

Swiftsure Bank 2021 voluntary vessel slowdown

Working together to reduce underwater noise effects on whales

Southern resident killer whales (SRKW) 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 recognize the need to take measures to reduce underwater noise generated by vessels, which has been shown to interfere with killer whales' ability to hunt, navigate and communicate via echolocation.

Since 2017, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority-led Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation (ECHO) Program has been working with the marine transportation industry, environmental groups, Indigenous advisors, and government to coordinate voluntary vessel slowdowns and lateral displacements in key feeding areas within SRKW critical habitat.

Thanks to the marine transportation industry's high participation rates in last year's slowdown trial at Swiftsure Bank, **underwater sound intensity was reduced by approximately 40%**. Building off last year's success, the 2021 slowdown at Swiftsure Bank will run from June 1 to October 31.

Slowdown parameters for 2021

Where: Swiftsure Bank

All large commercial vessels transiting outbound through Swiftsure Bank are asked to voluntarily slow down between JA buoy and the end of the traffic separation scheme, a distance of between 17 to 20 nautical miles.

Vessel operators are encouraged to slow down in the transition zone to the appropriate speed prior to entering the slowdown zone.

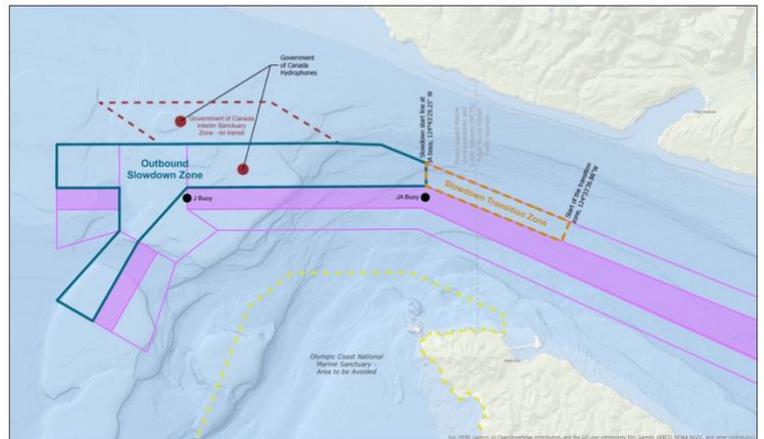
When: June 1 – October 31

The voluntary slowdown initiative will be in effect from June 1 to October 31, 2021.

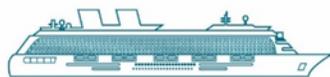
Speed:

The speed through water target for bulkers, tankers and government vessels has been lowered to 11 knots, a half knot less than in 2020. The speed through water target for vehicle carriers, cruise, and container vessels remains at 14.5 knots, the same as 2020.

Large commercial vessels are encouraged to transit through the slowdown area at or below the following speeds through water targets only when it is safe and operationally feasible to do so.



For a full size map of the slowdown area, [click here](#).



14.5 knots

speed through the water **or less**
for vehicle carriers, cruise and container vessels



11 knots

speed through the water **or less**
for bulkers, tankers and government vessels

Estimated transit time impacts:

Transiting Swiftsure Bank at these reduced speeds could add between **10 and 29 minutes** to the total transit time, depending on the vessel type.

Vessel type	Expected additional minutes of transit time
Bulker	10 minutes
Car carrier	13 minutes
Container	13 minutes
Cruise	29 minutes
Tanker	23 minutes

* Includes time in transition zone

Participation goal: 80%

In order to reduce underwater noise levels as much as possible in 2021, the ECHO Program is again seeking high levels of support with a participation goal of 80% of vessels achieving the target speed through water within one knot.

Participation rates by sector will be reported regularly throughout the slowdown period in the ECHO Program newsletter.

Monitoring and reporting

To support the ECHO Program's evaluation of the slowdown, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will monitor underwater noise levels before and during the slowdown period using underwater listening devices, called hydrophones, located at Swiftsure Bank.

Whale presence will be monitored and recorded through dedicated boat surveys by Pacheedaht First Nation within their territorial waters, collated with additional data sources such as from BC Cetacean Sightings Network.

Participation rates will be provided through the bi-weekly ECHO Program newsletter. At the end of the slowdown period, the ECHO Program team will conduct an analysis to evaluate its effectiveness and results will be published on our website.

For more information

- Learn more about the ECHO Program's initiatives: www.portvancouver.com/echo/projects
- Learn more about the ECHO Program: www.portvancouver.com/echo
- Sign up for our newsletter [here](#)
- Questions? Contact us at echo@portvancouver.com or through the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority Operations Centre, which is available 24/7 at 604.665.9086