

'Sharing the Road' With Whales!

Each winter and spring, gray whales migrate near shore between Arctic feeding and Mexican breeding grounds. In particular, in spring, gray whales can wander into San Francisco Bay, San Diego's Mission Bay, and into Tomales Bay—a shallow arm of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. In addition, the prime season for humpback whales foraging off California is April through November; however, humpbacks can be present here at any time, year-round.

While here, whales face dangers from disturbance, stress, and harassment caused by human activities, ship strikes, and entanglement in fishing gear. Sometimes, whales that are present already suffer from disorientation and other natural conditions affecting their health.

To prevent disturbance, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuaries advises watching for a whale's



*Breaching Humpback Whale, Avila Bay, San Luis Obispo County.
Photo: Ronnie Goyette.*

blow or exhalation, which looks like a puff of smoke. Humpback and gray whale blows are bushy and rise to about 10 feet. Be aware there may be whales nearby that you do not see.

Boaters, including paddleboarders and kayakers, should not:

- Approach a whale within 300 feet (the length of a football field).
- Cut across its path.
- Make sudden speed or directional changes,
- Get between a cow and her calf: If separated, the calf could starve.

Remember to adhere to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)/Endangered Species Act, which states: Marine mammals—whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals, sea lions, and otters—are protected under the MMPA, and some, additionally, are covered under the Endangered Species Act. Powerboaters and paddlers must resist the temptation to float alongside or otherwise interfere with whale migration. The MMPA defines minimum distances and harassment and the corresponding fines of up to \$10,000. [Read about what constitutes harassment.](#)

Entangled whales should be reported immediately to NOAA's Whale

Entanglement Hotline: (877) SOS-WHALE (877-767-9425) or the U.S. Coast Guard: VHF Ch. 16. Never attempt to free a whale yourself. Injured marine mammals should be reported to the Marine Wildlife Rescue regional agencies. Visit the [Division of Boating and Waterways' wildlife hotline webpage](#) for contact information.

Learn more about these majestic animals by listening to the Docksider podcast [here](#).

Should you have an encounter with any marine mammals, make sure you “share the road” and maintain a respectful distance from our amazing marine wildlife to help them thrive.

Renewals for Vessel Registration and Mussel Fee Stickers Underway

The main focus of the Mussel Fee Sticker Program is to provide California State Parks' Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) grants for quagga and zebra mussel infestation prevention projects. Waterbody owners/managers at reservoirs not already infested are eligible for the grants. A portion of the proceeds from the Mussel Fee Sticker Program also funds California Department of Fish and Wildlife's prevention efforts on quagga and zebra mussels.

“The Mussel Fee Sticker Program is vital to prevent the spread of invasive mussels through-

out the state,” said Edward Hard, chief of the DBW Aquatic Invasive Species Branch. “By paying this \$16 Mussel Fee, boaters aid and support infestation prevention efforts through DBW grant funding to eligible agencies for quagga and zebra mussel prevention programs at local reservoirs that allow boating and fishing recreation to continue.”

“With the 2023 grants recently awarded for a variety of planning, assessment, and/or implementation projects, approximately \$25 million has been awarded since 2014 to 43 agencies for 107 projects at 69 reservoirs,” reported Cara Roderick, DBW senior environmental scientist supervisor for the QZ Grant Program.

Mussel Fee Stickers can be purchased at any time, including while renewing your vessel registration.



Photo: California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways



Scan the QR code to request your Mussel Fee Sticker or visit dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee.

Another Successful California Coastal Cleanup Day!

On Sept. 23, 2023, tens of thousands of Californians turned out to almost 700 cleanup sites throughout the state for the 39th annual California Coastal Cleanup Day. In addition to the single-day event, the California Coastal Commission continued to promote self-guided neighborhood cleanups throughout the month of September, encouraging volunteers to clean their streets, local parks, creeks, and shorelines on their own. These neighborhood cleanups—an effort started during the height of the pandemic in 2020—helped expand the cleanup effort to include new areas of the state and new volunteers for whom the traditional Saturday cleanups may have been inconvenient or inaccessible.

During this year's California Coastal Cleanup Day:

- 44,352 volunteers turned out to scour California's beaches and waterways.
- 360,521 pounds of trash and recyclable material was collected from over 2,060 miles of the state's shorelines.



Volunteers from Surf Sports in Marin County. Photo: Surf Sports.



Volunteers from Marina Del Rey Outrigger Canoe Club. Photo: Marina Del Rey Outrigger Canoe Club.

The event enjoyed a strong volunteer turnout in both coastal counties and inland areas. On-the-water participation continues to grow among boating facilities and boating groups as well.

