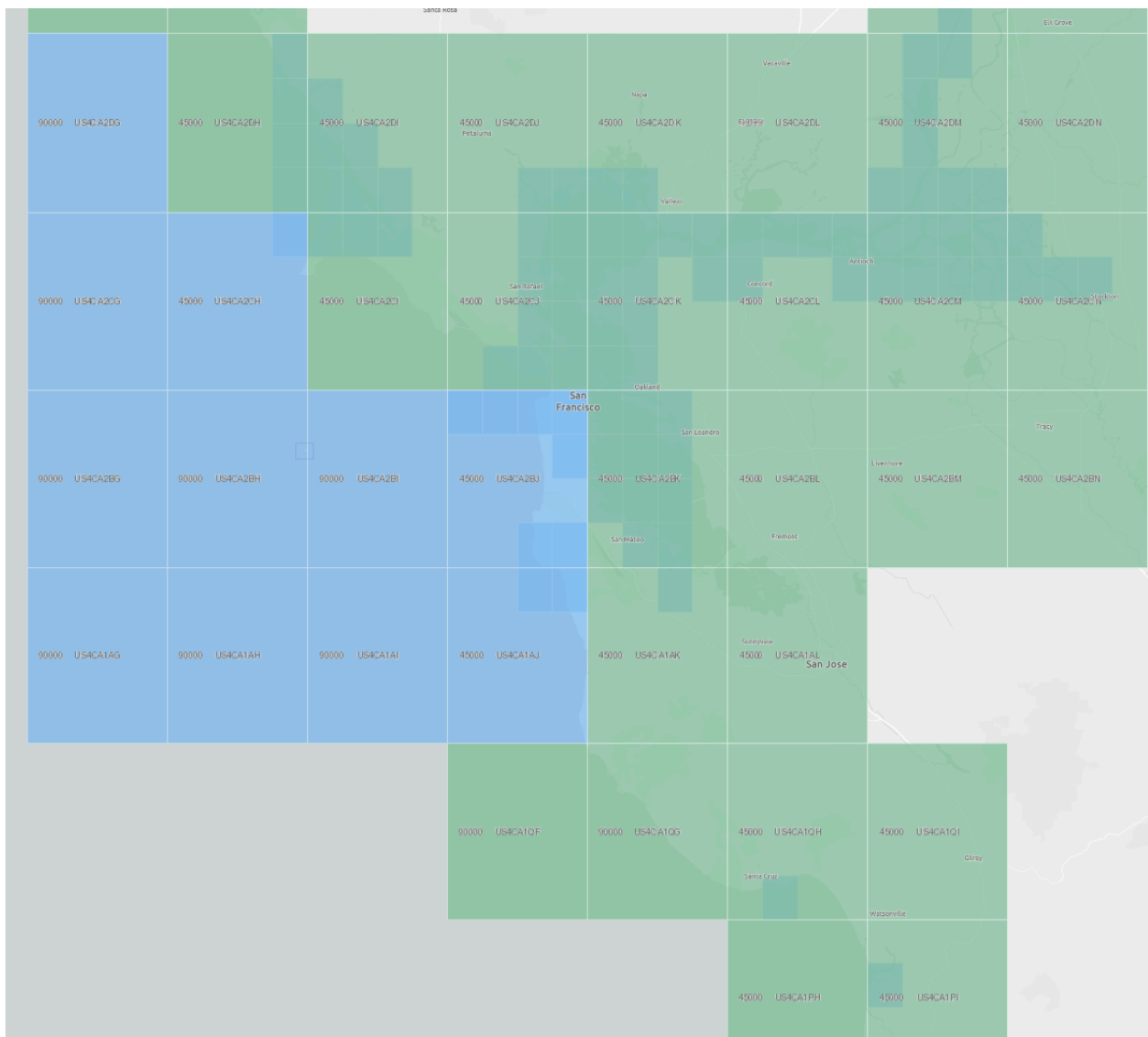


NOAA Report to the San Francisco Bay Harbor Safety Committee April 2026

Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC) Updates

As mentioned in previous meetings, NOAA is in the process of re-gridding our ENC coverage. You can view progress here: <https://distribution.charts.noaa.gov/ENC/rescheme/> All band 5 ENCs in the San Francisco Bay region are complete. We are now working on the band 4 scale ENCs

Current view: (Blue is final and publicly available, yellow is in final review, green is in work.)



