



The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is the federal agency responsible for the stewardship of the lands and waters that make up the Port of Vancouver, Canada's largest port. As a Canada Port Authority, our mandate is to enable Canada's trade through the Port of Vancouver, while protecting the environment, and considering local communities. As cargo volumes in the Port of Vancouver continue to grow, the port authority is working to improve the way we manage ship traffic within the port to support our vision for the Port of Vancouver to be the world's most sustainable port.

## Management of commercial ship traffic

Commercial ships travel under the guidance of a captain and crew, carrying cargo between various origins and destinations across the world. When accessing confined waters like the Port of Vancouver, the ship's captain is supported by a qualified marine pilot, who determines the safest route to the intended marine terminal, based on their local knowledge and experience of the waterways. The port authority is developing a new active vessel traffic management system that will prioritize and optimize how piloted ships and tug-and-barge traffic move within the port authority's jurisdiction for safety and environmental protection. In collaboration with supply chain partners and industry stakeholders, and with support from the Government of Canada, the port authority is designing this new collaborative system to manage marine traffic flow at the Port of Vancouver and in southern British Columbia. We are also seeking input from Indigenous groups, various levels of government, community stakeholders, and the public as part of this process.

The new active vessel traffic management system will strengthen marine safety, make the flow of goods transiting to and from the Port of Vancouver more efficient, and help better manage the effects of commercial ship traffic on the environment and local communities.

## Ship at anchor: guidelines, regulations and compliance

Within the Port of Vancouver's jurisdictional waters, the port authority manages ship traffic and the sites where these ships can anchor (called anchorages) while waiting to access a terminal. Outside of the Port of Vancouver, ships are free to anchor in an appropriate location for a reasonable period of time, per the common law right of navigation. In 2018, Transport Canada introduced a temporary protocol, known as the interim protocol, asking the port authority to assist by assigning anchorages around the Southern Gulf Islands. The interim protocol aims to balance anchorage usage and distribute ships more equitably among these designated anchorages to help mitigate community impacts and disruptions.

Ships at anchor are required to comply with international and Canadian statutes, obligations, and guidelines related to the environment, fisheries, safety, and good seamanship. While the interim protocol guidelines are voluntary, they are fully supported by representatives of the marine community.

Both the interim protocol and the new active vessel traffic management system under development are intended to complement the safety and navigation services provided by the Canadian Coast Guard's Marine Communications and Traffic Services. The new system will also look to strengthen marine safety beyond primarily safety of life at sea to include making the flow of goods more efficient and helping to better manage the effects of trade-related ship traffic on local communities and the environment. When a complaint about a ship at anchor is received, the port authority will work with Transport Canada to ensure that the party most appropriate to enforce compliance is the party responsible. This could mean that the port authority assumes a larger responsibility for anchorages than we currently have. This could also mean expanding the port authority's role to include influencing and monitoring ship activity and behaviour while at anchor as well as enforcing required behaviours.

## Anchorage code of conduct

The port authority recently implemented an anchorage code of conduct providing expectations for ships at anchor. As of February 15, 2023, all ships requesting an anchorage assignment at the Port of Vancouver and around the Southern Gulf Islands are asked to review and agree to the practices and procedures outlined in the anchorage code of conduct.

## Environment

Protecting the environment is part of our mandate as a Canada Port Authority, and our vision is for the Port of Vancouver to be the world's most sustainable port. To us, a sustainable port supports a healthy environment, economic prosperity through trade, and thriving communities.

While the current process of managing ship traffic focuses on regulatory marine safety, the active vessel traffic management system will expand to consider the needs of communities, customers, and supply chain leaders. Improved efficiencies resulting from this new system will help reduce the time ships spend at anchor and mitigate the impacts of light and noise on humans and wildlife.

## Minimizing noise and light impact

The procedures in Transport Canada's interim protocol for the use of Southern Gulf Island anchorages ask ship operators to minimize noise levels and light usage in consideration of residents, without compromising safety and security, and pursuant to regulatory requirements.

### Noise-reduction protocols:

- Keep ship's generator usage to the minimum requirements for operating essential systems and services
- Keep doors and hatches of machinery spaces closed as much as possible
- Use power tools and chipping hammers on deck as little as possible and never on weekends or between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. on weekdays

### Light-reduction protocols:

- Deck lights must be kept to a minimum and aimed downwards, not outward or toward the shore

- Ships are still required to follow the Collision Regulations for lighting

## Protecting marine ecosystems

We know from our work on the Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation (ECHO) Program over the past five years that by limiting ship speeds we can reduce noise impacts in southern resident killer whale habitat. We are considering how port optimization initiatives can complement and enhance the important work underway across the port authority and tap into existing advisory networks.

Through the port authority-led ECHO Program, we have access to a large advisory working group comprising government agencies (including Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Transport Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard), members of the marine transportation industry (pilots, shippers, cruise lines, as well as tug, ferry and other ship operators), Indigenous communities, conservation and environmental groups (including Raincoast Conservation Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council, and World Wildlife Fund Canada), and scientists.

Transport Canada requires that ships at anchor treat sewage system discharge and bilge system water before releasing it. Ballast water must also be exchanged prior to entering Canadian waters. Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard and the port authority work together to remind ships of these requirements when there are in port.

Transport Canada also stipulates that a ship must track its anchor at all times. A ship at anchor must have room to swing clear of dangers in the water and of adjacent ships. When an anchored ship changes position or direction, it doesn't always mean the anchor is dragging but any movement outside of the anchor "swing circle" may indicate anchor dragging, and immediate action is required.

Additionally, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is gathering information to determine impacts, if any, to the sea bottom in areas where anchorages have been in place for some time. Once this study is complete, the port authority will review the outcomes, and work collaboratively with relevant parties to explore solutions.

Future potential changes in this area would be considered as part of our parallel supply chain collaboration initiative, within the new active vessel traffic management system. Measures specific to anchor dragging would be guided by the current study by DFO and Canadian Coast Guard as part of our broader port optimization initiative.

## Ship collisions and spills

Outside of the Port of Vancouver, the port authority has no jurisdiction over marine collision or spill response. Increased levels of training have been provided to fire and emergency response personnel, and the Canadian Coast Guard has established enhanced readiness requirements under the Oceans Protection Plan. The Western Canada Marine Response Corporation has also increased its spill response capacity and expanded its presence across the southern coast.

## Stay informed and engaged

Throughout 2022, the port authority raised awareness about the active vessel traffic management system and engaged with the public, Indigenous groups, and other interested parties by sharing updates, and collecting feedback about the draft anchorage code of conduct and our approach to information sharing and complaint resolution.

Visit [portvancouver.com/avtmengagement](https://portvancouver.com/avtmengagement) or scan the QR code below for a summary of the engagement activities and feedback received to date, including how feedback is used:

