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April 27, 2023

The Honorable Rebecca Bauer-Kahan  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Water, Parks,  
and Wildlife 1020 N Street, Room 160  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: City of Capitola's Support for AB 953 (Connolly and Hart)

Dear Chair Bauer-Kahan,

The City of Capitola is pleased to express support for AB 953 (Connolly and Hart). This legislation will develop a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction (VSR) and sustainable shipping program for the California coast to reduce air pollution, the risk of fatal vessel strikes on whales, and harmful underwater acoustic impacts. Specifically, the statewide program will provide publicity to participants, collect data on program benefits, and will provide financial incentives to participants to the extent funding is available. This program would build upon the existing *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* VSR program for coastal areas of Santa Barbara, Ventura, and the Bay Area, expanding to include Monterey, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, and the North Coast, which would yield additional public health and ecosystem benefits. This bill would task the Ocean Protection Council, in coordination with California air districts along the coast and in consultation with the United States Coast Guard, the federal Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Navy, the State Air Resources Board, and other stakeholders, to create a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program for the California coast.

Since the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* program's inception in 2014 through 2021, it has achieved 526,211 slow-speed miles, a reduction of more than 2,300 tons of oxides of nitrogen (NOx), a reduction of over 76,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, and an estimated 50 percent decreased risk of fatal whale strikes during prime migration season in the targeted coastal areas. This program has encouraged ocean-going container vessels and other ships to voluntarily travel 10 knots or less in the designated areas to reduce air pollution and harmful whale strikes by providing small incentives and publicity to program participants.

Every year, the world's largest container ships and auto carriers make thousands of transits along the California coast, with an estimated 120 tons per day of NOx, a major contributor to smog and acid rain, being emitted within 100 nautical miles of the coast. These emissions



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negatively affect the public health of coastal communities and cause some areas of the coast to exceed national and state ambient air quality standards. However, ocean-going vessels are not subject to any state or federal engine requirements intended for emission reductions.

The City of Capitola is a coastal community serving approximately 10,000 residents and thousands of annual tourists. Pollution from mobile sources, such as cars, trucks and ships, accounts for approximately seventy percent of emissions throughout our three-county jurisdiction. Reducing mobile source emissions will have a beneficial effect on air quality and help to improve public and environmental health along California's coast, including Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties.

The City of Capitola appreciates the opportunity to submit our comments on this important piece of legislation and urges you to support AB 953 when it comes before you for consideration. For more information about The City of Capitola's support for AB 953, please feel free to contact 831-475-7300.

Sincerely,

Margaux Keiser  
Mayor, City of Capitola

cc: The Honorable Damon Connolly, Assemblymember, 12<sup>th</sup> District  
The Honorable Gregg Hart, Assemblymember, 37<sup>th</sup> District  
Members of the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife