



air pollution control district  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

# Update on the Vessel Speed Reduction Program

## Board of Directors

June 26, 2025

**Aeron Arlin Genet**  
Executive Director / APCO

**Alex Economou**  
Planning Division Manager

## Our Mission

To protect the people and the environment of Santa Barbara County from the effects of air pollution.



# Background: Ship Emissions

- **Santa Barbara Channel Region is a heavily-trafficked shipping corridor**
  - Outside District's regulatory control
  - District has been advocating for Federal & International emission controls since 1994
- **Draft 2025 Ozone Plan:**
  - Marine Shipping continues to be the largest source of ozone precursors in the County
  - **New Ships:** Federal & International regulations require emission controls (e.g. Tier 3 engines)
  - **Existing Ships:** Can continue operating older engines until retired (10+ years)



# Protecting Blue Whales And Blue Skies Program

- Air Districts, National Marine Sanctuaries, Non-Profits, and Foundations
- Asks shipping companies to voluntarily slow down to 10 knots or less
- Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) Benefits:
  - Significant emission reductions (NOx, GHGs, Particulate Matter, Air Toxics)
  - Reduce risk of fatal ship strikes on whales
  - Reduce ocean noise
- 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Began as a pilot in Santa Barbara Channel in 2014 & has expanded each year



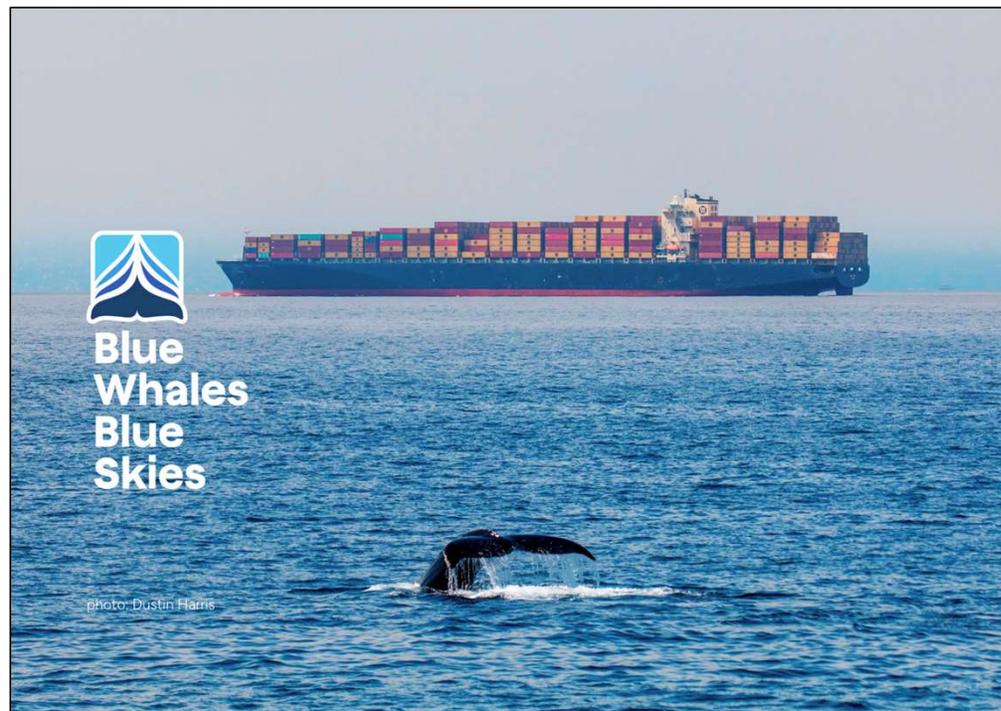
**Blue Whales  
Blue Skies**

# 2024 Program - Criteria

- **Seasonal program:**
  - May 1 – December 31, 2024
  - Coincides with high ozone levels and presence of whales
- **Open to containerships, auto carrier, bulk, and tanker companies**
- **Recognition based on % of total fleet distance traveled at 10 knots or less**

