




We  
are  
all  
connected

 **RE SOURCES**  
*2024 Impact Report*

 We live and work on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, who have lived in the region from time immemorial. We acknowledge the Tribes' treaty rights, as well as our responsibility to uphold them, and we are grateful for the Tribes' enduring care and protection of the lands and waterways.



# Message from our Co-Director

Cover and page 2 photos: Hannah Gabrielson

## A black bear is a northwest forest gardener.

I started my career as a black bear biologist, so I can explain. Every year and across the seasons, salmon migrate upriver to ancestral spawning grounds in lush forests across the Pacific Northwest. Black bears drag salmon from the water into the forest and even up into trees where they eat parts of the fish and leave the rest to decompose or be scavenged. The surrounding trees absorb the marine nutrients that salmon acquired on their ocean journeys. Thanks to salmon fertilizer, trees like hemlocks, firs and cedars grow into behemoths over time. Once mature, giant cedars start to rot at the base, leaving ideal spaces for black bear dens. Eventually, old trees that fall into streams provide shelter for newly hatched juvenile salmon. When strong enough, the salmon venture seaward and the cycle continues.

We get to decide on what our relationship with the land, and all the creatures on it (other humans included) looks like. For all the noise in the world — all the toxic systems around us — we have the power to nourish, replenish and heal the land and ourselves as an extension of the land. We can compost the ills of the world into change and create a future that honors connection and celebrates the unique and fascinating role the bear and salmon and human play in natural systems. That work is long and even though RE Sources has been around for decades already, we are only just getting started.

When my colleagues Janet Marino, Jay Kosa and I learned that RE Sources would need a new executive director, we reflected on the state of the environmental movement, the state of the world, and our organizational values. We decided that conditions were ripe for seeding a new, shared leadership model rooted in interdependence. We worked with our (amazing) board to ensure accountability and clarity of roles, and landed on an approach where the three of us serve as co-executive directors, each with authority over specific areas of decision-making and a consensus-based approach for decisions of broad organizational consequence.

So far we are enjoying the model for the efficiency, diversity of perspective, and resilience it affords. When life throws unexpected challenges at one of us, the other two can step up, and when the org faces important decisions, we make them swiftly, honestly and

thoughtfully. And our talented team is continuing to make lasting impacts to protect this region, all while setting examples for the rest of the Northwest and the country to follow.

2023 was certainly a year of transition for RE Sources, and yet it was also a year of culminations. Together, our staff and supporters:

- Conserved more than 600 acres of mature forest in Whatcom County by catalyzing a local grassroots movement for forest protection and channeling it into sound policy.
- Completed a 10-year community science effort to monitor our region's shorelines, collect valuable data and inform policies that better safeguard our shorelines and seas.
- Celebrated 30 years of RE Store operations, through which we provide jobs training, divert waste from landfills, and foster a culture of reuse.
- Convened Whatcom County's first climate summit for youth, by youth, to share solutions and hope grounded in local climate actions already underway.

Looking ahead, I too have hope rooted in on-the-ground, tangible progress. Yes, we're in a fraught presidential election year and we're facing efforts to roll back landmark climate legislation. But we've also raised the bar on what's possible when we speak up, act and invest as a community to hold polluters accountable and fiercely protect the places we love.

We are diving headfirst into complex but critical efforts, like an update to Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan, Nooksack watershed adjudication, and a pivotal moment for tackling pollution imperiling Bellingham Bay and the broader Salish Sea. Our team of experts is uniquely suited to navigate these complexities and craft thoughtful, collaborative solutions. We invite you, dear Northwesterner, to dive in with us. We're all connected. Like the black bear, you and I are gardeners of a thriving future for Northwest Washington. 🌱



**Ander Russell**  
RE Sources  
Co-Executive Director





# 2023 By The Numbers



**5,700**

Contacts to lawmakers by our Legislative Action Team during the 2023 WA lawmaking session



**16,600**

Messages sent by community members to stop the Brokedown Palace Timber Sale

**10**

Years of community science-led shoreline monitoring efforts culminated in 2023



**2,000**

Pounds of trash cleaned from beaches, rivers and lakes by nearly 200 volunteers



**1,722,200**

Pounds of trash diverted from landfills by RE Store programs in 2023. That's the equivalent of 31 humpback whales!



**90%**

RE Store Community Jobs Training Program participants who completed their work contract found employment or enrolled in a local college



## You make the difference

Your support makes it possible for RE Sources to secure crucial environmental victories today, while ensuring plans and policies center people and planet for generations to come. Thank you.

