




MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 27, 2026
TO: Community Advisory Council (CAC) Members
FROM: Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 
SUBJECT: Community Advisory Council - Quarterly Update

Per the Community Advisory Council (CAC) By-Laws, District staff provides quarterly updates to the CAC to maintain continuity during periods when there are no planning or rulemaking matters to discuss. The last quarterly update to the CAC occurred in December 2025, and a listing of the previous status updates can be found [here](#) on our website. The information below is provided as the quarterly status update for March 2026.

Climate Heat Impact Response Program (CHIRP)

The CHIRP incentive program was created through a State of Emergency in California proclaimed by Governor Gavin Newsom on July 30, 2021, due to an extreme heat event, which combined with reduced electricity supply caused by severe drought conditions and wildfires, placed a significant demand and strain on California's energy grid. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) was directed to develop a state-funded plan to mitigate the effects of additional emissions from increased use of diesel-fueled back-up generators and power plants that were allowed to operate outside of normal permit requirements during grid emergencies and periods of extreme heat. Assembly Bill 205 established the source of funding for CHIRP (Pub. Resources Code, §25791.5) to primarily fund, via local air districts, projects that involve the scrap and replacement of emergency diesel-fueled back-up generators.

In July 2024, CARB distributed the draft CHIRP allocation table to the 24 participating air districts, in which Santa Barbara was allotted a proposed amount of \$75,376. Upon receipt of this proposed allocation, the District's Compliance division discovered discrepancies with the excess emissions that had been reported to CARB during the extreme heat event compared with the actual emissions calculated by the District from data reported by its permitted sources. The District was able to provide more thorough information to CARB that corroborated these discrepancies. With that information, the CHIRP allocation table was updated to show a final allocation amount for Santa Barbara County of \$490,834.

These funds may be used for project types that are eligible under the Carl Moyer Memorial Air Quality Standards Attainment Program or the Community Air Protection Incentives Program. Since the excess emissions from the extreme heat event were caused by emergency diesel-fueled

back-up generators, the District's goal is to use the CHIRP funds to voluntarily install control equipment on these engines or to replace old, emergency diesel back-up generators with the cleanest available technology, with an emphasis on zero-emission equipment. Projects will be prioritized to benefit populations within disadvantaged and low-income communities.

Emergency diesel back-up generators emit several air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides (NO_x), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur oxides (SO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and diesel particulate matter (DPM), which is a main driver of health risk. Across the county, the District currently permits roughly 730 emergency diesel back-up generators. Based on 2024 emissions data, these units accounted for approximately 9 percent of all NO_x emissions and 19 percent of all DPM emissions from permitted sources countywide.

In addition to the CHIRP funding provided by CARB, the District is allocating an additional \$400,000 from the Board approved Clean Air Fund to CHIRP, bringing the program total to \$890,834. On March 19, 2026 the District Board adopted a Resolution to authorize the District's participation in implementing the CHIRP Program. The District's CHIRP Board letter and presentation are available [here](#).

Over the next few months, the District will be finalizing the details for the implementation of the CHIRP funding in Santa Barbara County and plans to launch the CHIRP incentive program as part of the District's 2026 Clean Air Grants program this Summer.

Protecting Blue Whales Blue Skies (BWBS) Program – 2025 Results and 2026 Season Start

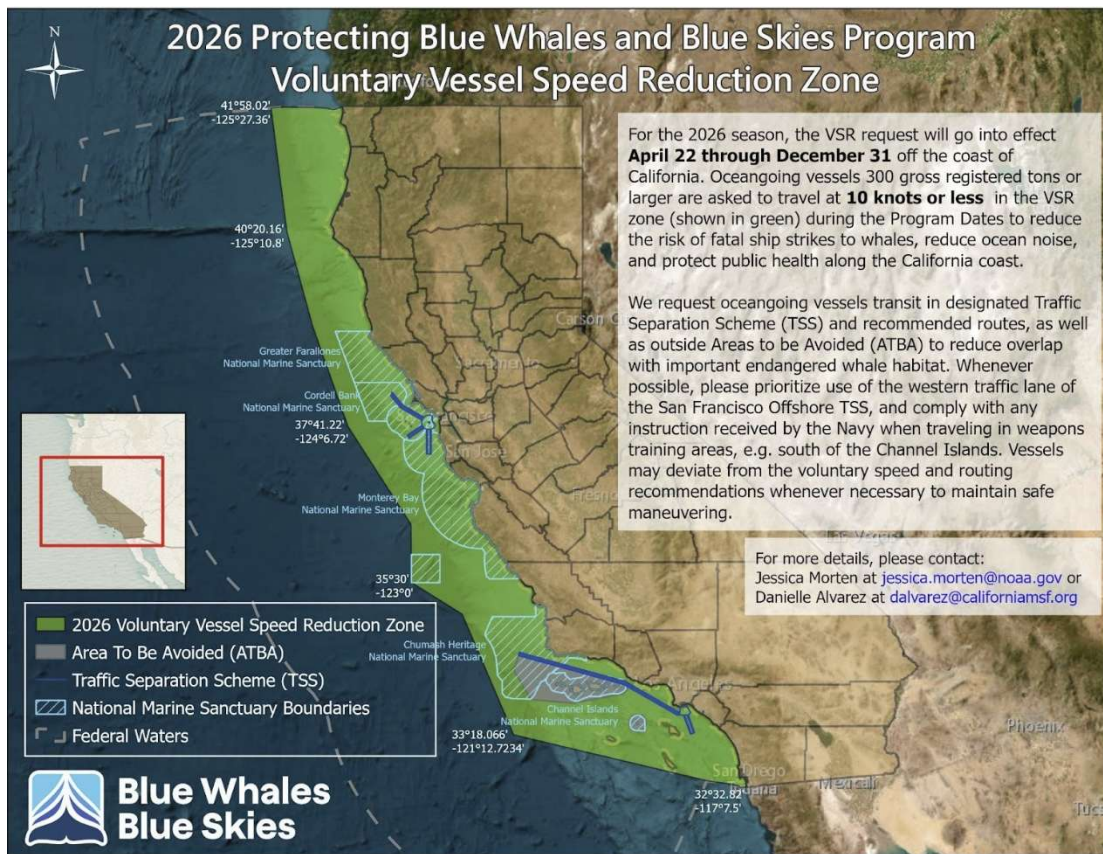
The BWBS Program incentivizes the world's largest shipping companies to voluntarily opt in to reduce speeds to 10 knots or less in the designated Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) zones off the California coast to help reduce air pollution, fatal ship strike risk to whales, and underwater noise pollution. After each VSR season, the BWBS Program analyzes vessel Automatic Identification System (AIS) data to determine the cooperation levels of the enrolled fleets. This data is used to recognize the shipping companies whose fleets consistently adhered to the reduced speed request and continues to demonstrate how these voluntary efforts translate to quantifiable environmental benefits for the marine environment and coastal California communities.