## Recognition Award Levels

<b>Sapphire</b>	<b>85 - 100%</b>
<b>Gold</b>	<b>60 - 84%</b>
<b>Blue Sky</b>	<b>35 - 59%</b>



# 2024 Program – VSR Zones

## 2024 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program San Francisco and Monterey Bay Region Vessel Speed Reduction Zones



## 2024 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program Southern California Region Vessel Speed Reduction Zone



# 2024 Results

- 49 global shipping companies participated:
  - 23 Sapphire, 18 Gold, 8 Blue Sky awardees
  - 743 vessels slowed down for 425,983 nautical miles
- Companies account for:
  - 78% of all containership traffic
  - 97% of all auto carrier traffic





**Protecting  
Blue Whales  
and Blue Skies**

**Vessel Speed Reduction Program**

Program Year	2014	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
VSR Zone	Santa Barbara Channel		Santa Barbara Channel & San Francisco Bay Region			Southern California & San Francisco Bay Region			+ Monterey Bay NMS	
Vessel Applicability	Containerships & Auto Carriers							+ Bulk & General	+ Tankers	
Program Duration	4 months	4.5 months			6 months			7.5 months		8 months
# Companies	7	10	11	12	15	16	18	23	33	49
# Vessels	14	25	44	295	349	482	545	671	709	743
Slow-speed Distance (nautical miles)	2,700	5,000	12,630	46,026	99,019	181,306	179,530	268,377	375,437	425,983
Overall Fleet Cooperation	--	--	--	36%	55%	60%	64%	78%	81%	85%
NOx Reductions (tons)	12.4	25.6	84	266	536	748	650	921	1,256	1,405
Regional GHG Reductions (metric tons)	535	1,005	2,630	8,668	17,026	24,258	22,201	32,604	45,784	49,945
Ocean Noise Reduction (dB / transit)	--	--	--	1.0	--	2.3	4.1	4.6	5.4	4.1 (38% source level reduction)
Fatal Ship Strike Risk Reduction *	--	--	--	--	--	35%	50%	44%	58%	50.1%

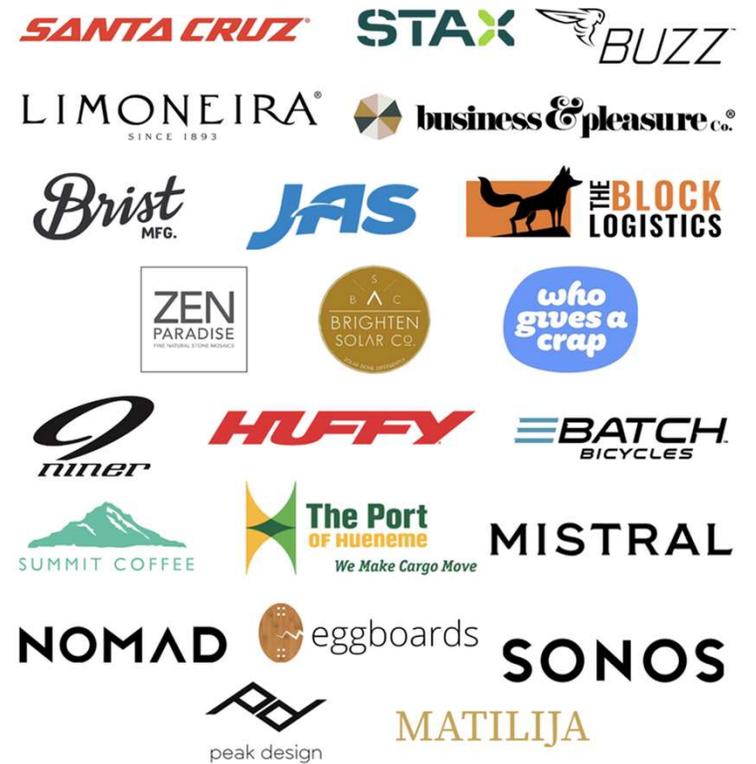
\* Represents the proportional decrease in risk from participating vessels and not absolute estimates of mortality avoided.