Marine Debris Removal - Special Funding Opportunity

Ocean Conservancy is soliciting applications under their Large Marine Debris Removal Project to remove large marine debris from remote and hard to reach environments. Using funding provided by a 2024 award from the NOAA Marine Debris Program, Ocean Conservancy will provide up to \$2.2 million in grants to remove large marine debris and derelict fishing gear throughout coastal waterways of the United States. Projects may range from \$50,000 to \$200,000.

Eligible debris for removal includes bulky debris requiring special resources to remove, such as boat parts, construction materials and tires; and abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear, including large fishing nets and tangled masses of rope traps and other fishing equipment. Vessel removals are not eligible for this funding opportunity. Successful projects will benefit local fishers; coastal economies dependent on seafood, tourism, and recreation; and coastal and marine habitats. Projects throughout the coastal United States, including United States territories and Freely Associated States, are eligible for consideration.

Proposals are due on May 31, 2026 by 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). To apply, please visit [Ocean Conservancy's website](#) for eligibility and submission information.

NOAA Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP)

NOAA is seeking candidates for the Hydrographic Services Review Panel, or HSRP, a federal advisory committee that advises the NOAA administrator on the agency's hydrographic programs, products, and technology. Applications must be received by April 30, 2026.

The panel advises NOAA on operations and research issues related to hydrographic surveying, nautical charts, tides and currents, geodetic and geospatial measurements, and coastal resilience. Applicants should have expertise in marine navigation; port administration; marine shipping or other intermodal transportation industries; cartography and geographic information systems; geodesy; physical oceanography; coastal resource management, including coastal resilience and emergency response; or other science-related fields.

For more information on how to apply, see the [Federal Register notice](#) or visit the [HSRP website](#).

2026 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction (VSR) Season

The program area has expanded under California Assembly Bill 14 as a statewide voluntary program, with California's Ocean Protection Council as a new stakeholder.

For the 2026 season, the VSR request will go into effect **April 22 through December 31** off the coast of California. Oceangoing vessels 300 gross tons (GT) or larger are asked to travel at 10 knots or less in the VSR zone during the program dates. This will reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes to whales, reduce ocean noise, and protect public health along the California coast. Please see the attached 2026 VSR zone, as well as further context below on the updated map.

For more information, including a commercial incentive program, see the Blue Whales and Blue Skies web site: <https://bluewhalesblueskies.org/>

National Weather Service

Increasing articles in the press about a possibly strong El Nino. It is possible, but still too early to predict with much confidence.

In short, yes, transition to El Niño is expected spring into summer, which could lead to warm-hot summer. Fire danger increases earlier. Likely will have more southerly swell events this summer due to an active East and Central Pacific tropical season. Look for drought conditions to return to the state at some point this summer.

However, currently lots of model variability. And El Nino is only one element of the seasonal forecast. Other puzzle pieces will play a role. We'll know more about winter 26/27 as we move into summer as seasonal models start to handle things better.

Stand by, more precision and details about strength of El Nino and possible impacts at future meetings.

END OF REPORT

Submitted by
Jeffrey Ferguson, CA Navigation Manager
NOAA, Office of Coast Survey
jeffrey.ferguson@noaa.gov

2026 Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Program Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone



41°58.02'
-125°27.36'

40°20.16'
-125°10.8'

37°41.22'
-124°6.72'

35°30'
-123°0'

33°18.066'
-121°12.7234'

32°32.82'
-117°7.5'

Greater Farallones
National Marine Sanctuary

Cordell Bank
National Marine Sanctuary

Monterey Bay
National Marine Sanctuary

Chumash Heritage
National Marine Sanctuary

Channel Islands
National Marine Sanctuary



- 2026 Voluntary Vessel Speed Reduction Zone
- Area To Be Avoided (ATBA)
- Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS)
- National Marine Sanctuary Boundaries
- Federal Waters

For the 2026 season, the VSR request will go into effect **April 22 through December 31** off the coast of California. Oceangoing vessels 300 gross registered tons or larger are asked to travel at **10 knots or less** in the VSR zone (shown in green) during the Program Dates to reduce the risk of fatal ship strikes to whales, reduce ocean noise, and protect public health along the California coast.

We request oceangoing vessels transit in designated Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) and recommended routes, as well as outside Areas to be Avoided (ATBA) to reduce overlap with important endangered whale habitat. Whenever possible, please prioritize use of the western traffic lane of the San Francisco Offshore TSS, and comply with any instruction received by the Navy when traveling in weapons training areas, e.g. south of the Channel Islands. Vessels may deviate from the voluntary speed and routing recommendations whenever necessary to maintain safe maneuvering.

For more details, please contact:
Jessica Morten at jessica.morten@noaa.gov or
Danielle Alvarez at dalvarez@californiamsf.org



**Blue Whales
Blue Skies**