## RE Sources would like to thank...

...our business and foundation funders for their generous support:

- Aslan Brewing Co.
- Backcountry Essentials
- Barron Quinn Blackwood
- Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship
- Bullitt Foundation
- Burning Foundation
- Cosman Family Foundation
- City of Bellingham, Public Works Department
- Danne Neill, Real Estate Broker
- Darby Foundation
- Dudley Foundation
- First Federal Community Foundation
- Heritage Bank
- H & H Evergreen Foundation
- Harder Foundation
- Horizons Foundation
- Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation

- Industrial Credit Union
- King County Solid Waste
- Loyal Bigelow and Jedediah Dewey Foundation
- Lucky Seven Foundation
- Lummi Indian Business Council
- M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust
- Norcliffe Foundation
- Northwest Fund for the Environment
- Patagonia
- Peach Foundation
- Puget Sound Benefit Services
- Rose Foundation
- Satterberg Foundation
- Steele Financial Services
- Sustainable Whatcom Fund
- Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund
- The Gary & Carol Milgard Family
- Village Books & Paper Dreams
- Washington Conservation Action
- Washington State Department of Ecology
- Whatcom Community Foundation
- Whatcom County Health Department



**2,500**

Whatcom students benefiting from their teachers engaging in ClimeTime and other professional development workshops



**48%**

Increase in how hopeful students felt that we as a society can address climate change and create a positive future, as a result of our YEP! program



# 2023 Milestone Victories

Staff from event partner Center for Responsible Forestry speaking at our rally for mature forests, August 2023

## Youth Action

Through our Educating for the Environment program, we connected our region's teens with multiple ways to learn about local climate solutions and make change together.

In August 2023, we ramped up youth action with the first-ever Youth Climate Summit in northwest Washington. Five local high school students co-planned the climate summit in August, and almost all presenters were under 25 years old, making this an event truly for youth, by youth.

In addition to the summit, we connected 25 high school students with avenues for local climate action through our Youth for the Environment & People (YEP!) program. YEP! offered 825 hours of climate education and action to students in 2023. The cohorts implemented three semester-long projects in the community to address a different climate-related issue of the students' choosing.

YEP! led to a 48% increase in how hopeful students felt that we as a society can address climate change and create a positive future. While hope is awfully hard to pin a number onto, there's no doubt our youth programming is showing young people they can actually make a difference.

## Scaling Up to Tackle Stormwater Pollution

RE Sources joined forces with six other cities along the Salish Sea and leveraged grassroots community science to expand stormwater monitoring and prompt action.

Four volunteers, along with RE Sources's North Sound Waterkeeper, Kirsten McDade, gather at the mouth of Padden Creek, where freshwater meets the sea. The team has to meet late at night to match the whims of the tide. Now, close to 7 p.m., the sea is finally out, and the team has access to the creek's mouth without worry of salt contamination. They get to work.

Scenes like this have been playing out along local shores since the fall of 2023, when McDade took RE Sources' Bellingham Bay stormwater monitoring project to the next level. Building on two years of extensive local monitoring largely carried out by two or three individuals, McDade trained more than a dozen volunteers who collect and examine stormwater samples monthly from urban creeks and stormwater outfalls that dump into Bellingham Bay. Now retirees, working professionals and students routinely come together around a shared desire to learn about and look after their homewaters.

In 2023, we also harmonized data collection efforts with six other cities to create a region-wide Salish Sea Stormwater Monitoring Program. Members of the effort submit stormwater data to respective cities and environmental agencies to identify sources of pollution and prompt action.

Artists played music and read poetry while circus performers dressed as mushrooms, forest fairies, and ents roamed the crowd. Thanks to dozens of volunteers who phone banked, made signs and art, and helped with logistics, the rally marked a new high point for this burgeoning forest movement.

The rally was bookended by a grassroots push to protect the mature forest at Brokedown Palace along the Middle Fork Nooksack river at the start of the year and a far-reaching forest conservation victory at the end. In December, the Department of Natural Resources announced the protection of 2,000 acres of largely mature, structurally-complex forests, often referred to as legacy forests, across western Washington as part of a state investment in climate adaptation and carbon storage.

Of that total, 627 acres of forests are located in Whatcom County, including Brokedown Palace and several tracts in the Lake Whatcom watershed. All 2,000 acres were conserved through a new program funded by Washington's cap and invest program, known as the Climate Commitment Act (CCA).

2023 proved that policy solutions in which climate polluters pay to fund investments in natural climate solutions (like conserving mature forests) are not only possible, but broadly supported and worth expanding. In 2024, we're advancing our Future Forests campaign to elevate ecological forest management and mature forest conservation as 21st century solutions to our 21st century challenges. 🌱

## Protecting the Best, Restoring the Rest

RE Sources and allies delivered a major victory for mature forests in Whatcom County and across western Washington, conserving 2,000 acres of state trust lands at risk for clearcutting.

