



# Active Vessel Traffic Management Program

## Phase three engagement frequently asked questions

This fall, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority completed the third phase of engagement for the AVTM Program. Between November 1 to 30, 2022, the port authority invited the community to learn more about and provide feedback on the draft anchorage code of conduct and our approach to information sharing and complaint resolution. We held three community open houses, an online information session and ran a digital survey.

Concurrent to public engagement, the port authority undertook Indigenous engagement by inviting 26 Indigenous groups to meet, share program updates, and seek feedback. A summary of key themes and details from the third phase of engagement will be included in the engagement summary report, to be published in early 2023.

This document highlights the most frequently asked questions we received during phase three public engagement.

### **To learn more about the AVTM Program or contact the project team:**

Visit: [portvancouver.com/avtm](https://portvancouver.com/avtm)

Email: [avtm@portvancouver.com](mailto:avtm@portvancouver.com)

### **What is the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's role in assigning anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands?**

In 2018, Transport Canada put in place temporary measures to reduce the impacts of commercial ships anchored outside of any port authority jurisdictions, including around the Southern Gulf Islands. This Interim Protocol asked the port authority to assist by assigning anchorages around the Southern Gulf Islands with the goal of balancing the distribution of ships.

Within the Port of Vancouver, the port authority manages ship traffic and where ships can anchor while waiting to access a port terminal for cargo operations. Active vessel traffic management is the system by which we prioritize and optimize how piloted vessels and tug-and-barge traffic move within the port authority's jurisdiction for vessel safety and environmental protection.

The port authority is designing this new system to manage marine traffic flow at the Port of Vancouver and in southern British Columbia, including the Southern Gulf Islands. This work is being done in cooperation with supply chain partners and industry stakeholders. We are also seeking input from Indigenous groups, various levels of government, and community stakeholders.

As shipping trade continues to grow, the 28 anchorages within the Port of Vancouver are being used more frequently. When the demand for anchorages at the port exceeds availability, ships need to anchor outside of our jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, the anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands.

### **Are the anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands permanent or temporary?**

The right to anchor a vessel is part of the common law right of navigation, and vessels are free to anchor wherever it is safe. An anchorage is defined as a suitable area in which to anchor a vessel.

The anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands have existed for many years, and ships have historically used these anchorages because they are located in deep water and can accommodate larger ships. Demand for Southern Gulf Island anchorages has increased in recent years due to supply chain

congestion, weather-related delays, and increasing size of ships, and will continue to be used as they are an important part of the supply chain.

### **Can anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands be moved further away from residents? Or removed entirely?**

The location of anchorages outside of a port authority's jurisdiction, including those in the Southern Gulf Islands, is under the Government of Canada's jurisdiction so the port authority does not have the authority to create or remove anchorages beyond the Port of Vancouver.

Anchorage are a key part of the supply chain and the need for anchorages around the Southern Gulf Islands will remain as Canada's trade continues to grow. We hear the community's preference to prohibit anchorages around the Southern Gulf Islands and through the AVTM Program, we are taking steps to improve efficiency and fluidity through the Port of Vancouver. This includes looking at ways to optimize anchorages within our jurisdiction and reduce the time vessels spend at anchor.

### **Can the port authority just tell ships not to anchor?**

International laws of the sea allow ships to anchor when needed. This common law, which has been in place for many years, is fundamental for marine safety and protection of life. Outside a port authority's jurisdiction in Canada, ships of any size have the right to navigate and anchor wherever it is safe to do so, including around the Southern Gulf Islands.

The AVTM Program is focused on better management of ships at existing anchorages in the Port of Vancouver and ships anchored in the Southern Gulf Islands. It also aims to enhance the efficiency of the supply chain so that a ship's dwell times at anchor are as short as possible.

### **How will the AVTM Program address anchorage usage?**

There are a few ways that the AVTM Program and our broader port optimization initiatives are designed to address anchorage usage:

- By making the movement of goods more efficient and reliable through optimizing linkages between road, rail and marine traffic, the goal is to reduce the time a ship waits at anchorages
- By developing an anchorage code of conduct that guides the actions of ship operators and crew when at anchor

While our current system focuses on regulatory marine safety, the new system looks at much more than this – adding another important layer that considers the needs of communities, customers, supply chain leaders, and the environment.

### **How is the AVTM Program addressing the environmental and social impacts of anchorages around the Southern Gulf Islands?**

The new AVTM system includes improvements to better mitigate environmental and social impacts, including:

- Shorter wait times and reduced ship transits
- Better information sharing to support the port authority and vessel traffic management partners, as well as ship operators in managing operational decisions within Georgia Strait and the Port of Vancouver
- An anchorage code of conduct that will help limit noise, light, and other social and environmental impacts, including minimizing overside discharges

## How will the new anchorage code of conduct work?

The anchorage code of conduct includes practices and procedures to minimize noise and light pollution while a ship is at anchor. These practices and procedures were co-created with industry to reduce impacts on the community, while ensuring minimum safety requirements are upheld.

The anchorage code of conduct will be included in the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's [Port Information Guide](#), which means it will apply to all ships anchored at the Port of Vancouver. The Port Information Guide contains a set of localized practices and procedures designed to promote safe and efficient navigation and supports efforts to protect the marine environment.

For anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands, when the ship's agent contacts the port authority's operations centre to request an anchorage assignment, we will be asking the ship's captain to review and agree to the anchorage code of conduct.

