



Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies is a partnership for cleaner air, safer whales, and quieter oceans

Santa Barbara County
Air Pollution Control District

Ventura County
Air Pollution Control District

Bay Area Air Quality
Management District

Channel Islands
National Marine Sanctuary

Cordell Bank
National Marine Sanctuary

Greater Farallones
National Marine Sanctuary

Monterey Bay
National Marine Sanctuary

National Marine
Sanctuary Foundation

California Marine Sanctuary
Foundation

The Volgenau Foundation

Environmental Defense Center

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Partners Launch 2019 Program to Protect Blue Whales and Blue Skies

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – The partners in an initiative to reduce air pollution and protect endangered whales announced the launch of the 2019 incentive program, which will run through November 15, 2019, with voluntary vessel speed reduction (VSR) zones in the Santa Barbara Channel and San Francisco Bay regions.

Similar to the 2018 program, companies participating in the 2019 program are asked to voluntarily slow down their entire fleet to 10 knots or less, with an average speed that does not exceed 12 knots. Partners chose the target of 10 knots to achieve maximum emission reduction benefits, and for consistency with other programs. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Sanctuaries request that vessels 300 gross tons or larger slow to 10 knots or less during peak whale feeding season to protect whales from lethal ship strikes.

Approximately \$300,000 in incentives is available for the 2019 program. Individual award amounts will be tiered based on levels of participation. The following companies have already registered to participate in this year's program: **CMA CGM, Cosco, Evergreen, GALI, Hapag Lloyd, Hyundai Glovis, K-Line Ro-Ro, Maersk, Matson, MSC, NYK Ro-Ro, ONE Line, PIL, and Yang Ming**. Companies can continue to register for the 2019 program. Application materials are available online: www.ourair.org/air-pollution-marine-shipping. Companies can also email jessica.morten@noaa.gov.

The waters off California are major feeding grounds for significant populations of endangered blue, humpback and fin whales. These populations are still recovering from past whaling impacts. With increased international trade they now face new threats from potentially lethal collisions with ships transiting the same areas in which they must feed. Channel Islands, Monterey Bay, Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries protect these waters to keep the marine ecosystem healthy and productive, benefitting whales and other marine life, and supporting robust fisheries. Whale behaviors cannot be controlled. Therefore, the sanctuaries, together with industry and partner agencies, have formulated this program by slowing ship speeds in specific whale-critical areas. At slower speeds, ship strikes are more avoidable and more survivable when they do occur.

In 2018, 12 shipping companies participated in the program and slowed down 280 vessels, some with multiple trips in the VSR regions. Those efforts reduced 266 tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides (NOx) and more than 8,600 metric tons of greenhouse gases. See additional information about the 2018 program: www.ourair.org/wp-content/uploads/2018_VSR_Brochure.pdf.

In recognition of this program's success, California State Senator Scott Wiener included VSR in California Senate Bill 69, which would direct the California Air Resources Board to develop a similar voluntary VSR program in coordination with affected air districts and the national marine sanctuary program. This bill would provide much-needed support from the state.

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (VCAPCD) is providing \$175,000 for the 2019 program from a Supplemental Environmental Project secured through the California Air Resources Board settlement. Additional support for this year's program comes from the other air districts and the Volgenau Foundation.

Mike Villegas, Air Pollution Control Officer at VCAPCD, noted, "The vessel speed reduction program results in very cost-effective emission reductions of smog forming NOx and is critical to our efforts to attain the federal ozone (smog) air quality standards in Ventura County. The participating shipping lines are making a positive impact in protecting public health in our county."

"The program continues to grow, and 2019 should be no different," said Aeron Arlin Genet, Director of Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District. "Emissions from marine shipping significantly impact the Central Coast. Building off the success we've collectively achieved over the past five years, we look forward to improved air quality, whale protection, and expanded recognition for participating shipping companies."

Superintendent Maria Brown of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary, noted, "The endangered whales that benefit from this program are living national treasures, deserving of our protection. Through this collaborative partnership of commerce and conservation, we can help ensure that future generations will be able to experience their majesty and importance in the marine ecosystem. Further, they will appreciate the wisdom of our generation in taking action to preserve them."

“As one of VSR incentive program’s original partners, the Environmental Defense Center is pleased to see this effort continue in 2019,” said Kristen Hislop, Marine Conservation Program Director at the Environmental Defense Center. “Over the years, we have watched NOAA’s requests for ships to voluntarily slow down through the Santa Barbara Channel fail while this incentive-based program continues to be effective at protecting whales and improving air quality. With the recent increase in observed ship-strike related whale fatalities along the California coast, these efforts must remain a top priority. We are also encouraged by the introduction of California Senate Bill 69, which would provide much-needed stability for this important program.”

For more information, visit:

www.ourair.org/air-pollution-marine-shipping/.

www.farallones.noaa.gov

www.cordellbank.noaa.gov