



Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies is a partnership for cleaner air, safer whales, and quieter oceans

Santa Barbara County
Air Pollution Control District

Ventura County
Air Pollution Control District

Bay Area Air Quality
Management District

Channel Islands
National Marine Sanctuary

Cordell Bank
National Marine Sanctuary

Greater Farallones
National Marine Sanctuary

National Marine
Sanctuary Foundation

California Marine Sanctuary
Foundation

The Volgenau Foundation
Environmental Defense Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 19, 2020

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Fifteen global shipping companies slowed cargo ships for 99,000 nautical miles in 2019 program off California coast to protect blue whales and blue skies ***Program continues to expand and achieve greater environmental benefits***

SANTA BARBARA CHANNEL REGION and SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, Calif. — The partners in an initiative to cut air pollution and protect endangered whales announced results from the 2019 program and recognized the 15 shipping companies that participated, reducing speeds to 10 knots or less in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Santa Barbara Channel region. The voluntary incentive program ran May 15, 2019 through November 15, 2019. Partners hope to further recognize the companies at a ceremony at the Port of Hueneme later this year, depending on public health guidelines regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shipping companies receive recognition and financial awards based on the percent of distance traveled by their vessels through the Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) zones at 10 knots or less and with an average speed of 12 knots or less. (The average baseline speed of participating ships prior to the incentive program is approximately 15 knots in the VSR zones.) The 10-knot target follows the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) requests for all vessels (300 gross tons or larger) to slow down during the months of peak endangered blue, humpback, and fin whale abundance to protect these whales from deadly ship strikes.

NOAA has identified ship strikes as a leading cause of death; reducing these mortalities is a major priority of NOAA's, including NOAA's West Coast national marine sanctuaries. Documented deaths totaled 48 endangered whales from 2007-2019, and likely represent only a small fraction of the total number of ship strikes annually.

The timing of the program also coincides with the season when ground-level ozone (smog) concentrations are typically high. The 10-knot target allows ships to travel at an efficient operating load using less fuel and producing less pollution. Ocean-going vessels transiting the California coast generate nitrogen oxides (NOx, a precursor to smog), sulfur oxides (SOx), particle pollution, and greenhouse gases. These vessels account for more than 200 tons of NOx per day emitted off the coast of California, which affects ozone levels onshore in many regions of the state. The greater Los Angeles area (including Ventura County), San Diego, and San Francisco Bay areas do not meet the state and/or federal air quality standards for ozone.

The program is a collaborative effort by the following agencies and organizations:

- Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District
- Ventura County Air Pollution Control District
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District
- Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
- Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
- Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary
- The Volgenau Foundation
- California Marine Sanctuary Foundation
- National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
- Environmental Defense Center

The program partners established four award tiers to recognize participating companies based on the percent of distance their fleet traveled through the VSR zones at speeds of 10 knots or less. The four award tiers are Sapphire (75-100% of fleet total distance in VSR zones traveled at 10 knots or less), Gold (50-74%), Silver (25-49%), and Bronze (10-24%). Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders on each ship continuously transmitted the ship's speed, heading, and location. AIS data was analyzed for each fleet and the company's performance was classified by tier. Companies that performed at Gold or Sapphire level were awarded a financial incentive. Below is the award tier earned by each participating company:

Sapphire

MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company)	GALI (Great American Lines, Inc)
Hapag-Lloyd	Polynesia Line

Gold

COSCO	NYK Ro-Ro
Evergreen	Maersk
"K" Line	PIL (Pacific International Lines)
CMA CGM	

Silver

Yang Ming	Hyundai Glovis
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Bronze

ONE (Ocean Network Express)	Matson
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The Mediterranean Shipping Company and Hapag-Lloyd notably achieved the Sapphire tier in the large company category (greater than 30 transits) in both regions by slowing down more than 400 transits, combined. Polynesia Line and GALI achieved the Sapphire tier in the small

company category (less than 30 transits) in both regions. For their outstanding commitment, all four of these companies earned the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Whale Tail award.

