



air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Update on the Protecting Blue Whales & Blue Skies Program

Board of Directors

June 25, 2026

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.



BWBS Program Overview

- Air Districts, National Marine Sanctuaries, Non-Profits, State & Federal Government Agencies, 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
- 12th Anniversary: Began as a pilot in Santa Barbara Channel in 2014 & has expanded each year

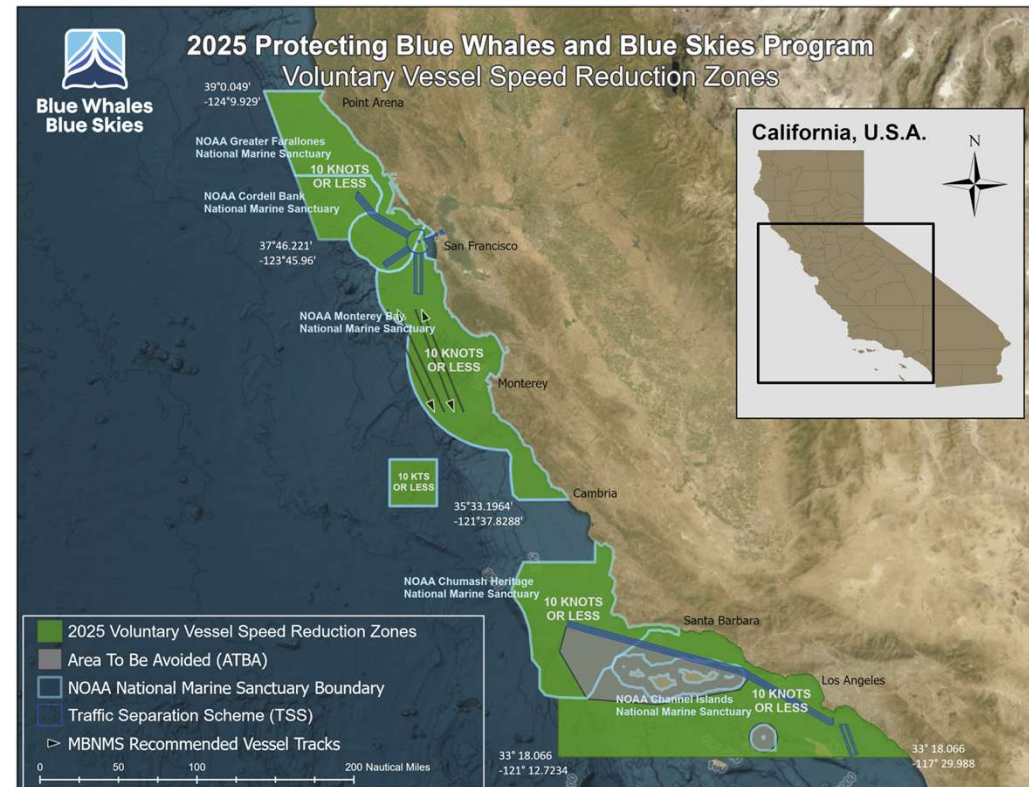


2025 BWBS Season

- **Seasonal Program:**
 - May 1, 2025 – January 15, 2026
 - Coincides with high ozone levels and presence of endangered 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

Sapphire	90 - 100%
Gold	70 - 90%
Blue Sky	50 - 70%

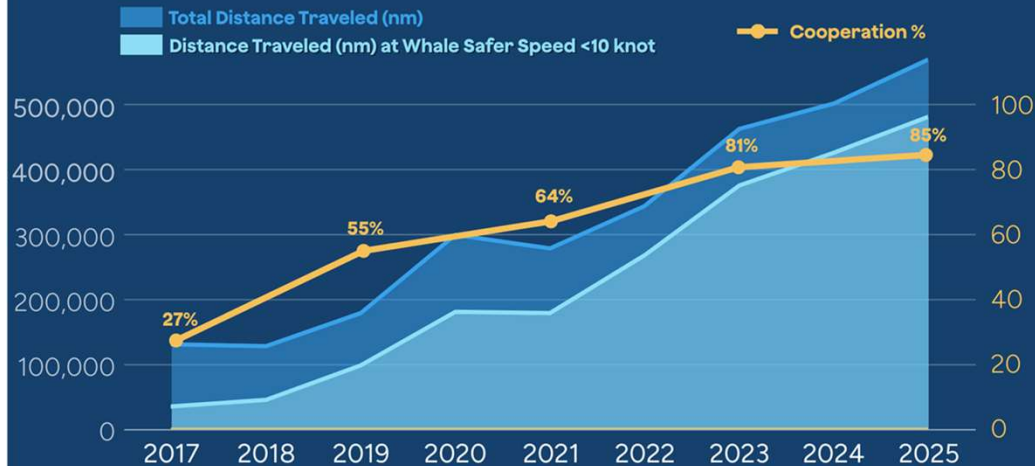


2025 BWBS Season Results

787 vessels (from 44 shipping lines) reduced speeds for 481,000+ nautical miles; the equivalent of 85% of total miles traveled.



