




air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 27, 2025

TO: Community Advisory Council (CAC) Members

FROM: Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 

SUBJECT: Community Advisory Council - Quarterly Update

Per the Community Advisory Council (CAC) By-Laws, District staff provides quarterly updates to the CAC to maintain continuity during periods when there are no planning or rulemaking matters to discuss. The last quarterly update to the CAC occurred in December 2024, and a listing of the previous status updates can be found [here](#) on our website. The information below is provided as the quarterly status update for March 2025.

Protecting Blue Whales Blue Skies (BWBS) Program Update

Each year, the BWBS Program works to incentivize the world's largest shipping companies to voluntarily opt in to reduce speeds to 10 knots or less off California to help reduce air pollution, fatal ship strike risk to whales, and underwater noise pollution. After each Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) season (i.e., May to December), the BWBS Program analyzes vessel Automatic Identification System (AIS) data to determine the cooperation levels of the enrolled fleets. This data is used to recognize the shipping companies whose fleets consistently adhered to the reduced speed request and continues to demonstrate how these voluntary efforts translate to quantifiable environmental benefits for the marine environment and coastal California communities.

Results show that the 10th annual season of the BWBS Program was the most effective year to date, with a cooperation rate of 85%. In total, the shipping companies reduced smog-forming NOx emissions by over 1,400 tons, diesel PM emissions by 8 tons, and greenhouse gases by nearly 50,000 metric tons along the California coast in 2024. Additionally, the risk of deadly ship strikes to whales was reduced by 50% and underwater noise was reduced by 38%. The next season of this program is anticipated to begin on May 1, 2025. A BWBS presentation will be provided to the APCD Board at its June 26 meeting. For more information on the BWBS Program and the District's involvement as a program partner, please visit www.bluewhalesblueskies.org/.

Related to the BWBS Program, Assembly Bill (AB) 14 was introduced in December 2024 by Assemblymember Gregg Hart. This bill would authorize the expansion of the existing Protecting

Blue Whales and Blue Skies voluntary vessel speed reduction program off the San Francisco Bay, Central Coast, and South Coast to include other areas of the California coast without an existing VSR program. The bill would build upon the existing BWBS Program in order to reduce air pollution, the risk of fatal vessel strikes on whales, and harmful underwater acoustic impacts along the California coast. This bill would coordinate the efforts of California air districts along the coast in consultation with the federal Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Navy, the Ocean Protection Council, and the maritime industry. The District has been working with the program partners to help urge the passage of AB 14, as it would provide additional support for continuing and expanding the emission-reduction impacts from the existing program. The bill has unanimously passed through the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife and has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources.

CARB Workshop on the Potential Ocean-Going Vessel In-Transit Regulation

On December 5, 2024, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) hosted a virtual public workshop focused on the development of an In-Transit Regulation for ocean-going vessels (OGV). OGV are one of the largest contributors of air pollutants in California, and thus, the workshop started by covering the need for an In-Transit Regulation. The marine shipping sector is expected to grow in the coming years, and as a result, oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emission reductions are needed to help attain and maintain the state and federal ozone standards, and diesel particulate matter (PM) reductions are needed to help reduce the burden on low-income and disadvantaged coastal communities in accordance with Assembly Bill 617.

CARB has already adopted an OGV Fuel Regulation and an At-Berth Regulation to reduce emissions from the OGV sector. For this potential In-Transit Regulation, CARB is evaluating emission reduction strategies such as incentivizing and/or requiring the following:

- 1) Newer & cleaner vessel visits to California (i.e. Tier 3 engines),
- 2) Alternative fuel types (i.e. Liquefied Natural Gas and Methanol), and
- 3) Operational changes (i.e. Reducing vessel speeds to 10 knots or less).

CARB has indicated that this rulemaking process may take between five to seven years. As such, the workshop informed stakeholders about the regulatory process and invited them to be actively engaged in evaluating the strategies. The workshop also covered the draft updates to the CARB OGV emission inventory. Since the last OGV methodology update in 2021, there have been improvements in data sources, calculation methodologies, and forecasting the future impacts of this source category. As you may recall, emissions from ocean-going vessels contribute 42% to the overall ozone emissions in Santa Barbara County. Efforts to reduce emissions are an important component to assist our region in reaching and maintaining attainment of the State and Federal ozone standards. The updated OGV inventory and emission projections will be incorporated into the District's upcoming 2025 Ozone Plan. For more information on the potential regulation and inventory, please visit CARB's website at: ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/potential-ocean-going-vessel-ogv-transit-regulation.

2025 Ozone Plan

Every three years, the District is required to update our plan to attain and maintain the state 1-hour and 8-hour ozone standards. The 2025 Ozone Plan will be the eleventh triennial update to the initial state Air Quality Attainment Plan adopted by the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (District) Board of Directors in 1991.

We anticipate the 2025 Ozone Plan will be composed of seven chapters that address air quality trends, the emission inventory, stationary source control measures, transportation control measures, voluntary incentive programs, and attainment strategy. District staff plan to hold the next CAC meeting in the Spring and/or Summer of 2025 to begin the review process and discuss the 2025 Ozone Plan. District staff intend to take the 2025 Ozone Plan to the District Board for a public hearing and adoption in the Fall of 2025.

This concludes the status update for this quarter. If you have any questions, please contact me (aag@sbcapcd.org) or Alex Economou (aje@sbcapcd.org).

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The CAC's charter is to consider issues related to air pollution planning and rulemaking for which the District has jurisdiction, and to render advice to the District Board and the APCO. The CAC serves an important function by providing expertise and representation of community interests during planning and rulemaking. The CAC's advice has helped the District Board adopt plans and rules, which have contributed to improving air quality in our county, and District staff appreciate the care and consideration you show in carrying out your service. These updates are also be posted to our website at www.ourair.org/community-advisory-council-info.