

Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Becomes State Law in one of the World's Biggest Economies

AB 14 Signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom

SANTA BARBARA, CA, UNITED STATES, October 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A landmark law signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom earlier this month expands Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies (BWBS) into a statewide program.

After three years of effort, [Assembly Bill 14](#) by Assemblymembers Gregg Hart (Santa Barbara), Steve Bennett (Ventura) and Damon Connolly (San Rafael) became law on Oct. 11.

On Oct. 14, representatives from BWBS partners, including air districts and environmental organizations, gathered with program ambassadors and community leaders in Santa Barbara to celebrate the law's passage.

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Rachel Rhodes

"We're proud to see the state recognize the effectiveness of this collaborative program and support its expansion along the California coast," said Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District Executive Director Aeron Arlin Genet at the event organized by Hart's office at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Sea Center.

Since its launch in the Santa Barbara Channel in 2014, BWBS has worked to [engage and enroll shipping lines](#) responsible for the majority of distance traveled by cargo ships across the region. In the 2024 season, BWBS verified

that 743 vessels from 49 of the world's largest shipping lines opted in to reduce their speeds. By



Photo Credit: Ralph A. Clevenger; Dolphins swim in the bow wave of a large shipping vessel in the Santa Barbara Channel, October 2025

reducing speeds voluntarily, the shipping lines [address one of the top risks globally to whales — fatal ship strikes](#) — as well as cut air pollution and emissions by 27% and underwater radiated noise by 38%. The annual nitrogen oxides (NOx) reductions resulting from shipping lines' participation in the program is equivalent to taking 900,000 cars off the road for a year.

Since California is one of the largest economies in the world and its ports — including Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Hueneme, and San Diego — are major hubs for international trade, the statewide support could lead to wider growth and expanded impact.

"Expanding this program statewide means more whales protected, cleaner air for coastal communities and a model that can inspire similar efforts elsewhere, potentially worldwide," said Rachel Rhodes with project partner Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory. "This gives me a lot of hope of what's possible when science, policy and industry work together toward a common goal."

The BWBS partners are the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation; Channel Islands, Chumash Heritage, Monterey Bay, Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries; Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory; Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control Districts and Monterey Bay Air Resources District; and the Bay Area Air District.

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Container ship and whale fluke

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