

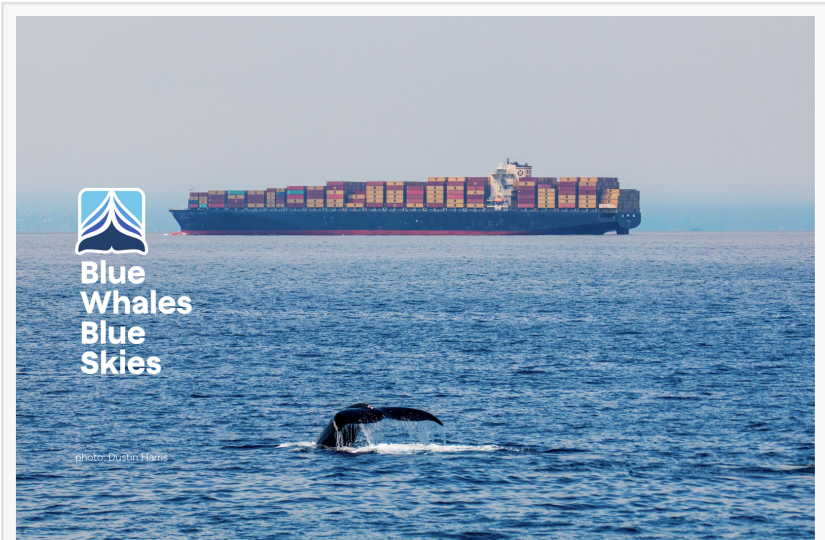
60 Global Shipping Lines on Track for Record Year as Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Program Expands Coastwide July 1

Industry cooperation hits record levels as the statewide Vessel Speed Reduction zone for the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program officially begins.

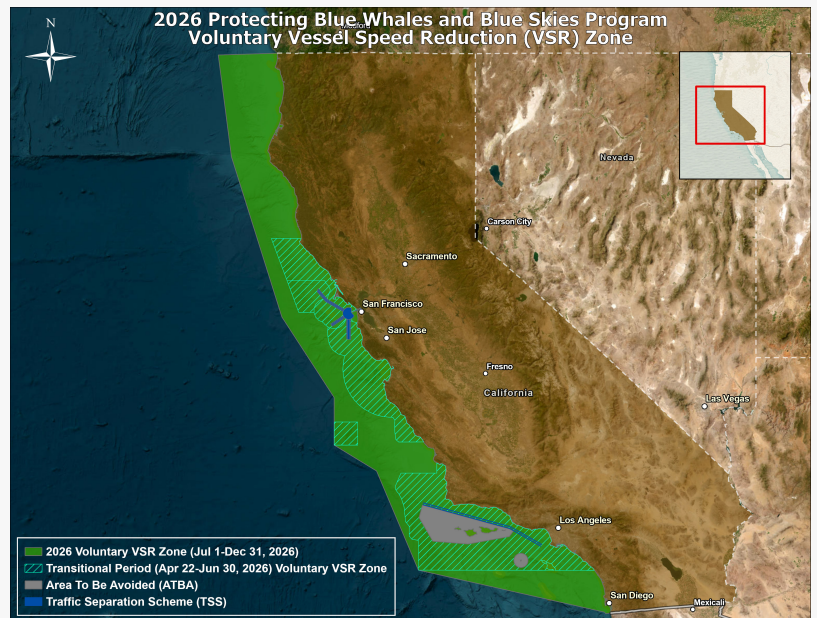
CA, UNITED STATES, July 1, 2026

/EINPresswire.com/ -- With enrollment in the 2026 season reaching a record-breaking 60 shipping lines, BWBS is pleased to report that the early-season data is demonstrating continued strong industry cooperation with the voluntary VSR program to [protect endangered whales and reduce air pollution and ocean noise](#).

Preliminary analysis of ship speed data for the first six weeks of the season shows impressive cooperation levels by BWBS-enrolled companies – including some newly eligible cruise lines, which were welcomed into program enrollment this year – with a cumulative cooperation rate of 80% across the [expanded 2026 VSR zone](#). Thus far, 250 participating ships have transited over 73,000 nautical miles (or 84,000 miles) at whale-safer speeds of 10 knots or less. More than half of the participants with transits in the VSR zone are on track to qualify for BWBS top recognition awards.



Container ship and whale fluke



2026 Season Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) zone and 2025 & Transitional Period map

The 2026 Blue Whales and Blue Skies Season went into effect on April 22, Earth Day, and, starting July 1, the voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction zone officially expands statewide from the Oregon border to the Mexico border. The voluntary VSR request will remain in effect through December 31, 2026. Ocean-going vessels of 300 gross tons or more are requested to travel at 10 knots or less within the zone to reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes on endangered whales, decrease underwater radiated noise, and protect coastal communities' air quality.

“The enrollment and cooperation data we are already seeing in the 2026 season reveal meaningful momentum as this program transitions to its largest zone area to-date. We are deeply grateful to our shipping industry partners for their feedback, their continued collaboration, and their commitment to protecting marine and coastal environments.” — Jess Morten, Director of Marine Resource Protection, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation

About the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program

Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies (BWBS) is a collaborative effort by the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation; Ventura County Air Pollution Control District; Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District; San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District; Monterey Bay Air Resources District; San Diego County Air Pollution Control District; Bay Area Air District; Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District; Channel Islands, Chumash Heritage, Greater Farallones, Cordell Bank, and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries; and Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory. Learn more at bluewhalesblueskies.org.

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Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies

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