



Our Vision  Clean Air
And Safer Whales



Ventura County
Air Pollution
Control District



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

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Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program Expands to San Francisco Bay Area

Three National Marine Sanctuaries and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District join the Santa Barbara Channel region program

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — In an initiative to cut air pollution and protect whales in the Santa Barbara Channel region, the partners announced today that the Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) voluntary incentive program will for the first time include the San Francisco Bay Area. The 2017 Program will start July 1 and continue until November 15. This week the partners began enrolling ships in the program, and will continue to sign up ships through June 30.

“We are excited to welcome new partners, and expand this program along the California coast,” said Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer at Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District.

“Our goal with this program is to improve air quality and reduce the risk of lethal ship strikes to whales. We applaud the collaboration of the shipping industry and our VSR partners, and are pleased to see new air district and marine sanctuary partners join this effort,” said Chris Mobley, superintendent of NOAA’s Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, NOAA’s Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, and Volgenau Foundation collaborated on a 2016 VSR program in the Santa Barbara Channel region, slowing 50 ship transits to 12 knots or under, reducing more than 25 tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides (NOx) and more than 1,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Ten global shipping companies participated in the 2016 Program: CMA CGM, Evergreen, Hamburg Sud, Hapag Lloyd, Holland, K Line, Maersk, MOL, NYK Line, and Yang Ming. In 2016, more than 90 percent of the companies contacted by the program indicated interest in also participating in a Bay Area program in the future.

In 2017, the VSR program partners will continue to implement a Santa Barbara Channel region program, and will be joined by the Cordell Bank, Greater Farallones, and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to extend the program to the San Francisco Bay Area.

“In the Bay Area, we have established ambitious goals for reducing toxic air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions to protect public health and the climate,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. “When we work together we achieve greater success. Partnerships like the ‘Blue Whales, Blue Skies’ program are essential to achieving mutually beneficial environmental goals – improving coastal air quality and reducing GHG emissions while protecting marine life.”

Ships transiting along the California coast emit a large amount of smog-forming pollution, and ship strikes are a major threat to recovering endangered and threatened whale populations, including blue, humpback, and fin whales. Slowing ship speeds reduces air pollution and has been shown to reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes on whales.

Mike Villegas, Air Pollution Control Officer of the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District said: “The VSR program demonstrates the great potential of partnerships between different government agencies, non-profit foundations and the private sector. It is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce NOx emissions while also benefiting the marine environment and the local economy.”

For 2017, the incentive program will have a maximum possible incentive of \$2,500 for transits that slow to 10 knots in both regions in a single trip. More than \$185,000 in funding is planned to incentivize slow-speed transits for 2017, with the potential to more than double the number of slow-speed transits over 2016.

For more information, and to view a new film on the collaborative effort, visit <http://www.ourair.org/air-pollution-marine-shipping>.