# Recognition and Outreach

## VSR Award Ceremony at Port of LA



## BWBS Ambassador Program

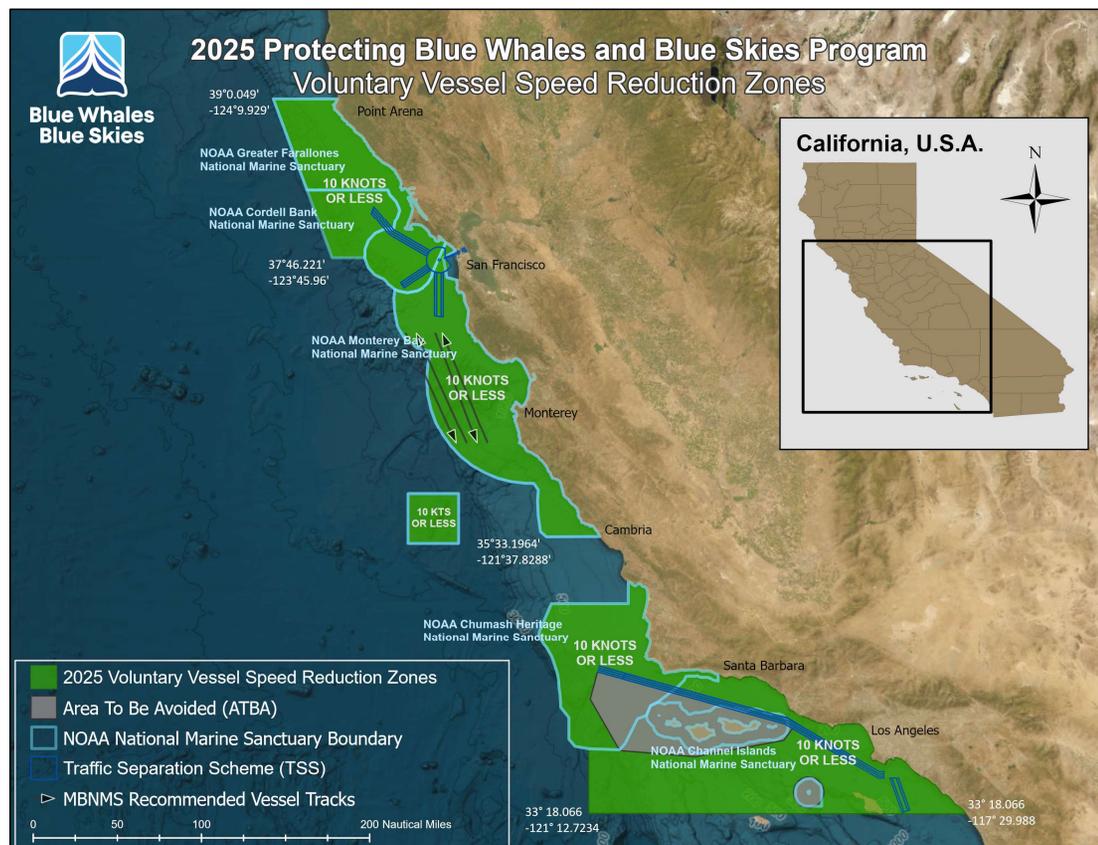


# 2025 Program Launch

- Same as the 2024 Program except for 2 key changes:
  - 1) Added the recently designated Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary as a VSR Zone
  - 2) Increased the cooperation rates needed to reach the Award Tier Levels

## Updated Recognition Award Levels

<b>Sapphire</b>	<b>85% → 90%</b>
<b>Gold</b>	<b>60% → 70%</b>
<b>Blue Sky</b>	<b>35% → 50%</b>



# State Legislation

- **California AB 14 introduced in December 2024 by Assemblymember Gregg Hart**
  - Would expand the voluntary Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies VSR program statewide
- **The bill has unanimously passed through the State Assembly and is currently in the Senate**



Photo credit: Asm. Hart's Office

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