

2018 Voluntary Vessel Slowdown in Haro Strait

Slow down for the whales

The remaining 76 southern resident killer whales are listed as endangered under both the *Species at Risk Act* in Canada and the *Endangered Species Act* in the U.S. Both countries' governments have highlighted the need to develop and implement measures to reduce underwater noise generated by vessels which research indicates can interfere with whales' ability to hunt, navigate and communicate with each other.

In 2017, the voluntary vessel slowdown trial in Haro Strait demonstrated that reducing vessel speeds is an effective way of reducing the underwater noise generated at the vessel source, as well as reducing total underwater noise in nearby habitats which may in turn benefit the behaviour and feeding success of the southern resident killer whale (SRKW).

The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, as the Minister responsible for Parks Canada Agency, recently formed the opinion that the SRKW is [facing imminent threats](#) to its survival and recovery. With this in mind, a refined approach is proposed for voluntary vessel slowdown action in Haro Strait in 2018 which will utilize different vessel speeds and a dynamic slowdown start and end date in an effort to both maximize vessel participation and benefit to the whales, when they are present.

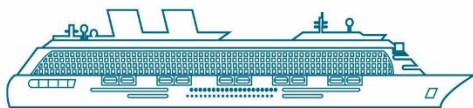
What's new this year?

Speed

Based on analysis of 2017 information, the ECHO Program has identified optimum speeds for different vessel types to reduce underwater noise levels and maximize vessel participation. Where it is safe and operationally feasible, vessels are encouraged to transit Haro Strait at the following speeds through the water:

15kn

or less for vehicle carriers, cruise and container vessels



12.5kn

or less for bulkers, tankers, Washington State Ferries and government vessels.



Transiting Haro Strait (see figure of slowdown and transition areas below) at these reduced speeds could add between 11 and 18 minutes to the total transit time, depending on the vessel type.

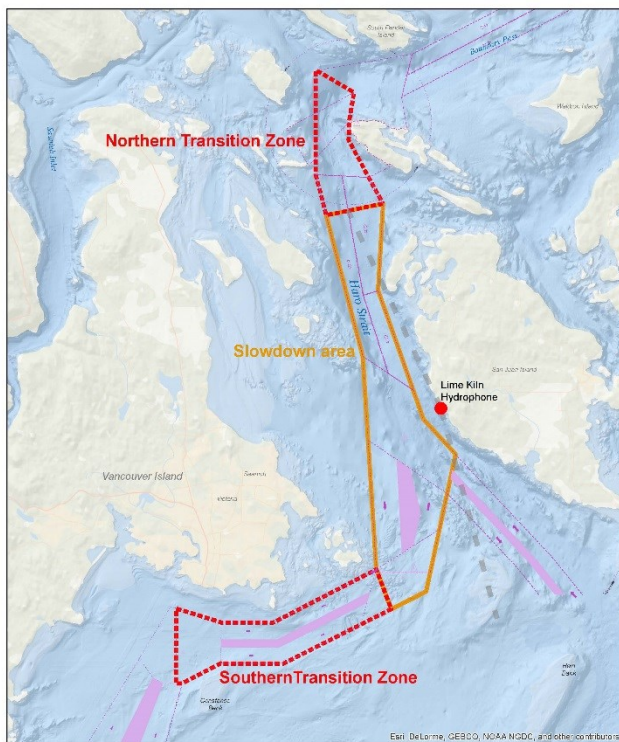
Dynamic trial start and end dates

Between the dates of July 1st and October 31st 2018 vessels should plan for a potential voluntary slowdown in Haro Strait. An SRKW monitoring period will commence on July 1st 2018, but the vessel slowdown will only come into force once SRKW have been confirmed as present within Haro Strait or a buffer area which encompasses the transition zones, as confirmed by hydrophone data and trusted observers. The official slowdown start and end date will be communicated to mariners through a Notice to Shipping and via the Pacific Pilotage Authority, BC Coast Pilots, shipping associations and agents, and the ECHO website and newsletter.

Once activated, the vessel slowdown will stay in effect until at least September 15th 2018. SRKW monitoring will continue throughout the summer and into September and October, based on SRKW presence. If the whales are still confirmed present, the slowdown will extend for a two week period to the end of September. This process of monitoring, evaluation and adaptive two week extension to the slowdown based on SRKW presence will continue to no later than October 31st 2018.

Vessel participation

With varied vessel speeds and reduced anticipated delay times, we are encouraging all vessels to participate where possible. In order to approach the same levels of vessel noise reduction that were achieved last year, we are looking for as many vessels to participate as possible. Participation rates by sector will be reported regularly through the ECHO newsletter.



Same as last year

Location

The slowdown area in Haro Strait between Discovery Island and Henry Island is unchanged from last year. Vessels are encouraged to use the transition zones to slow down to the appropriate speed prior to entering the trial boundary. The trial distance is 16.6nm inbound, 14.9nm outbound.

Monitoring

Similar to last year, the ECHO Program will monitor underwater noise levels before, during and after the trial using the hydrophone located at Lime Kiln. Southern resident killer whale presence will be monitored and recorded by hydrophone and human observers. Vessel participation rates will be reported by the Pacific Pilotage Authority and will also be monitored by AIS data. At the end of the slowdown period, an analysis will be conducted by the ECHO Program to evaluate its effectiveness.

Questions or feedback

For more information on the slowdown please contact the ECHO Program team at echo@portvancouver.com or Vancouver Fraser Port Authority Operations Center which is available 24/7 at 604.665.9086. For more information on the ECHO program please see www.portvancouver.com/echo