



Blue Whales Blue Skies

April 14, 2025

RE: 2025 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Incentive Program

Dear Carrier Representative:

We are implementing a 2025 voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) incentive program May 1 – December 31 in areas off of California to reduce air pollution, fatal ship strikes on whales, and underwater noise. The structure of the 2025 VSR Program will be similar to the 2024 Program. Positive press and public relations incentives will be awarded to participating vessel operators based on percent of distance traveled by all of their vessels through the VSR Zones at 10 knots or less, termed “percent of cooperation,” during the identified time period.

Consistent with the 2024 Program, program participants will receive recognition for their participation through a positive public relations campaign to draw public awareness to the VSR program and your company’s participation. Level of recognition will be scaled according to each company’s level of participation.

Each vessel transiting the VSR Zones will have their speed verified via analysis of Automatic Identification System (AIS) data. Participation is voluntary and does not commit shipping industry participants beyond the program period. If an enrolled company is unable to meet the minimum program criteria, there is no penalty, but public relations and positive press incentives will not be awarded.

Please additionally note the presence of the Area to Be Avoided (“ATBA”), which vessels should avoid to reduce overlap with important endangered whale habitat. Any nautical miles transited by participating vessels within the ATBA will not be counted towards a company’s distance traveled at 10 knots or less.

Whenever possible, to reduce the overlap of vessel traffic with high concentration areas of endangered whales, vessels are additionally requested to prioritize use of the western traffic lane of the San Francisco TSS when traveling in the San Francisco Offshore Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS).

While the scope of the program is limited to the VSR zone areas, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the threat of ship strikes on whales extends beyond these areas. Every effort should be made by participating vessels to not increase speed between and while outside the VSR Zones to “make up time,” which negates the positive benefits of your company’s participation.

This VSR incentive program complements the existing federal seasonal whale advisory and voluntary slow speed request in effect off of California. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) strongly recommends that all vessels 300 gross 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 are required to sign a Participant Agreement. Please return the completed and signed Agreement to Jessica Morten and Danielle Alvarez (contact information provided below).

Please enroll by May 1, 2025 so that your company's information can be included in a news release. Please note that enrollments after May 1 will be accepted, but ship speeds during the entire program period will be included in all award level determinations.

For more information about the VSR incentive program, please visit www.bluewhalesblueskies.org

Enrollment materials, comments, or questions may be directed to:

Jessica Morten – jessica.morten@noaa.gov

Danielle Alvarez – dalvarez@californiamsf.org

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 this voluntary VSR incentive program.

Sincerely,

The Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program





Blue Whales Blue Skies

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

(Participants must read and acknowledge this Agreement
in order to participate in the Program.)

Date: _____

Company Name: _____

This Participant Agreement (the “Agreement”) is entered into in favor of Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies (the “Program”) by (the “Company”). The Program is a voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (“VSR”) effort along the coast of California that incentivizes shipping companies to reduce their speeds in strategic areas. Speed reduction has been proven to reduce ship strikes to endangered whales, air pollution, regional greenhouse gas emissions, and underwater noise. The Program is a unique collaboration between federal and local government agencies, foundations, and environmental nonprofits, including the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Channel Islands, Chumash Heritage, Monterey Bay, Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Santa Barbara County, Ventura County and San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control Districts and Monterey Bay Air Resources District (collectively, the “Program Sponsors”). The Company voluntarily agrees to participate in the Program pursuant to the terms and conditions as set forth in this Agreement.

1. Nonbinding Understanding. Section 1 of this Agreement is not intended to be legally binding or enforceable on either Party. It is the present intention of the Parties that the Company will participate in the Program on the terms and conditions set forth in Section 1 of this Agreement:
 - a. At the start of each VSR season, the Company shall identify and share all eligible vessels (i.e., container ships, car carriers, bulk and general cargo vessels, and tankers) in its



Shipping Line that may transit within the designated VSR Zones during the VSR Season or “Program Dates”, referenced in Attachment A. The VSR Zones and Programs Dates may be updated by the Program by submitting a revised Attachment A to the Company.

- b. The Company understands that only Shipping Lines that travel 30% or more of the distance traveled in VSR Zones at 10 knots or less are eligible for participation in the Program.
- c. The Company understands that the award level and public recognition that a particular company will receive, as set forth in Attachment B, will be based on the percent distance traveled at 10 knots or less. The Award Tiers may be updated by the Program from time to time by submitting a revised Attachment B to the Company.
- d. Any nautical miles transited by participating vessels within the Area to Be Avoided (“ATBA”) in the southern California region, as set forth in Attachment A, will not be counted towards a company’s distance traveled at 10 knots or less.
- e. The Company, to the best of its ability, will seek opportunities to highlight the Program in communications with customers and in corporate sustainability reports.
- f. The Company will be recognized as a participant of the Program if its fleet achieves at least 30% of distance traveled in the VSR Zones at 10 knots or less during the Program Dates. Participation includes use of Company name and logo in Program promotional material and website.
- g. The Program will publicly recognize through the Program’s website, various media, news releases, announcements, and events Shipping Lines that achieve a Blue Sky rating or higher as set forth in Attachment B. Recognition will be scaled based on the award tier achieved.

