



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