The 2025 season of the BWBS Program included VSR zones off the San Francisco, Central Coast, and South Coast regions and began on May 1 and concluded on January 15, 2026. [Results](#) show that the 11th annual season of the BWBS Program was the most effective year to date, with a cooperation rate of 85%. In total, the shipping companies reduced smog-forming NO_x emissions by almost 1,500 tons, diesel PM emissions by 8.9 tons, and greenhouse gases by over 55,000 metric tons along the California coast in 2025. Additionally, the risk of deadly ship strikes to whales was reduced by 40% and the acoustic intensity of the underwater noise during vessel transits was reduced by 70%. An award ceremony for the companies involved in the 2025 BWBS Program will be held on April 22 at Jack London Square near the Port of Oakland.

The upcoming ceremony will also officially kick-off the 2026 VSR season, which will span from April 22 through December 31. There are a number of changes being introduced for the 2026 season as the program expands statewide in accordance with the recent signing of Assembly Bill (AB) 14 – authored by Assemblymember Gregg Hart. The statewide map, as shown in Figure 1 below, is based upon the latest data regarding vessel behavior, important whale habitat, as well as prevailing onshore air pollution flow from vessel traffic. The updated zone is also optimized

for both conservation benefit and to provide industry with a more connected and straightforward area for navigation and planning purposes.

Figure 1: 2026 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone Map and Coordinates



For this 2026 VSR season, the program is also welcoming new partners to this collaborative effort, such as the California Ocean Protection Council, the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District, and the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District. For more information on the BWBS Program, a full list of the parameters for the 2026 program, and the District’s involvement as a program partner, please visit www.bluewhalesblueskies.org/.

Special Study of Particulate Matter in the Santa Maria Valley

In December 2024, the District was awarded an Air Monitoring Grant under the Inflation Reduction Act from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to perform a special study of particulate matter (PM) speciation in the Santa Maria Valley. The project was designed to build a better understanding of the PM pollution in the Santa Maria Valley – which includes the cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe as well as the unincorporated communities of Orcutt, Garey, and Sisquoc – and what species are present in the PM. Over the past 10 years, this study area has experienced nearly 25 exceedances annually of the state PM₁₀ standard (50 micrograms/cubic meter), which Santa Barbara County is currently designated as nonattainment for.

With this study, the District aims to better understand the PM concentrations, compositions, and sources present throughout the Santa Maria Valley, and how they are affected by location, time of year, and weather conditions. The District will also identify potential strategies to reduce PM₁₀

pollution in the Santa Maria Valley, and will engage with residents in English and Spanish to increase community-level awareness about air quality as well as provide resources to help protect people from exposure to high levels of PM₁₀.

The District began work on the grant in March 2025 and issued a request for proposals in April 2025, seeking assistance from an air quality consultant with the preparation of the special study. The District received several high quality proposals, and in August 2025, executed a contract with Trinity Consultants to perform the special study. Over the last several months, the District has been evaluating potential monitoring sites and procuring, calibrating, and installing equipment for the special study. The yearlong study is planned to begin in April 2026 with air monitoring and sampling occurring at several locations throughout the Santa Maria Valley. For more information on the Santa Maria Valley Particulate Matter Study and to see a map of the monitoring locations, please visit <https://www.ourair.org/santa-maria-valley-pm-study/>.

This concludes the status update for this quarter.

We will be scheduling a Community Advisory Council meeting in the next quarter to present on the draft Ozone Plan and provide an update on cannabis fees under the Cost Reimbursement Basis that was previously discussed as part of the Rule 210 recommendations by your Council.

If you have any questions, please contact me (aag@sbcapcd.org) or Alex Economou (aje@sbcapcd.org).

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The CAC's charter is to consider issues related to air pollution planning and rulemaking for which the District has jurisdiction, and to render advice to the District Board and the APCO. The CAC serves an important function by providing expertise and representation of community interests during planning and rulemaking. The CAC's advice has helped the District Board adopt plans and rules, which have contributed to improving air quality in our county, and District staff appreciate the care and consideration you show in carrying out your service. These updates are also be posted to our website at www.ourair.org/community-advisory-council-info.