

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



March 30, 2020

To: All Mariners

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with support from the United States Coast Guard (USCG) annually issues voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) requests that go into effect May 1 off of San Francisco and May 15 off of southern California; please see the attached charts. The goal of these seasonal voluntary VSR zones is to reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes to endangered blue, fin, and humpback whales within and near Greater Farallones, Cordell Bank, Monterey Bay, and Channel Islands national marine sanctuaries. These 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.

NOAA and the USCG request that all vessels 300 gross registered tons (GRT) or larger reduce speeds to 10-knots when transiting within the designated VSR zones. We request your cooperation with the voluntary VSR zones to protect whales that annually migrate to these areas in summer and fall to feed. NOAA analyzes all transits by vessels 300 GRT or larger via Automated Information System (AIS) data provided by USCG to assess the industry's cooperation.

NOAA and USCG are committed to the long-term protection of nationally significant marine resources by enhancing marine safety and environmental awareness in the maritime community. We encourage vessel crews to report whale sightings through the Whale Alert App (<http://www.whalealert.org>). If you have questions, please contact Sean Hastings, (805) 893-6424, [sean.hastings@noaa.gov](mailto:sean.hastings@noaa.gov). We appreciate your commitment to protecting endangered and threatened whales by cooperating with the voluntary 10-knot VSR requests in 2020 off of San Francisco and southern California.

Handwritten signature of William J. Douros in black ink.

William J. Douros, Regional Director  
NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
West Coast Region

Handwritten signature of Barry A. Thom in blue ink.

Barry A. Thom, Regional Administrator  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service  
West Coast Region

Handwritten signature of Peter Gautier in blue ink.

