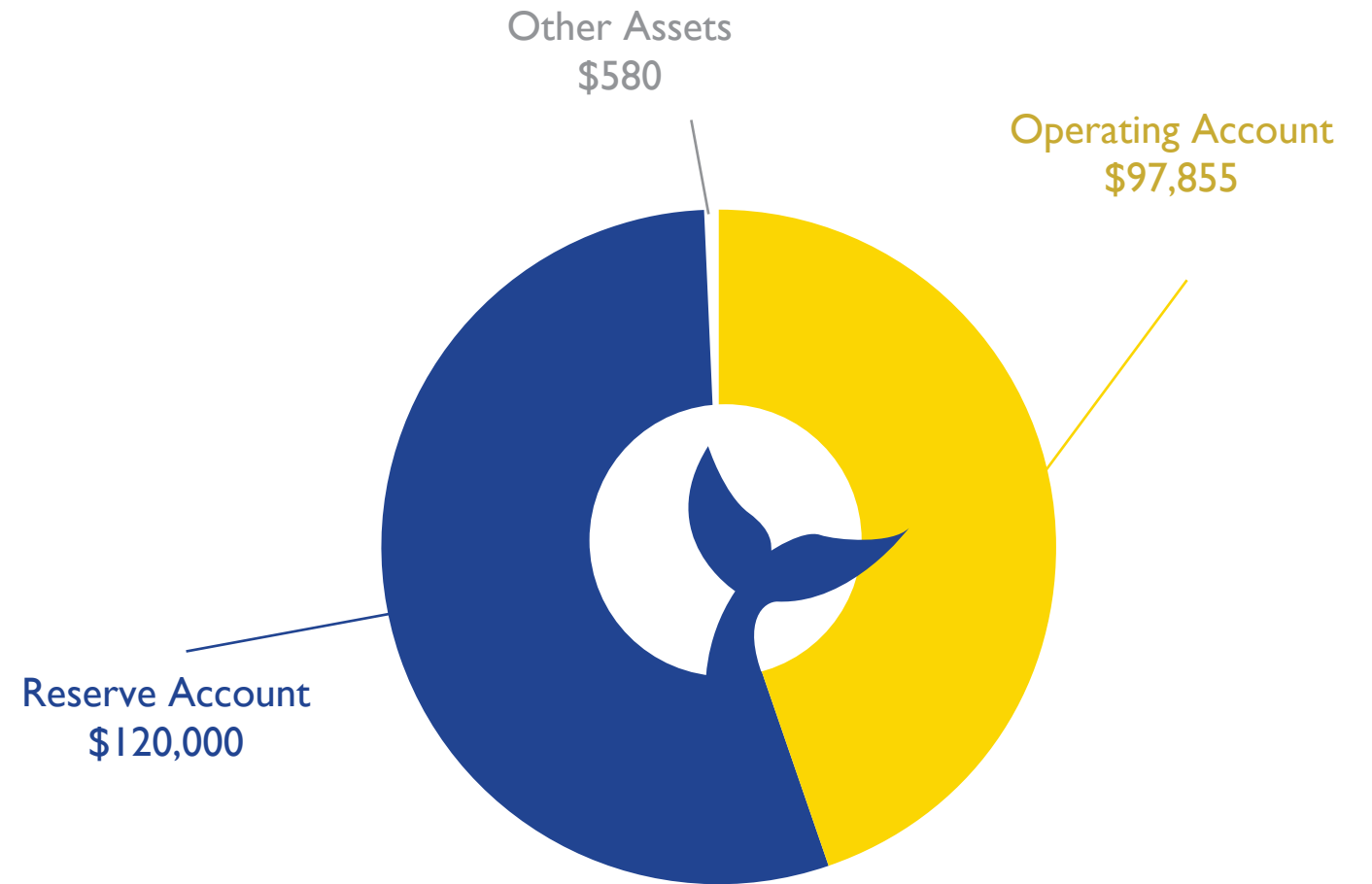
**EXPENSES: \$400,807**



# 2023 Financials



**TOTAL LIABILITY & EQUITY:  
\$218,435**



**TOTAL ASSETS: \$218,435**

# 2023 Donors

Connie Abell  
Maria Abreu  
Access Sports Medicine  
& Orthopaedics  
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Jay Albere  
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Amadeus  
AMC Law Group, PLLC  
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Rachel Bennett  
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Meredith Bezak  
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Tonya Brewen  
Helen Brewster  
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Monique Chretien  
Johnnie Christensen  
Dari Christenson  
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Micheline Cignoli  
Peggy Ciotti  
Brian Clancy  
Tanya Clark  
Brenda Class



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Jennifer Edwards  
Carol Ehlen  
Betsy Eischen

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Christopher Emmons  
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Jean Eno  
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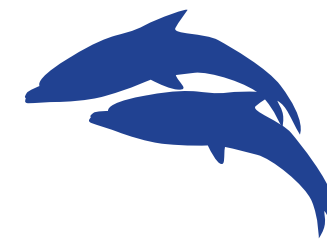
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