Vessel Speed Reduction Program Growth (2017-2025)



2025 Season Cooperation

Sapphire

90%+



Gold

70-89%




Blue Sky

50-69%



BWBS - Cumulative Impacts (2014 - 2025)

 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Vessel Speed Reduction Program											
Program Year	2014	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
VSR Zone	Santa Barbara Channel		Santa Barbara Channel & San Francisco Bay Region			Southern California & San Francisco Bay Region			+ Monterey Bay NMS		+ Chumash NMS
Vessel Applicability	Containerships & Auto Carriers							+ Bulk & General	+ Tankers		
Program Duration	4 months	4.5 months			6 months			7.5 months		8 months	8.5 months
# Companies	7	10	11	12	15	16	18	23	33	49	44
# Vessels	14	25	44	295	349	482	545	671	709	743	787
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	481,273
Overall Fleet Cooperation	--	--	--	36%	55%	60%	64%	78%	81%	85%	85%
NOx Reductions (tons)	12.4	25.6	84	266	536	748	650	921	1,256	1,405	1,491
Regional GHG Reductions (metric tons)	535	1,005	2,630	8,668	17,026	24,258	22,201	32,604	45,784	49,945	55,771
Ocean Noise Reduction (dB / transit)	--	--	--	1.0	--	2.3	4.1	4.6	5.4	4.1	5.2
Fatal Ship Strike Risk Reduction *	--	--	--	--	--	35%	50%	44%	58%	50%	40%

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

Celebrating Industry Leadership

BWBS provides awareness and transparency on responsible shipping practices, and recognition for industry leadership on efforts that help protect marine biodiversity and air quality.



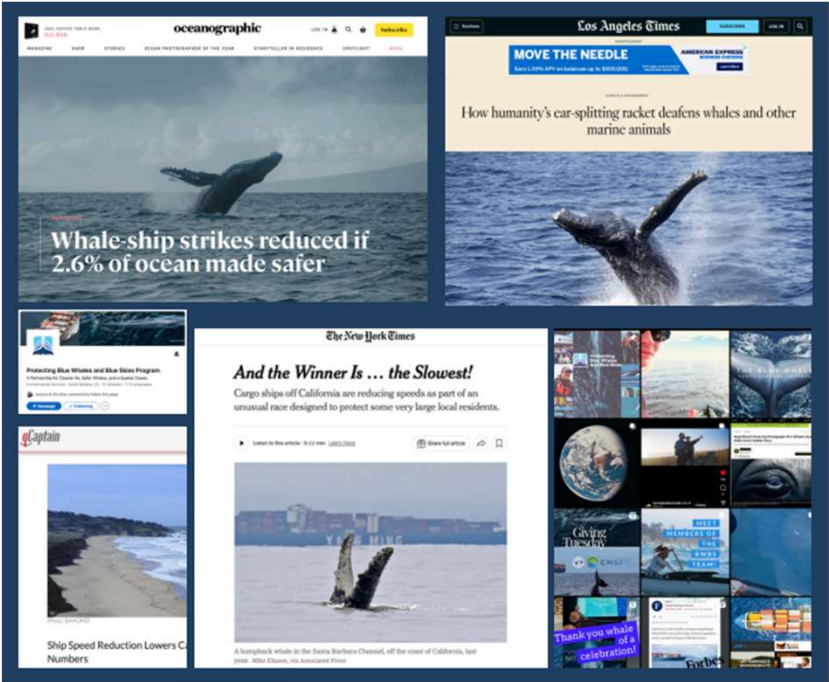
2025 SEASON AWARDS CEREMONY

Blue Whales Blue Skies

APRIL 22 2026
10:45 AM - 05:00 PM

SAVE THE DATE

The poster features a group of people on a stage receiving awards, with the Blue Whales Blue Skies logo in the top right corner.



A collage of news articles and social media posts related to whale-ship strikes and shipping industry efforts. The articles include:

- oceanographic**: "Whale-ship strikes reduced if 2.6% of ocean made safer"
- Los Angeles Times**: "MOVE THE NEEDLE: How humanity's car-splitting racket deafens whales and other marine animals"
- The New York Times**: "And the Winner Is ... the Slowest! Cargo ships off California are reducing speeds as part of an unusual race designed to protect some very large local residents."
- Facebook**: "Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program"
- Twitter**: "Ship Speed Reduction Lowers C Numbers"
- Twitter**: "A humpback whale in the Santa Barbara Channel, off the coast of California, last year. Mike Chouin, the associated photo."
- Twitter**: "Thank you whale celebration!"



Behind the Viral Moment at Sea: Captain Ryan Sequeira & Yang Ming

Share [f](#) [x](#) [in](#)

The image shows a man in a white captain's uniform standing on the deck of a ship, holding a smartphone.



Captain Ravi Vijay Damley with Maersk

Share [f](#) [x](#) [in](#)

The image shows a man in a white captain's uniform holding a camera, standing on the deck of a ship.

BWBS - 2025 Awards Ceremony



Ambassador Program

BWBS Ambassador Program supports and highlights companies that work with BWBS shipping lines to advance responsible shipping to protect whales and coastal communities.

This also creates customer pressure on shipping lines to participate and increase cooperation level.

