



# Haro Strait and Boundary Pass 2023 voluntary ship slowdown

## A collaborative effort to create quieter oceans for healthier whales

Haro Strait and Boundary Pass are known areas of importance within the critical habitat of southern resident killer whales, which are listed as endangered in both Canada and the United States. Both countries' governments have identified underwater noise from ships as one of the key threats to killer whales due to its interference with their ability to hunt, navigate and communicate via echolocation.

To reduce the impacts of commercial shipping on at-risk whales in these key areas, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority-led [Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation \(ECHO\) Program](#) is coordinating a voluntary ship slowdown in Haro Strait and Boundary Pass in collaboration with government, the marine transportation industry, environmental groups, and Indigenous communities. During the voluntary slowdown, all ships transiting through the area are encouraged to slow down when safe and operationally feasible to do so, in order to reduce disturbance to whales.

The Haro Strait and Boundary Pass voluntary slowdown is one of three underwater noise reduction initiatives coordinated by the ECHO Program. Since 2017, these initiatives have encouraged thousands of ship operators to slow down or stay distanced in southern resident killer whale critical habitat, reducing underwater sound intensity by up to 55% in key foraging areas.

### Slowdown parameters for 2023

**Date: Approx. June 1 – November 30**

The start date of the slowdown is dependent on the presence of southern resident killer whales, but could **begin as early as June 1**. Once launched, the slowdown will **remain active until November 30**, unless southern resident killer whales are absent in the area for more than two weeks in November.

Start and end dates will be communicated through a Navigational Warning issued by the Canadian Coast Guard, as well as via communication materials from the Pacific Pilotage Authority, BC Coast Pilots, shipping associations and agents, and the ECHO Program.

### Location: Haro Strait and Boundary Pass

There are two optional slowdown zones where ship operators can participate, when safe and operationally feasible to do so.

### Speed:

**When it is safe and operationally feasible**, ships are encouraged to transit the slowdown area at or below the following speeds through the water:

**14.5 knots**

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



**11 knots**

speed through the water or less  
for bulkers, tankers, ferries and government ships



For specific coordinates of the slowdown area, see the full-sized map [here](#).

### Estimated transit time impacts:

Transiting Haro Strait and Boundary Pass at these reduced speeds could add between **16 to 41** minutes to the total transit time, depending on the ship type.

Ship type	Expected transit time*
Bulker	29 minutes
Car carrier	16 minutes
Container	28 minutes
Cruise	41 minutes
Tanker	34 minutes

\* Includes time in transition zones

### Participation goal, monitoring and reporting:

The ECHO Program is seeking high levels of support for the Haro Strait and Boundary Pass slowdown, with a participation goal of **90%** set for this year.

The ECHO Program will monitor underwater noise levels before and during the slowdown period using underwater listening devices located in Haro Strait and Boundary Pass. Southern resident killer whale presence will be monitored and recorded by hydrophones and trusted visual observers.

Participation rates are reported throughout the slowdown period via the ECHO Program's bi-weekly newsletter. At the end of the slowdown period, the ECHO Program team will conduct an analysis of the the voluntary slowdown's results, with full details being published at [portvancouver.com/echo](https://portvancouver.com/echo).

### For more information

- Learn more about the ECHO Program: [portvancouver.com/echo](https://portvancouver.com/echo)
- Learn more about the ECHO Program's initiatives: [portvancouver.com/echo/projects](https://portvancouver.com/echo/projects)
- Sign up for our newsletter [here](#)
- Questions? Contact us at [echo@portvancouver.com](mailto:echo@portvancouver.com) or through the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority Operations Centre, which is available 24/7 at 604-665-9086