On a sunny day in August 2023, more than 300 people mobilized in downtown Bellingham to demonstrate their support for protecting mature forests on public land while they still exist. Rally attendees heard from elected officials and local advocates. In addition, Lummi master carver Jewell James and other Indigenous leaders spoke about the importance of protecting old forests to restore salmon runs and adapt to climate change.





## Climate Action

Frighteningly low snowpack levels and unprecedented flooding are just the latest reminders that climate impacts are already reshaping life in Northwest Washington. Responding means pushing for an equity-centered transition from fossil fuels to clean energy in order to limit the severity of climate change, while adapting and building resilience to changes that are underway. To those ends, we:

- Partnered with local labor unions to better protect refinery workers as well as our air and waters. We called on Washington state to pass stronger safety rules for oil refineries (known as Process Safety Management) vital for preventing potentially deadly incidents, while also reducing the more common non-fatal incidents of toxic exposures and emergency flaring that releases toxic pollution above the usual limits.
- As part of a broad coalition of organizations, we successfully advocated for a new state law, HB 1181, that creates a pathway for local jurisdictions to weave carbon reduction and climate adaptation into their comprehensive plans. These plans guide how, when, and where future development happens. The bill supports counties in developing their own solutions rooted in environmental justice and tailored to their communities.
- Removed barriers to local wind power. Small wind energy systems are growing more affordable and practical to install. This summer, Whatcom County updated the county development code, allowing for local wind power facilities. RE Sources has a representative on the county's Climate Impact Advisory Committee, and we helped urge the County Council to make this important step to expand clean energy infrastructure and build resiliency locally in the face of climate change.

## Watershed Health & Salish Sea Protection

Take a paddleboard journey from the headwaters of the Nooksack or Skagit River to the sea (visit our YouTube page if you need help visualizing), and you'll pass by forests, farmland, towns, cities and shorelines that all contribute to the health of our waters, lands, wildlife and people. That's why we advocate, educate and mobilize folks around issues that impact all these landscapes. In 2023, supporters like you:

- Successfully urged the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to pause the Brokedown Palace Timber Sale, twice — once in February and again in June, thanks to a combined 16,600 emails sent by 1,457 community members.
- Successfully advocated for Whatcom County Council to form the "Forest Resilience Task Force," a round table with representatives from the county, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, the Department of Natural Resources, the US Forest Service, and various stakeholder interests.
- Worked with the WRIA 1 Planning Unit (stakeholder group for the Nooksack Watershed) to engage Whatcom County Council, asking that the county better integrate land use planning with water resources planning to prevent future conflicts like what happened in the summer of 2023 when wells serving hundreds of Whatcom County residents went dry.
- Educated the community about ecological forestry and the climate resilience benefits it offers our region. Educational efforts included a Environmental Speaker Series lecture at WWU, multiple tours through local working forests, and some creative cinematic storytelling to convey important climate and forest science to broader audiences.

**“When we protect mature forest stands, we are protecting the old-growth of the future. Mature and old-growth forests can help attenuate the floods, landslides, droughts, and wildfires that climate change will bring to our neck of the woods.”**

—Alexander Harris, Land & Water Policy Manager

# More ways you made a difference



(Eric Creitz)

- Held several beach cleanups where over 200 volunteers collected almost 2,000 pounds of trash.
- Held four public tours of contaminated cleanup sites in Bellingham Bay and Blaine. Each year, our tours are attended by dozens of residents, where folks have a chance to talk directly with agency officials and our staff scientists about how past industrial pollution is getting remediated, and give input on how our communities want the sites to be used in the future.
- Monitored and patrolled our rivers, creeks, and marine shorelines. This monitoring, which totaled 158 hours in 2023, helps us notice pollution so we can alert local officials to clean it up. It also allows us to identify pollution hotspots for various types of pollution, and informs where the community needs to focus its pollution prevention efforts. 📍





YEP! students at the clothing swap they organized in Spring 2023

**I had never had a chance to join an official group or be a part of a project to make a change and help the community. This was my first time and definitely not my last.**

—YEP! program participant, 10th grade

## Youth Education & Action

Too often, young people are served platitudes from adults when what they're demanding is meaningful climate action. Educators want to address important issues like climate change, but are stretched thin. That's why we equip educators, school administrators and students with connections and tools rooted in local climate and environmental solutions. In 2023, we:

- Partnered with other local nonprofits and the Washington State ClimeTime program. 120 Whatcom County K-12 teachers joined us across our five professional development courses. Every single teacher who participated in the ClimeTime "Teaching Outside" workshop reported that their confidence increased for facilitating outdoor learning.
- Equipped 150 fifth grade students with tools to green their school. The students performed a waste investigation at their school, and about 80 of the students worked to reduce food waste going into the landfill at their schools by improving waste bin signage, volunteering as "lunchroom monitors", and installing a water bottle refill station.
- 83 Lummi Nation School students picked up 362 pounds of trash from the beach near their school.
- High schoolers in our Youth for the Environment & People (YEP!) program led hands-on lessons to 45 elementary students, using clay to model various river systems and help the young Wild Whatcom students discover what an ecosystem resilient to flooding looks like. Another cohort of YEP! students held a clothing swap and educated shoppers about the impacts of fast fashion.

