
CONSENT

Bill No: AB 14
Author: Hart (D), Bennett (D) and Connolly (D), et al.
Amended: 5/23/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/10/25
AYES: Limón, Seyarto, Allen, Grove, Hurtado, Laird, Stern

SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE: 8-0, 7/2/25
AYES: Blakespear, Valladares, Dahle, Gonzalez, Hurtado, Menjivar, Padilla,
Pérez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 76-0, 5/1/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Coastal resources: Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program

SOURCE: Bay Area Air District
Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District
Ventura County Air Pollution Control District

DIGEST: This bill codifies and provides for the expansion and implementation of a seasonal voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program off the California coast to reduce whale strikes and air pollution, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

- 1) Establishes protections, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, for fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered. Lists blue, fin, and humpback whales as endangered species. (16 United States Code (USC) §§1538 *et seq.*)

- 2) Establishes the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to prevent marine mammal species and population stocks from declining beyond the point where they cease to be significant functioning elements of the ecosystems of which they are a part. Prohibits the “take” of marine mammals—including harassment, hunting, capturing, collecting, or killing—in waters of the United States (US) and by US citizens on the high seas. (16 USC §§1361 *et seq.*)
- 3) Establishes the National Marine Sanctuaries Act and authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to designate and protect areas of the marine environment with special national significance due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, scientific, cultural, archeological, educational, or esthetic qualities as national marine sanctuaries. (16 USC §§1431 *et seq.*)

Existing state law:

- 1) Establishes the Ocean Protection Council (council), a cabinet-level entity chaired by the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency that is mandated to:
 - a) Coordinate activities of ocean-related state agencies to improve the effectiveness of state efforts to protect ocean resources;
 - b) Establish policies to coordinate the collection and sharing of scientific data related to coast and ocean resources between agencies; and
 - c) Identify and recommend changes in law to both the Legislature and the Governor. (Public Resources Code §35600, §35615)
- 2) Makes it unlawful to take any marine mammal except in accordance with certain federal laws. (Fish and Game Code §4500)
- 3) Establishes the State Air Resources Board (ARB) and air pollution control and air quality management districts with the primary responsibility for the control of air pollution from all sources other than vehicular sources. (Health and Safety Code §§39500 *et seq.*, §§40000 *et seq.*)
- 4) Requires, per ARB’s At Berth Regulations, a certain percentage of a fleet’s vessels to plug into shore power while at berth to reduce emissions from ocean-going vessels to improve air quality at California ports. (Title 17, California Code of Regulations §§93130-93130.22)

This bill:

- 1) Requires the council, subject to the availability of funding, to participate, as a stakeholder and in an advisory capacity, in the Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program with air pollution control districts and air quality management districts along the coast and other stakeholders, as specified, to support in an advisory capacity, coastal air districts in their efforts to implement a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program in order to reduce air pollution, the risk of fatal vessel strikes on whales, and harmful underwater acoustic impacts.
- 2) Authorizes the expansion of the existing Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program (program), as provided.
- 3) Authorizes the program to include the following components:
 - a) A marketing program to promote voluntary vessel speed reduction (VSR) and sustainable shipping, and an acknowledgment of the program's participants;
 - b) Data collection on ship speeds along the California coast in order to analyze the program for future refinement, expansion, or both;
 - c) Data collection on underwater acoustic impacts or fatal vessel strikes on whales, to the extent data is available;
 - d) Data collection of the regional air quality impacts on the coast and air quality to coastal disadvantaged communities from oceangoing vessel traffic, as specified;
 - e) Incentives to program participants based on a percentage of distance traveled by a participating vessel at reduced speeds – including speed zones at 10 knots or less - to the extent that local or federal funding is made available;
 - f) Development of VSR zones along the coast that take into account navigational safety, protected marine mammal migration and breeding seasons, federal marine sanctuaries and state marine protected areas, shipping lanes, and any other relevant variables;
 - g) Program seasonality; and
 - h) Description of covered vessels.
- 4) Requires the program to supplement and work in conjunction with any other existing port-related VSR programs. Provide that in the event of conflicting

requirements that cannot be resolved that the program exclude the ocean territory within 40 nautical miles of the affected port.

- 5) Limits the program to vessels that are 300 gross tons or greater (i.e. commercial ocean-going vessels).
- 6) Requires the participating air pollution control districts and air quality management districts to submit a report to the Legislature regarding the implementation of the program on or before December 31, 2029, as specified.
- 7) Provides that the program and its components are based upon voluntary actions and are not regulations, and requires that their implementation not conflict with federal law and regulations.
- 8) Makes findings and declarations related to shipping, air quality, and that the expansion of the existing voluntary program is a critical strategy in advancing protection of marine mammals.

[NOTE: See the Senate Natural Resources and Water, and Environmental Quality Committees' analyses for detailed background of this bill.]

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 7/14/25)

Bay Area Air District (co-sponsor)
Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (co-sponsor)
Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (co-sponsor)
Breathe California
Breathe California of the Bay Area, Golden Gate, and Central Coast
Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
California Air Pollution Control Officers Association
California Association of Zoos and Aquariums
California Environmental Voters
California Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Central Coast Clean Cities Coalition
City of Goleta
County of Santa Barbara
Environmental Defense Center
Fresno Chaffee Zoo
Green Policy Initiative
JAS Worldwide Management
Monterey Bay Air Resources District

Monterey Bay Aquarium
Pacific Merchant Shipping Association
Port of Hueneme
San Diego County Air Pollution Control District
San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District
Santa Barbara County Green Business Program
Sierra Club California
Sustainable Rossmoor
Svario, Inc.
The Block Logistics, Inc.
The Nature Conservancy
Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance
West Coast Regional Office, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National
Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OPPOSITION: (Verified 7/14/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “The Santa Barbara voluntary vessel speed reduction program is a prime example of what happens when we prioritize public health, protect the marine ecosystem, and showcase the beneficial partnership between shipping companies, public health agencies, marine sanctuaries, and environmental organizations. Assembly Bill 14 provides participating companies with the official endorsement of the State of California for their efforts to reduce emissions and protect whales. This invaluable state-level recognition will increase visibility, interest and support for conservation efforts along the California coast.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 76-0, 5/1/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Chen, McKinnor, Papan

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