

Vessel speed reduction (VSR) program in the Santa Barbara Channel  
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Shipping is vital to the global economy, but it comes with impacts on public health and the marine environment. In 2014, the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the Santa Barbara and Ventura County Air Pollution Control Districts, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the Environmental Defense Center launched a trial financial incentive vessel speed reduction (VSR) program in the Santa Barbara Channel to reduce air pollution and protect endangered whales. The trial was based on existing successful ship speed reduction programs at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Seven global shipping companies participated and slowed 27 transits to 12 knots or less from July through November in the reduced speed zone, a time period coinciding with the busiest whale season and high levels of ozone air pollution. The program resulted in emissions reductions of more than 12 tons of ozone-forming nitrogen oxides and approximately 500 metric tons of regional greenhouse gases--a more than 50 percent reduction from baseline emissions. The trial demonstrated the feasibility of such a VSR program and in 2016 in collaboration with Greater Farallones (GFNMS) and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries (CBNMS) are expanding the program to San Francisco.