## How will the port authority monitor compliance of the anchorage code of conduct? Will vessels be fined for non-compliance?

We are working with Transport Canada to determine details regarding monitoring and compliance measures for the anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands. We are also exploring the establishment of an on-water service to monitor ships around the Southern Gulf Islands, and will continue to respond to community complaints about ships at anchor by asking the ship's captain directly to take corrective action.

The anchorage code of conduct procedures and guidelines are voluntary but are supported by representatives of the marine industry. Agencies like the Canadian Coast Guard and Transport Canada are responsible for oversight of ships anchored in the Southern Gulf Islands and have programs like the National Aerial Surveillance Program. Additionally, through its Environmental Response program, the Canadian Coast Guard is responsible for ensuring the cleanup of ship-sourced spills of oil and other pollutants into Canadian waters. This includes:

- Monitoring clean up efforts by polluters
- Managing clean up efforts when polluters are unknown, unwilling, or unable to respond to a marine pollution incident

## Can you introduce fees for ships using the Southern Gulf Island anchorages?

Under the *Canada Marine Act*, the port authority may set fees for ships, persons, and goods only within its navigational jurisdiction. All ships that call to the Port of Vancouver pay fees for harbour use, which includes anchorage use within the Port of Vancouver.

We do not have the authority to introduce fees for anchorage use around the Southern Gulf Islands, however we are exploring incentive measures to better manage anchorages use.

## Will the new AVTM system include measures to reduce the risks of anchor chain scouring of the seabed due to wind and tide effects on ships at anchor?

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

We understand that Fisheries and Oceans Canada is gathering information to determine if there are impacts 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.

The port authority is also conducting a feasibility study to determine if alternative vessel mooring systems can be used at the Port of Vancouver to mitigate any impacts caused by anchor chain.

### **I am worried about the discharges I see coming from ships. How are discharges regulated?**

Outside of a Canada Port Authority's navigational jurisdiction, discharges from ships into Canadian waters are governed and enforced by Transport Canada under the Vessel Pollution and Dangerous Chemicals Regulation.

Ballast water is an example of a discharge that may be seen coming from a vessel. Ballast is any type of solid or liquid brought on board a vessel to increase its balance, stability, and trim. If the ship is travelling without cargo or has dropped off some cargo at one port and is on route to its next port of call, ballast water may be taken on board to achieve the required safe operating conditions.

Under the current Canadian regulations by Transport Canada, all ships entering Canadian waters must exchange ballast water. Mid-ocean ballast exchange that occurs 200 nautical miles from shore, in waters that are at least 2,000 metres deep, currently provides the best available option to reduce the risk of introducing and transferring alien species. The Port of Vancouver was the first in North America to prohibit in-port ballast water exchange without prior mid-ocean exchange.

These regulations also apply to ships calling the Port of Vancouver, with additional practices and procedures required by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, as outlined in our Port Information Guide.

There is a common misconception that all water coming from ships is discharge or black water, which isn't always the case. A deep-sea ship is continuously suctioning seawater for various onboard systems. For example, aside from ballast or cleaning, seawater is also used to cool a ship's main engine and generators. Once the water flows through the pipes and cools the equipment, it is discharged.

### **I heard the port authority is no longer permitting the discharge of scrubber wash water. Does this apply to ships at anchorages assigned by the port authority around the Southern Gulf Islands?**

As of March 2022, the discharge of scrubber wash water from exhaust gas cleaning systems (EGCS) into the environment is not permitted while a ship is anchored at the Port of Vancouver. For ships anchored around the Southern Gulf Islands, Transport Canada regulations allow for the discharge of scrubber wash water from an approved EGCS.

Through the anchorage code of conduct, we are requesting ships anchored around the Southern Gulf Islands retain the scrubber wash water on board to be disposed at an authorized facility or change to compliant fuel, as these are the same best practices used by ships anchored at the Port of Vancouver.

### **What happens to the complaints we send through the community feedback line and web form on the port authority website? We never hear back.**

If your complaint is related to a ship at anchor, we encourage you to submit your comments through the [web form](#) that specifically addresses anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands. All complaints sent through the web form are reviewed and actioned. When a complaint about a specific ship's operations is received, our operations centre contacts the ship's agent and requests corrective action. Our performance target is to contact the ship's agent within two to four hours of receiving an online form submission. We also log the complaints so we can identify trends over time and share this information with Transport Canada.

Each web submission is actioned, however, at this time we are unable to reply to each one directly due to capacity constraints.

All other emails submitted to the port authority's community feedback line are addressed directly through that inbox, with a target response time of five to 10 business days.

### **How is the port authority engaging with Indigenous groups on the AVTM Program?**

We acknowledge Indigenous groups' interest in this topic and appreciate opportunities to provide updates on how ship traffic is currently managed, what improvements we are exploring, and how we are incorporating input, as well as hearing and responding to questions and concerns.

Engagement with Indigenous groups is ongoing. Since March 2022, the port authority has been engaging with 26 Indigenous groups on the AVTM Program. During phases one through three, the port authority held 12 meetings with interested Indigenous groups and heard their concerns, interests, and ideas. Indigenous groups have raised the importance of immediate and cumulative environmental and community impacts of anchorages and ship and rail traffic on culturally sensitive areas and traditional activities. The port authority looks forward to continually working with Indigenous groups and incorporating key suggestions and ideas in future phases of engagement.