



Swiftsure Bank 2024 voluntary inbound and outbound ship slowdown

A collaborative effort to create quieter oceans for healthier whales

Swiftsure Bank is a known foraging area 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 this key foraging area, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority-led [Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation \(ECHO\) Program](#) is coordinating a voluntary ship slowdown at Swiftsure Bank in collaboration with government agencies, Indigenous communities, the marine transportation industry, and environmental groups. During the voluntary slowdown, ships transiting the inbound and outbound shipping lanes at Swiftsure Bank are encouraged to slow down when safe to do so.

The Swiftsure Bank voluntary inbound and outbound ship 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 2024

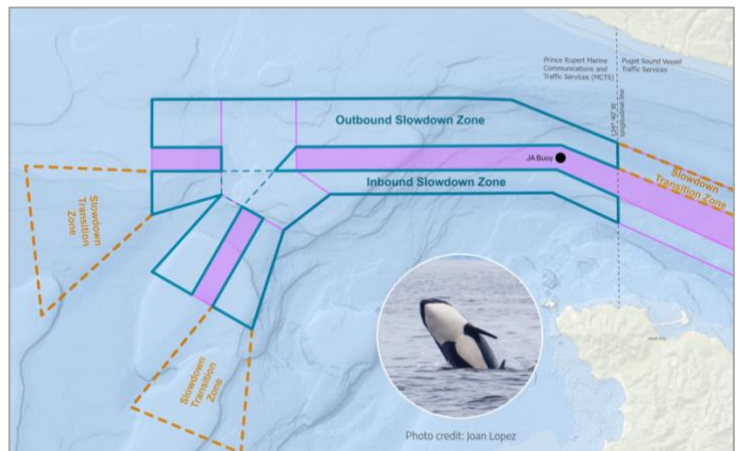
Date: June 1 – October 31

The voluntary slowdown will be in effect from June 1 to October 31, 2023.

Location: Swiftsure Bank

Ships transiting **inbound** and **outbound** shipping lanes at Swiftsure Bank are asked to voluntarily slow down to the target speeds noted below, when safe and operationally feasible to do so.

The Swiftsure Bank slowdown is taking place within the treaty-protected Usual and Accustomed Fishing Area of the Makah Tribe and the maritime territory of the Pacheedaht First Nation, an area of significant cultural and spiritual value and where harvested resources of Indigenous nations are located. The Makah Tribe and the Pacheedaht First Nation are key advisors to the ECHO Program in the development and implementation of safe vessel slowdown practices in this important area.



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

Speed:

When it is safe and operationally feasible, ships are encouraged to transit through 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 and government ships



* If safe, these types of ships are encouraged to consider further reducing their speeds to 11 knots

Estimated transit time impacts:

Transiting through the Swiftsure Bank voluntary ship slowdown area at the above speeds could add between **11 and 32 minutes** to the total transit time, depending on the ship type and direction. The maximum total distance of the Swiftsure Bank voluntary ship slowdown area is 23 nautical miles.

Ship type	Outbound Expected transit time*	Inbound Expected transit time*
Bulker	13 minutes	12 minutes
Car carrier	16 minutes	14 minutes
Container	13 minutes	11 minutes
Cruise	32 minutes	29 minutes
Tanker	22 minutes	19 minutes

* Maximum estimate of additional transit time, including time spent in the transition zone

Participation goal, monitoring, and reporting:

The ECHO Program is seeking high levels of support for the Swiftsure Bank voluntary ship slowdown with a participation goal of **80%** set for the outbound and inbound shipping lanes.

Underwater noise levels will be evaluated using underwater listening devices called hydrophones and computer modelling. Whale presence will be monitored through boat surveys conducted by Pacheedaht First Nation within their maritime territory and collated with additional data from the BC Cetacean Sightings Network.

Participation rates will be reported regularly throughout the slowdown period via the ECHO Program's bi-weekly newsletter. At the end of the slowdown, the ECHO Program team will conduct an analysis of the slowdown's results, with full details published at www.portvancouver.com/echo.

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