2. Intellectual Property.

- a. All copyrights, trademarks, and any other intellectual property (“IP”) disclosed or provided for use to the other Party in connection with this Agreement shall remain the property of the Party making such disclosure for the purposes of this Agreement.
- b. Any IP created in the furtherance of the activities contemplated by this Agreement is the property of the Party who created such IP. Use of the other Party’s IP is permissible once this Agreement has been terminated, as long as such IP is used in furtherance of the Program’s mission and objectives.
- c. Except as expressly provided in this Agreement, IP owned by the Program, or any Program Sponsor, shall not be used or shared without formal written consent by the Program or such Program Sponsor. Neither termination of this Agreement nor completion of the

acts to be performed under this Agreement shall release the Company from its agreement not to use or share IP owned by the Program or a Program Sponsor without formal written consent by the Program or such Program Sponsor. All IP protections are binding and shall survive the life of this Agreement.

3. Indemnification. The Company understands and agrees that any and all decisions concerning safe navigation and maneuvering of participating vessels shall remain solely with and at the discretion of the ship masters and crew. To the extent permitted by law, the Company shall defend, indemnify, and save harmless the Program, the Program Sponsors, and their respective officers, employees, agents, or representatives (collectively, "Program Parties") from and against any and all claims, suits, or actions for injury from, arising out of, related to, or otherwise in connection with the Company's participation in the Program and performance under this Agreement, except to the extent it is caused by the gross negligence or willful misconduct of a Program Party.
4. Term and Termination. Unless and until terminated as provided in this Section 4, the term of this Agreement shall commence on the date first set forth above (the "Effective Date") and shall terminate on the third anniversary of the Effective Date. The Program and the Program Sponsors reserve the right to terminate the Program and/or this Agreement with the Company at any time effective immediately upon written notice to the Company. The Company may terminate this Agreement after 30 days from the Effective Date by providing written notice to the Program, [care of the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Jessica Morten at jessica.morten@noaa.gov and Danielle Alvarez at dalvarez@californiamsf.org] of its intent to terminate. This Agreement and the Company's enrollment in the Program shall terminate 20 days after the Program's receipt of the Company's written notice to terminate. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Section 2 (Intellectual Property) and Section 3 (Indemnification) shall survive the expiration of the Term or any termination of this Agreement or the Program.
5. Changes to the Program and the Agreement: The Program, the incentives for participating in the Program, the Program requirements and guidelines, and all other aspects of the Program may be amended, modified, or terminated at any time. Further, the Program may amend this Agreement or any attachment, exhibit or schedule to this Agreement at any time. The Program will advise the Company of any relevant changes, modifications or amendments, at which point any such changes, modifications, or amendments will become effective. The Company is deemed to accept such changes, modifications or amendments unless the Company provides the Program with written notice to the contrary in writing within 20 days of the date of the notice of such amendments and requests termination of this Agreement in accordance with Section 4 above. For additional and the most current information on the Program, please visit www.bluewhalesblueskies.org.
6. Governing Law. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the internal laws of the State of California without giving effect to any choice or conflict of law

provision or rule (whether of the State of California or any other jurisdiction) that would cause the application of laws of any jurisdiction other than those of the state of California.

7. No Third-Party Beneficiaries. Nothing herein is intended or shall be construed to confer upon any person or entity other than the Parties and their successors or assigns, any rights or remedies under or by reason of this Agreement.
8. No Assignment. Neither this Agreement, nor any rights or obligations hereunder may be assigned, delegated or conveyed by either Party without the prior written consent of the other Party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Company has caused this Agreement to be duly executed and delivered by its authorized representative.

Shipping Company: _____

Company Representative Name: _____

Company Representative Title: _____

Company Representative Mailing Address:

Company Representative Email: _____

Signature: _____

Optional:

Shipping Company Media/Communications Point of Contact (name and email):



**Protecting
Blue Whales
and Blue Skies**

Attachment A

Program Dates: May 1 - December 31, 2025

VSR Zones



This map is not to be used for navigational purposes

24 MARCH 2025

Attachment B

Award Tiers

Tier	% Distance Traveled
Blue Sky	50% or more of distance traveled in VSR zones at 10 knots or less
Gold	70% or more of distance traveled in VSR zones at 10 knots or less
Sapphire	90% or more of distance traveled in VSR zones at 10 knots or less



**Protecting
Blue Whales
and Blue Skies**



Blue Whales
Blue Skies

2025 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zones

39°0.049'
-124°9.929'

