



A partnership for cleaner air, safer whales, and quieter oceans

**Air Districts of
Santa Barbara County,
Ventura County, and
the San Francisco Bay
Area**

April 15, 2020

RE: 2020 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) incentive program for southern California and the San Francisco Bay region in California

**NOAA National Marine
Sanctuaries**

**The Volgenau
Foundation**

**California Marine
Sanctuary Foundation**

**National Marine
Sanctuary Foundation**

**Environmental Defense
Center**

Dear Carrier Representative:

We are implementing a 2020 VSR incentive program May 15 - November 15, 2020 to reduce air pollution and fatal ship strikes on whales. The structure of the 2020 VSR Program will be similar to the 2019 Program. Incentives will be awarded to companies based on the percent of distance traveled by their fleet of vessels through the VSR Zones at 10 knots or less during the identified period. The average speed of a transit throughout the entire VSR Zones must not exceed 12 knots 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 fleets' 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, we expect to have close to \$200,000 available for incentive awards, and financial awards will be scaled according to the Gold and Sapphire 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. Enrollment in the 2020 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies incentive program is voluntary and enrollment does not commit shipping industry participants beyond the incentive program time 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 San Francisco Bay Area and southern California 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 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 through the VSR Zone and we will continue to closely monitor outbound transits in those zones.

Please note that this VSR incentive program complements existing seasonal whale advisories and voluntary slow speed requests in effect in the San Francisco Bay Area (May 1 - November 15, 2020) and in southern California (May 15 - November 15, 2020). 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 United States Coast Guard 11th District Local Notice to Mariners.

To enroll in the incentive 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, 2020 so that your company's information can be included in the news release**. Late enrollments will be accepted, but ship speeds during the entire 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 (203) 807-0769

Email: jessica.morten@noaa.gov

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
San Francisco Bay Marine Exchange

Attachments:

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