## The RE Store

More than a store, The RE Store (a long-time project of RE Sources) on Meridian Street in Bellingham is a local institution devoted to community, environmental ethos, and reinvention. Through a suite of programs, we provide training to disadvantaged workers, salvage building material, build furniture, and teach reuse. We evolve to meet the changing needs of our community, fighting waste and climate change all the while. In 2023, we:

- Diverted 1,722,200 pounds of building materials from the landfill.
- In 2023, 90% of our Community Jobs Training Program trainees who completed their work contact found employment or were enrolled in a local college.
- Our Salvage Services performed 229 free pickups throughout Whatcom County and beyond, saving donors on disposal costs and stocking The RE Store with a variety of usable building materials. Additionally, we were hired for 26 deconstruction projects in 2023.
- Partnered with Sustainable Connections to build and launch Washington state's first official "Freedge" shed, a mini food pantry for perishables available to everyone, helping divert over 8,000 pounds of food waste.
- Celebrated our 30th Anniversary by having a huge store-wide sale and party with live music, games and more, with attendees completely filling our parking lot.
- Sold over 10,000 feet of wood flooring — that's almost three-quarters the height of Mt Rainier and twice the elevation of Artist Point!

Learn more at: [www.re-store.org](http://www.re-store.org)





## 2023 Financial Report

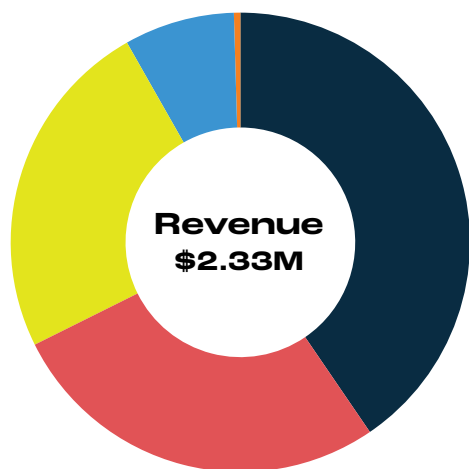
Across the environmental nonprofit sector, 2023 was a challenging year, and RE Sources was no exception. With Whatcom County facing a cost of living 20 percent higher than the national average and costs rising across the board, we increased salaries where possible. In a year where environmental giving was down nationally, we were grateful to have added more new donors in 2023 than in any of the past five years and to see our number of monthly donors reach an all-time high. Unfortunately, total funds from individuals and foundations did not increase at levels commensurate with our expenses. RE Store revenue also underperformed compared to expectations.

We responded early in 2024 by honing our programmatic focus and restructuring our staffing, including

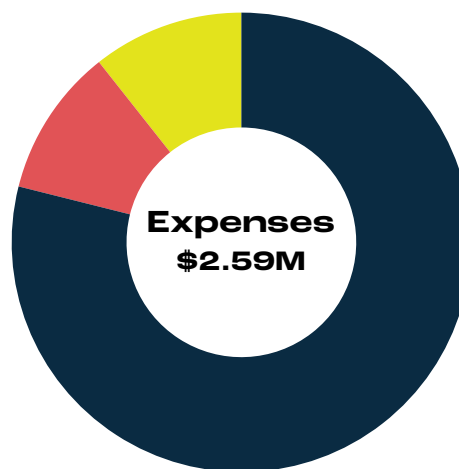
ensuring that our new co-executive leadership structure resulted in an ongoing net cost savings to the organization. In addition, we're developing relationships with a host of foundation and government funders to ensure we leverage dollars into tangible science and policy advances here in northwest Washington and serve as replicable, scalable models across the country.

We at RE Sources are grateful for your continued support in this year of generational significance for our region's lands, waters, climate and communities.

**If you wish to receive a copy of our 2023 990 Tax Filing, available by mid-year, please reach out to Development Director Callie Hamilton at [CallieH@re-sources.org](mailto:CallieH@re-sources.org).**



- 40.5% RE Store Sales & Services
- 27.2% Foundation & Trust Grants
- 24.1% Individual Donations
- 7.8% Government Grants & Contracts
- 0.5% Other Income



- 78.9% Programs (RE Store & Education/Advocacy)
- 10.6% Admin Support
- 10.4% Development



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RE Sources' North Sound Waterkeeper advocates for the Salish Sea and waters that flow into it.

### Join Us.

We mobilize people to protect the water, land and climate we all depend on.  
[re-sources.org](http://re-sources.org) • Text **RESOURCES** to 40649

