



Ventura County  
Air Pollution  
Control District

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Ali Reza Ghasemi, PE  
Air Pollution Control Officer

September 13, 2022

California Air Resources Board  
Dr. Steven Cliff  
Executive Officer  
P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95812-2815

Dear Dr. Cliff,

On behalf of the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, I write to express our support for funding the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies (PBWBS) program. PBWBS is a partnership of local air districts (Bay Area, Santa Barbara County, and Ventura County), federal marine sanctuaries (Channel Islands, Cordell Banks, and Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuaries), non-profit organizations (Volgenau Foundation, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Greater Farallones Association, and Environmental Defense Center) and supporting technical consultants and research organizations (Starcrest Consulting Group, LLC; Point Blue Conservation Science; and Scripps Whale Acoustics Laboratory). The partners work together to provide incentives to owners and operators of ocean-going vessels (OGV) that voluntarily reduce speeds in specific near-shore areas where ship exhaust affects air quality in coastal areas and where endangered whales congregate.

Since 2014, the PBWBS program has achieved over 536,000 slow-speed ship miles, avoiding over 2,000 tons of nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions and 46,000 tons of regional greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing the risk of lethal ship strikes on endangered whales by 35%. The slower ship speeds also reduce anthropogenic ocean noise in California's coastal waters. Funding for the program has been provided by the California Air Resources Board Supplemental Environmental Project program, local air district funds, US Environmental Protection Agency one-time grant, and in-kind labor provided by partners. However, the program lacks long-term funding so it is therefore uncertain if the program will continue in 2023 and beyond.

Funding the PBWBS partnership will support the continuation of critical air pollution emission reductions along the California coast. As evident by the tonnage of NOx and greenhouse gases already reduced by the program, emissions from large cargo vessels contribute significantly to ozone and fine particulate matter pollution in areas with some of the worst air quality in the United States. In fact, the disadvantaged and low-income communities in the coastal areas of Ventura, Los Angeles and Orange Counties will directly benefit from the emission reductions in the Southern California region. In addition, emission reductions from ships transiting the nearshore waters outside San Francisco Bay will reduce air pollution in Bay Area communities.

The Ventura County Air Pollution Control District urges you to secure \$4 million in funding to sustain the PBWBS program for the next 5 years. This voluntary incentive program is critical in

supporting the efforts to meet the 2015 National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ozone in Ventura County by the statutory deadline in 2026 and in the South Coast Air Quality Management District by its deadline in 2035. No other viable method of reducing NOx emissions from OGV is available to local air districts. It is also critical in supporting recovery of the endangered blue, fin, and humpback whales that share the ocean ecosystem with these giant ships.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Mr. Ali Ghasemi, Air Pollution Control Officer of Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, if you have any questions or would like to discuss the PBWBS program. He can be reached at 805-303-4016 or [aghasemi@vcapcd.org](mailto:aghasemi@vcapcd.org).

Sincerely,

Matt LaVere  
Air Pollution Control Board Chair

cc: Craig Segall, Deputy Executive Officer - Mobile Sources & Incentives  
Scott Rowland, Branch Chief - Incentives & Technology Advancement