

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



To: All Mariners

April 22, 2022

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with support from the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a voluntary 10-knot Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) request that goes into effect May 1 off of San Francisco and southern California; please see the attached charts. Large ships travelling 10 knots give whales more time to move to avoid a strike, reduce the lethality of a strike should one occur, generate less harmful ocean noise and have fewer air emissions. Thus, the goals of these voluntary VSR zones are to reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes to endangered blue, fin, and humpback whales, reduce ocean noise and protect public health adjacent to Greater Farallones, Cordell Bank, Monterey Bay, and Channel Islands national marine sanctuaries. 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 15, 2022 for all VSR zones off California, as shown in the attached charts. Note the expansion of the VSR zone off San Francisco over prior years is designed to reduce ship strike risk in areas of known whale presence and vessel traffic. The season has been extended to account for the presence of whales later in the year.

NOAA, USCG and EPA request that all vessels 300 gross tons (GT) or larger reduce speeds to 10 knots when transiting within the designated VSR zones. We request your cooperation with the voluntary VSR to protect the health of communities living near these zones, and whales that annually migrate to and through these zones. All transits by vessels 300 GRT or larger are analyzed by NOAA via Automatic Information System (AIS) data provided by USCG to assess the industry's cooperation.

NOAA, USCG and EPA are 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. 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) 705-1790, sean.hastings@noaa.gov. NOAA, USCG and EPA commend your commitment to protecting endangered and threatened whales and protecting public health by cooperating with the 10-knot VSR requests and working towards a goal of 100% cooperation in 2022.

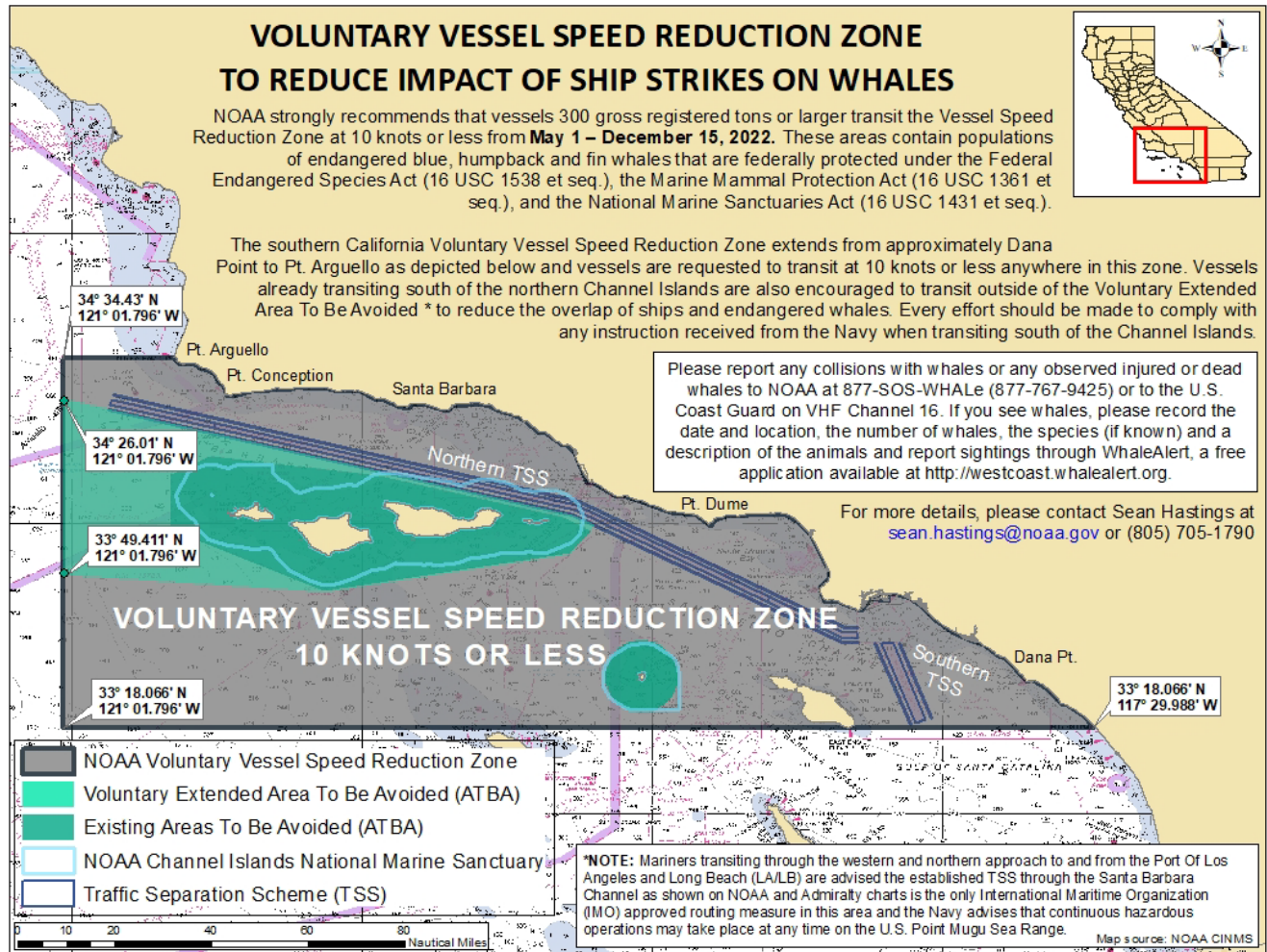
William J. Douros, Regional Director
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
West Coast Region

Scott Rumsey, Acting Regional Administrator
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
West Coast Region

Brian K. Penoyer, Rear Admiral
U.S. Coast Guard District Eleven

Martha Guzman, Regional Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency Region 9

2022 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone Southern California



NOAA Chart 18022

Chart not for navigational purposes.

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