

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



April 26, 2019

RE: 2019 voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) incentive program for the Santa Barbara Channel and San Francisco Bay regions off California

Dear Carrier Representative:

We are implementing a 2019 VSR incentive program May 15 - November 15, 2019 to reduce air pollution and fatal ship strikes on whales. The structure of the 2019 VSR Program will be similar to the 2018 Program. Financial incentives will be awarded to companies based on percent of distance traveled by their vessels through the VSR Zones at 10 knots or less, termed “percent of cooperation,” during the identified time period. Average speed of a transit throughout the entire VSR Zones must not exceed 12 knots in order to receive credit for distance traveled at 10 knots or less. In the Bay Area region, companies are encouraged to reduce vessel speed on both inbound and outbound trips.

Program participants will receive recognition for their participation, and we will work with successful shipping companies on a positive public relations campaign to draw public awareness to the VSR program and your company’s participation. In addition, close to \$300,000 is available for incentive awards, and award amounts will be scaled according to the levels of participation.

The California Marine Sanctuary Foundation will manage the incentive payments to individual shipping lines; please see the Letter of Understanding. Each vessel’s speed transiting the VSR Zones will be verified via analysis of Automatic Identification System (AIS) data. Participation is voluntary and does not commit shipping industry participants beyond the program period. If companies are enrolled in the program and unable to meet the minimum program criteria, there is no penalty but financial and public relations incentives will not be awarded.

While the scope of the program is limited to the Santa Barbara Channel and San Francisco Bay Area regions (see Attachment A), air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the threat of ship strikes on whales extends beyond these regions. Every effort should be made by participating vessels to not increase speed while outside the VSR Zones to “make up time.” Ship speed monitoring using AIS may occur between the Santa Barbara Channel and San Francisco Bay region VSR Zones to determine if ships are speeding up between zones. We also have noticed lower rates of cooperation in recent years with ships departing the San Francisco Bay Area VSR Zone and will be monitoring outbound transits in those zones more closely.

Please note this VSR incentive program complements existing seasonal whale advisories and

Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies is a partnership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Channel Islands, Monterey Bay, Cordell Bank, and Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuaries, Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, and the Volgenau Foundation

voluntary slow speed requests in effect in the Santa Barbara Channel (May 15 - November 15, 2019) and San Francisco Bay Area (May 1 - November 15, 2019) regions. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) strongly recommends that all vessels 300 gross registered tons or larger reduce speeds to 10 knots or less in these vessel slow speed zones. For more information on the seasonal whale advisories, please consult the USCG 11th District Local Notice to Mariners.

To enroll in the program, companies will be required to sign a Letter of Understanding. Please return the completed and signed Letter of Understanding and Sign Up Form (Attachment B) to Jess Morten (contact information provided below). Please enroll by **May 10, 2019 so that your company's information can be included in the news release**. Late enrollments will be accepted, but ship speeds during the complete program period will be included in all incentive tier determinations.

For more information about the VSR incentive program, watch "Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies," a promotional film found at <https://www.ourair.org/air-pollution-marine-shipping/>. Please also see Attachment C to learn how to report sightings of endangered whales.

Enrollment materials, comments or questions may be directed to:

Contact: Jessica Morten

Address: NOAA Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
University of California Santa Barbara
Ocean Science Education Building 514, MC 6155
Santa Barbara, CA, 93106-6155

Phone: +1 (805) 893-6433

Email: jessica.morten@noaa.gov

We believe by working together we can maintain vibrant maritime commerce, enhance corporate responsibility, and protect human health and the marine environment. We thank you in advance for considering your company's participation in the VSR incentive program.

Sincerely,

The Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Partners

Cc: Pacific Merchant Shipping Association
Marine Exchange of Southern California
Chamber of Shipping of America

Attachments:

- A. Maps of the VSR Zones in the Santa Barbara Channel and San Francisco Bay Area Regions
- B. Letter of Understanding / Sign-Up Form
- C. Whale Sightings Report