



April 24, 2025

To: All Mariners

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is issuing a voluntary 10-knot Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) request that goes into effect May 1 off the coast of California; please see the attached chart. Large ships traveling at 10 knots or less give whales more time to move to avoid a strike, reduce the lethality of a strike should one occur, and generate less harmful ocean noise and fewer air emissions. Thus, the goals of these voluntary VSR zones are to reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes to endangered and threatened blue, fin, and humpback whales, reduce ocean noise, and protect public health along the California coast. These whale species are protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1538 et seq.), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.), and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.). Any unauthorized take of whales, even if unintentional, by vessels transiting in U.S. waters violates federal statutes.

The voluntary VSR request will be in effect May 1 to December 31, 2025 in the VSR zones, as shown in the attached chart. Note the southern California VSR zone has been expanded to include the newly designated Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary and the VSR period is the same for both VSR zones due to the presence of protected humpback whales in recent years. NOAA requests that all vessels 300 gross tons (GT) or larger reduce speeds to 10 knots when transiting within the designated VSR zones and prioritize use of the western traffic lane of the San Francisco Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) when traveling in the San Francisco Offshore TSS. Vessels may deviate from the speed and routing recommendations whenever necessary to maintain safe maneuvering.

We request your cooperation with the voluntary VSR requests to protect the health of coastal communities and whales that annually migrate to and through these zones to feed. All transits by vessels 300 GT or larger are analyzed by NOAA via Automatic Information System (AIS) data provided by USCG to assess the cooperation of your company along with industry as a whole.

NOAA is committed to the long-term protection of nationally significant marine resources and public health by enhancing marine safety and environmental awareness in the maritime community. If you have questions, please contact Sean Hastings, 805-705-1790, sean.hastings@noaa.gov.

NOAA commends your commitment to protecting endangered and threatened whales and protecting public health by cooperation with the 10-knot VSR requests and working towards a goal of 100% cooperation in 2025. By working together we demonstrate that commerce and conservation can coexist.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Sarah Fangman".

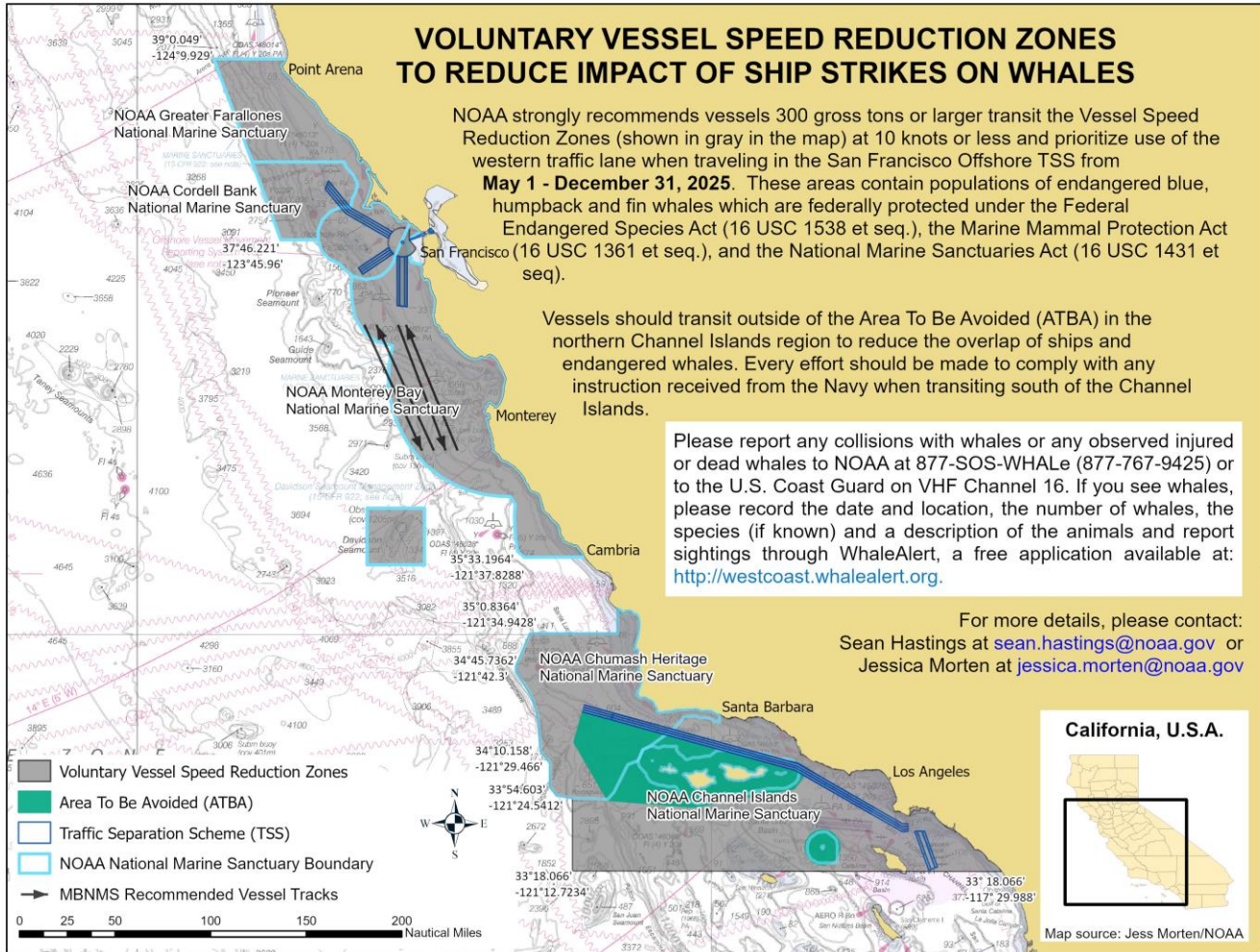
Sarah Fangman, Regional Director
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
West Coast Region

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Quan".

Jennifer Quan, Regional Administrator
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
West Coast Region



2025 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zones – California



NOAA Chart 501

This map is not to be used for navigational purposes

25 APRIL 2025