SANTA CRUZ

STAX 

LIMONEIRA
SINCE 1893

 **business & pleasure Co.**

Brist
MFG.

JAS

 **THE BLOCK LOGISTICS**

 **Shipco Transport**

ZEN PARADISE
FINE NATURAL STONE MOSAICS

 **BRIGHTEN SOLAR CO.**
SOLAR PANEL DELIVERY

 **who gives a crap**

patagonia

TOAD&CO 

 **niner**

HUFFY

 **BATCH BICYCLES**

DECKERS BRANDS

UGG HOKA Teva



PORT OF OAKLAND

 **SUMMIT COFFEE**

 **The Port OF HUENEME**
We Make Cargo Move

MISTRAL

 **seaspan**

NOMAD

 **eggboards**

SONOS

PACIFIC STONWORKS & TILE
Fine Craftsmanship in Natural Stone

 **peak design**

MATILIJA

AB 14 - BWBS Statewide Expansion

- Assembly Bill 14 (Hart) signed into law October 11, 2025
- Expanded the BWBS program statewide
- Brought California Ocean Protection Council in as a program partner



California Protects Blue Whales and Blue Skies With Historic State Law



NOAA file image
PUBLISHED DEC 16, 2025 4:33 PM BY PROTECTING BLUE WHALES AND BLUE SKIES



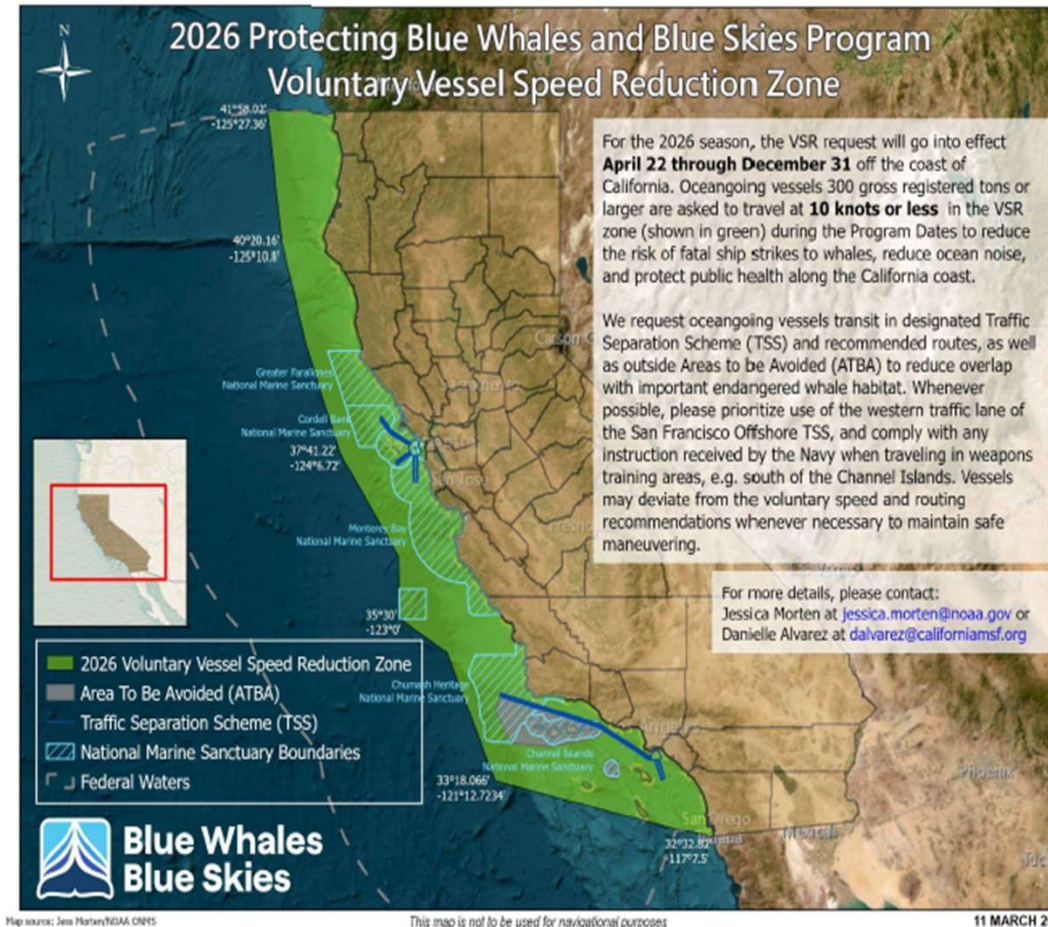
2026 Program Launch

- **Several changes from 2025 Program:**

- 1) Statewide Expansion
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Program adjustments
 - Technical Advisory Working Sessions
- 2) Cruise lines now eligible to enroll
- 3) 2026 Award Tier Expanded Eligibility

Updated Recognition Award Levels

Star Sapphire	90% - 100%
Sapphire	75% - 90%
Gold	50% - 74%
Blue Sky	30% - 49%



Alex Economou

Planning Division Manager

(805) 979-8333

EconomouA@sbcapcd.org



air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

ourair.org

@OurAirSBC