Peter Gautier, Rear Admiral  
U.S. Coast Guard  
District Eleven

# VOLUNTARY VESSEL SPEED REDUCTION ZONE TO REDUCE IMPACT OF SHIP STRIKES ON WHALES

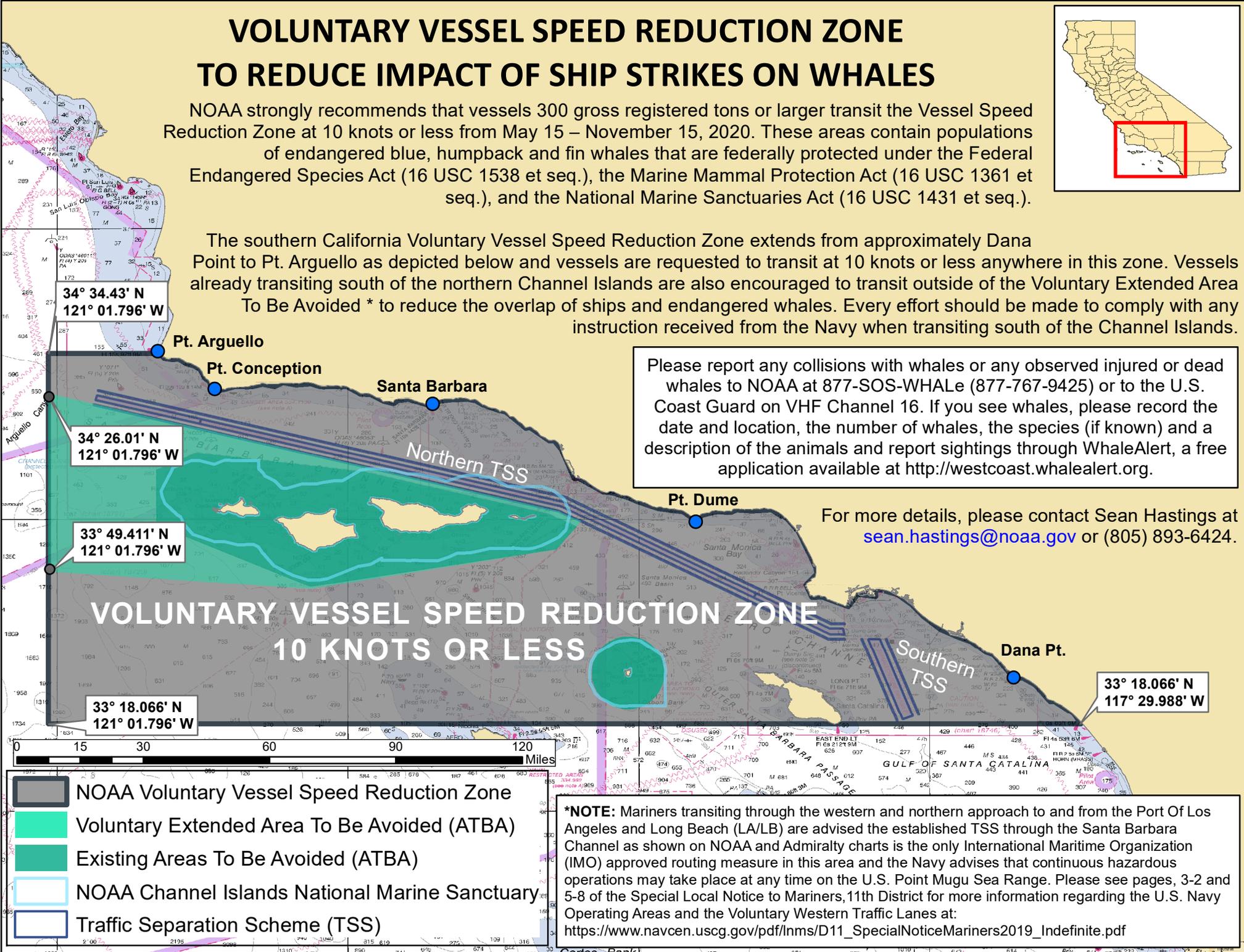


NOAA strongly recommends that vessels 300 gross registered tons or larger transit the Vessel Speed Reduction Zone at 10 knots or less from May 15 – November 15, 2020. These areas contain populations of endangered blue, humpback and fin whales that are federally protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1538 et seq.), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 USC 1361 et seq.), and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 USC 1431 et seq.).

The southern California Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone extends from approximately Dana Point to Pt. Arguello as depicted below and vessels are requested to transit at 10 knots or less anywhere in this zone. Vessels already transiting south of the northern Channel Islands are also encouraged to transit outside of the Voluntary Extended Area To Be Avoided \* to reduce the overlap of ships and endangered whales. Every effort should be made to comply with any instruction received from the Navy when transiting south of the Channel Islands.

Please report any collisions with whales or any observed injured or dead whales to NOAA at 877-SOS-WHALE (877-767-9425) or to the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Channel 16. If you see whales, please record the date and location, the number of whales, the species (if known) and a description of the animals and report sightings through WhaleAlert, a free application available at <http://westcoast.whalealert.org>.

For more details, please contact Sean Hastings at [sean.hastings@noaa.gov](mailto:sean.hastings@noaa.gov) or (805) 893-6424.



- NOAA Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone
- Voluntary Extended Area To Be Avoided (ATBA)
- Existing Areas To Be Avoided (ATBA)
- NOAA Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
- Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS)