The VSR incentive program has expanded in scope and environmental benefits each year, including 2019, which marked the fifth year. Highlights of the 2019 program include:

- Of the nearly 180,000 nautical miles of ocean transited by all the ships in the program, more than 99,000 nautical miles were at 10 knots or less.
- Ships in the program transiting the Santa Barbara Channel 100-nautical-mile VSR zone traveled at 10 knots or less for 52% of the total miles travelled. In 2018, 32% of those miles were traveled at 10 knots or less; in 2017, 21% of those miles were traveled at 10 knots or less. This shows the increasing commitment by the participating companies over the years.
- In the San Francisco Bay Area 30-nautical-mile VSR zone, 2019 cooperation from the participating companies increased to 65%. In 2017 and 2018, 50% of the total nautical miles were traveled at 10 knots or less.
- Incentives ranged from \$2,000 to \$50,000 per company in the Gold and Sapphire award tiers.
- Five companies – COSCO, Evergreen, GALI, K Line, and Polynesia Line – generously declined their financial incentive payment. Those funds will be reinvested in the 2020 program.

The 2020 program started on May 15, 2020. For more information, visit www.ourair.org/air-pollution-marine-shipping.

Statements from Program Partners

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, Dr. Laki Tisopulos, Air Pollution Control Officer: “Thanks to a Supplemental Environmental Project award from the California Air Resources Board, the 2019 incentive program demonstrates that stable funding for the fleet-wide incentives can achieve great benefits for air quality in the region. Ventura County had one of the cleanest ozone seasons in modern history in 2019 and the reduced nitrogen oxides emissions from shipping in the Channel was certainly a contributing factor. The continued implementation of the voluntary vessel speed reduction incentive program is crucial for Ventura County to meet the 2008 federal air quality standard for ozone by our statutory deadline of 2021.”

Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer: “The 2019 Vessel Speed Reduction Incentive Program was our most successful year to date. With an increase in participating companies and a doubling of nautical miles slowed, the program achieved the largest emission reductions to date — twice as much ozone precursor and greenhouse gases reduced as compared to 2018. This is a great example of a successful collaboration of local, state, national, and international organizations coming together to protect endangered whales and improve air quality off our coast.”

Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Jack Broadbent, Executive Officer: “When public, private, and non-profit organizations work together, we can improve public health as well as the environment. Both air quality and blue whales benefit by the slower movement of ships through critical coastal zones.”

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Chris Mobley, Superintendent: “The National Marine Sanctuaries Act guides us to create models of, and incentives for, ways to conserve and manage, including innovative management techniques. This innovative incentive-based vessel speed reduction program, in collaboration with county air management districts, the shipping industry, other agencies, and NGOs, serves as a model for enhancing ocean and human health while promoting a sustainable, blue economy.”

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (also on behalf of Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary), Maria Brown, Superintendent: “The survival of these endangered whales is up to all of us. The success of this program hinges on the shipping industry’s willingness to advance whale conservation and promote cleaner air, while conducting commerce, in partnership with agencies and non-profits. By working together, we can ensure blue, fin, and humpback whales continue to live on this planet.”

The Environmental Defense Center, Kristen Hislop, Marine Conservation Program Director: “The Environmental Defense Center (EDC) is pleased to see continued growth of this program, which has shown year after year that it has unmatched combined value to regional air quality and protection of endangered whales. Entering its sixth year, we continue efforts to convince our elected officials that this program deserves consistent funding.”

The Volgenau Foundation, Lisa Volgenau, Vice President and Board Director: “We are proud to be a part of this partnership that helps improve air quality and protect marine species, particularly endangered whales. Each year, the increasing participation of shipping companies contributes to the goal of a sustainable outcome. We especially commend those companies that declined their incentives, which truly shows their support of conservation along the coast. We hope that many more will follow their commitment to significantly improve ocean and human health for future generations.”