

Executive summary

This report summarizes the results of the 2023 voluntary inshore lateral displacement in the Strait of Juan de Fuca (the lateral displacement). The lateral displacement was coordinated by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority-led Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation (ECHO) Program (the Program), with the input and advice of the ECHO Program's vessel operators committee and advisory working group members.

The Strait of Juan de Fuca is a known area of importance within the critical habitat of endangered southern resident killer whales (SRKW) that overlaps with commercial shipping lanes, and the initiative area is in Canadian waters. In order to reduce underwater noise – one of the key threats to at-risk whales – in this area, the ECHO Program coordinated its sixth consecutive voluntary lateral displacement for tugboats.

While this voluntary measure was in effect from June 1 to October 31, 2023, tugboat operators transiting the Canadian inshore area of the Strait of Juan de Fuca were encouraged to laterally displace or move away from the enhanced management area along the southwest coast of Vancouver Island when safe and operationally feasible to do so. Tugboats transiting in the outbound lane of the traffic separation scheme were also considered to be participating. The cumulative participation rate in the lateral displacement was 95%, with 101 of 106 tugboat transits voluntarily moving away from the enhanced management area.

Marine mammal presence in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Swiftsure Bank areas was monitored by Pacheedaht First Nation through boat transect surveys within their territorial waters. Between June and November 2023, 91 survey days were completed, with 57 killer whale sightings, of which were SRKW seen on at least three days.

The 2023 Strait of Juan de Fuca lateral displacement results further demonstrate the effectiveness of voluntary measures at reducing threats to at-risk whales such as the endangered SRKW. [Learn more about this initiative on our webpage.](#)

Overview

Lateral displacement period

June 1 to October 31, 2023

Participation

95% of tugboat transits

Acoustic benefit

~4 - 7dB reduction
in underwater sound intensity
per tugboat transit