



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Air District urges passage of AB 953 to expand *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* program statewide**

**SAN FRANCISCO** - The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is sponsoring [AB 953](#) (Connolly and Hart) to build upon and expand the voluntary vessel speed reduction program, [Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies](#), statewide. Expansion of the speed reduction and sustainable shipping program for the entire California coast would reduce air pollution, greenhouse gases and the risk of fatal vessel strikes on whales.

*Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* currently covers the San Francisco Bay and Southern California coastal regions and incentivizes companies to incorporate sustainable shipping practices across their global supply chain. By creating slow speed zones where ocean-going container vessels and other ships voluntarily travel 10 knots or less in the designated areas, the program helps improve air quality and human health outcomes while protecting endangered whales.

“The continued success of the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* program provides ample justification for the need to build upon and expand the program,” said Sharon Landers, interim executive officer of the Air District. “Air pollution, greenhouse gases and whales aren’t confined to the current slow speed zones, and neither should this program be limited to the San Francisco Bay and Southern California coastal regions. AB 953 can change that and protect air quality and whales along the entire California coast.”

“Efforts at the local level have done an incredible job protecting marine wildlife and improving air quality,” said Assemblymember Connolly (D-San Rafael). “It is crucial that we expand our work to cover all of our coastal regions. I look forward to working with the Ocean Protection Council and our locals to protect our vulnerable ecosystems.”

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District, as well as the [Santa Barbara County](#) and [Ventura County](#) air districts are part of a unique partnership of federal and local government agencies, foundations and environmental nonprofits that have administered the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* since 2014.

Since the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* inception through 2021, it has achieved 526,211 slow speed miles, a reduction of more than 2,300 tons of oxides of nitrogen, or NO<sub>x</sub>, a reduction of over 76,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions and an estimated 50 percent decreased risk of fatal whale strikes during prime migration season in the targeted coastal areas.

AB 953 would task the [Ocean Protection Council](#) – in coordination with California air districts along the coast and in consultation with the federal [Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#), the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), the [U.S. Navy](#), the [California Air Resources Board](#) and other stakeholders – to create a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program for the California coast. The bill would build upon the existing *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* program as well as any other existing local vessel speed reduction programs.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality and the global climate in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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