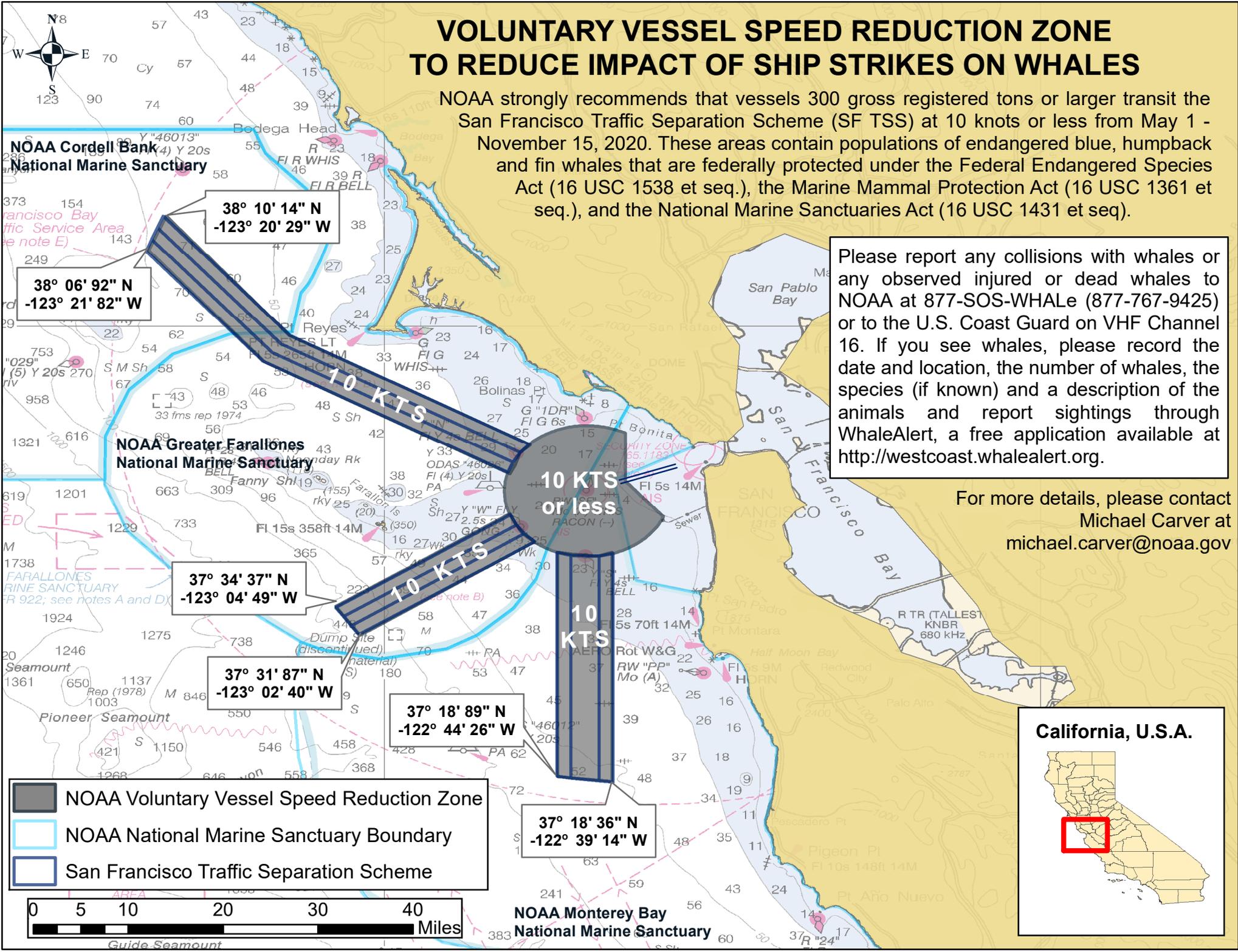
**\*NOTE:** Mariners transiting through the western and northern approach to and from the Port Of Los Angeles and Long Beach (LA/LB) are advised the established TSS through the Santa Barbara Channel as shown on NOAA and Admiralty charts is the only International Maritime Organization (IMO) approved routing measure in this area and the Navy advises that continuous hazardous operations may take place at any time on the U.S. Point Mugu Sea Range. Please see pages, 3-2 and 5-8 of the Special Local Notice to Mariners, 11th District for more information regarding the U.S. Navy Operating Areas and the Voluntary Western Traffic Lanes at: [https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/Inms/D11\\_SpecialNoticeMariners2019\\_Indefinite.pdf](https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/Inms/D11_SpecialNoticeMariners2019_Indefinite.pdf)

# VOLUNTARY VESSEL SPEED REDUCTION ZONE TO REDUCE IMPACT OF SHIP STRIKES ON WHALES

NOAA strongly recommends that vessels 300 gross registered tons or larger transit the San Francisco Traffic Separation Scheme (SF TSS) at 10 knots or less from May 1 - November 15, 2020. These areas contain populations of endangered blue, humpback and fin whales that are federally protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1538 et seq.), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 USC 1361 et seq.), and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 USC 1431 et seq.).

Please report any collisions with whales or any observed injured or dead whales to NOAA at 877-SOS-WHALE (877-767-9425) or to the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Channel 16. If you see whales, please record the date and location, the number of whales, the species (if known) and a description of the animals and report sightings through WhaleAlert, a free application available at <http://westcoast.whalealert.org>.

For more details, please contact Michael Carver at [michael.carver@noaa.gov](mailto:michael.carver@noaa.gov)



**38° 06' 92" N  
-123° 21' 82" W**

**38° 10' 14" N  
-123° 20' 29" W**

**37° 34' 37" N  
-123° 04' 49" W**

**37° 31' 87" N  
-123° 02' 40" W**

**37° 18' 89" N  
-122° 44' 26" W**

**37° 18' 36" N  
-122° 39' 14" W**

- NOAA Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone
- NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Boundary
- San Francisco Traffic Separation Scheme