Point Arena

NOAA Greater Farallones
National Marine Sanctuary

10 KNOTS
OR LESS

NOAA Cordell Bank
National Marine Sanctuary

37°46.221'
-123°45.96'

San Francisco

NOAA Monterey Bay
National Marine Sanctuary

10 KNOTS
OR LESS

Monterey

10 KTS
OR LESS

Cambria

35°33.1964'
-121°37.8288'

NOAA Chumash Heritage
National Marine Sanctuary

10 KNOTS
OR LESS

Santa Barbara

Los Angeles

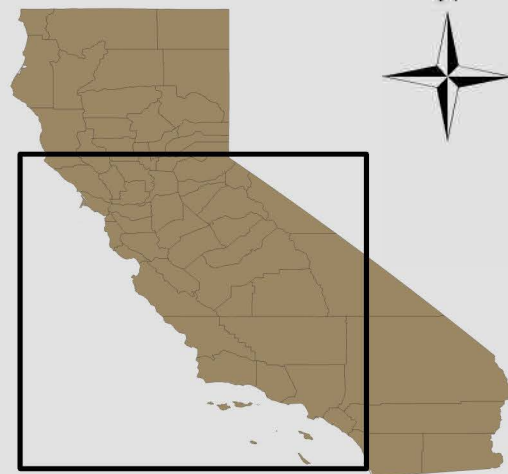
NOAA Channel Islands
National Marine Sanctuary

10 KNOTS
OR LESS

33° 18.066
-121° 12.7234

33° 18.066
-117° 29.988

California, U.S.A.



2025 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zones

Area To Be Avoided (ATBA)

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Boundary

Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS)

MBNMS Recommended Vessel Tracks

0 50 100 200 Nautical Miles

This map is not to be used for navigational purposes

24 MARCH 2025

Whale Sightings Report by Transit – HIGHLY ENCOURAGED

If you see whales, please send this completed report and any photographs by email to jessica.morten@noaa.gov.

You can also report whales through OceanAlert, a free application available at <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/ocean-alert/id1457113771>

Please report any collisions with whales or any observed injured or dead whales to NOAA at sean.hastings@noaa.gov or to the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Channel 16.

Ship Name _____ Observer's First Name _____ Observer's Last Name _____

Were any whales seen during the transit? YES ☐ NO ☐ What did you see? (Check all that apply)

BLUE WHALE ☐



HUMPBACK WHALE ☐



FIN WHALE ☐



UNKNOWN WHALE SPECIES ☐

Whale Sighting Details: Note – if any whale sightings were reported on the Whale Alert app please provide the email address or addresses used in the app here: _____

Were all whale sightings reported using the Whale Alert App? YES ☐ NO ☐

(If yes, then reporting the whale sighting details below is optional)

EXAMPLE

Whale Sighting Event Number* 1 **Observer's Name** Jessica Morten **Posted via Whale Alert app?** YES ☒ NO ☐

Date (UTC) April 14, 2025 **Time (hh:mm UTC)** 10:45 UTC **Latitude** 34.495782 **Longitude** -121.446667

of Blue 1 **# of Humpback** 0 **# of Fin** 0 **# of Unknown Whales** 2

Whale Sighting Event Number* _____ **Observer's Name** _____ **Posted via Whale Alert app?** YES ☐ NO ☐

Date (UTC) _____ **Time (hh:mm UTC)** _____ **Latitude** _____ **Longitude** _____

of Blue _____ **# of Humpback** _____ **# of Fin** _____ **# of Unknown Whales** _____

Whale Sighting Event Number* _____ **Observer's Name** _____ **Posted via Whale Alert app?** YES ☐ NO ☐

Date (UTC) _____ **Time (hh:mm UTC)** _____ **Latitude** _____ **Longitude** _____

of Blue _____ **# of Humpback** _____ **# of Fin** _____ **# of Unknown Whales** _____

*Number each event sequentially starting with the first whale(s) seen during the transit with a new number for each new group of whales seen.



Whale Sighting Event Number* _____ Observer's Name _____ Posted via Whale Alert app? YES ☐ NO ☐

Date (UTC) _____ Time (hh:mm UTC) _____ Latitude _____ Longitude _____

of Blue _____ # of Humpback _____ # of Fin _____ # of Unknown Whales _____

Whale Sighting Event Number* _____ Observer's Name _____ Posted via Whale Alert app? YES ☐ NO ☐

Date (UTC) _____ Time (hh:mm UTC) _____ Latitude _____ Longitude _____

of Blue _____ # of Humpback _____ # of Fin _____ # of Unknown Whales _____

Whale Sighting Event Number* _____ Observer's Name _____ Posted via Whale Alert app? YES ☐ NO ☐

Date (UTC) _____ Time (hh:mm UTC) _____ Latitude _____ Longitude _____

of Blue _____ # of Humpback _____ # of Fin _____ # of Unknown Whales _____

Total # of Whales Sighted During Transit: _____