- 43 boating facilities and boating groups participated in the event, with
- 1,799 volunteers collecting 17,641 pounds of trash and recyclables from land and from 203 vessels.

2024 will mark the 40th annual Coastal Cleanup Day, an incredible achievement that continues to show how Californians are resilient and committed to action. A big thank you to all the volunteers who cleaned California's coast, waterways, green spaces, and neighborhoods, during Coastal Cleanup Day and beyond.

Funding Available for Pumpouts and Dump Station Projects

The Clean Vessel Act (CVA) Grant Program, established by Congress in 1992, aims to reduce sewage discharges from recreational vessels into U.S. waters. The Grant Program helps fund the construction, renovation, operation, and maintenance of pumpout and dump stations to service pleasure craft. As part of its commitment to provide clean, safe, and enjoyable recreational boating in California, the California State Parks' Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) is serving as the State Grant coordinator. Public and private marina facility operators, including local government entities and private businesses, can apply for CVA grant funds. Grants operate on a reimbursement basis, with fully executed grant agreements required before any purchases or repairs can commence. Grants reimburse recipients up to 75% of costs, with the grant recipient responsible for at least 25% of costs associated with pumpout and dump station projects. This match can be in the form of cash, the fair market value of labor and materials, or a combination of both.

CVA offers two types of grants, installation grants and operation and maintenance grants:

- **Installation grants:** The installation grants will reimburse recipients up to 75% of the cost of installing a new pumpout or dump station. Qualifying expenses include costs associated with new equipment installation, equipment renovations, and various essential components like pumps, piping, lift stations, on-site holding tanks, pier or dock modifications, signage, permits, and miscellaneous equipment required for an efficient station. However, the grant does not cover the construction or renovation

of onshore restroom facilities or sewage treatment plants.

For installation grants, the recipient shall guarantee that the facilities will be operated, maintained, and accessible to all recreational vessels for the full period of their useful life. The national pumpout symbol should be prominently displayed to boaters and an informational sign that specifies fees, restrictions, hours of operation, operating instructions, and a contact name and telephone number to call if the facility is inoperable. While DBW encourages the free use of facilities constructed under this program, a maximum user fee of \$5 can be charged. The sign shall also acknowledge that the facility was constructed or improved with funds from the Sport Fish Restoration Program, through DBW.

- **Operation and maintenance (O&M) grants:** The O&M grants cover up to 75% of eligible costs for maintaining existing pumpout stations. The O&M grant's duration aligns with the grant agreement, which spans one to three years. Costs incurred during this term are eligible for reimbursement.

For more information about applying for CVA grants, contact Ethan Tratner (Park and Recreation Specialist, California State Parks Division of Boating & Waterways) via phone at (916) 902-8823 or email at ethan.tratner@parks.ca.gov. By applying for CVA grants, you can afford to play a vital role in preserving our waterways and ensuring a positive boating experience for all. Don't miss this opportunity to make a difference. Apply today!

Consider a Marine Composting Toilet

As you gear up for next year's boating season, contemplate the integration of a marine composting toilet into your vessel. Recognized as Type III marine sanitation devices, these toilets align with U.S. Coast Guard regulations, ensuring a "no discharge" compliance. Featuring a waterless and lightweight design, they present a multitude of advantages that resonate with boaters.

The absence of water in these systems translates to a hassle-free installation process, eliminating the need for plumbing or dealing with unpleasant pipes. This not only saves you precious time but also contributes to substantial cost savings in terms of installation, maintenance, and repairs. Contrary to popular belief, composting toilets offer a more pleasant olfactory experience compared to their conventional counterparts.

The innovative separation of solids and liquids in composting toilets eradicates the typical sewage smell associated with traditional systems. This breakthrough means you can bid farewell to strong, foul odors, rendering the use of environmentally hazardous deodorizing chemicals unnecessary.

For a comprehensive understanding of how marine composting toilets operate, delve into the [informational guide](#) provided by The Bay Foundation. Elevate your knowledge further by watching our informative [video](#), showcasing the myriad benefits of marine composting toilets. The [video](#) is also available with Spanish captions. Embrace the transformative advantages of marine composting toilets this season and revolutionize your boating experience.



Marine Composting Toilet. Photo: The Bay Foundation.

Ideas for future
newsletter articles?
Please contact Vivian
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Honoring Robert Simons

Robert Simons (Bob) was born May 28, 1940, in Pennsylvania, to retired Capt. Dr. Robert B. Simons, St. USN, and Jean P. Allely. He lived in the San Diego area most of his life, but extensively traveled around the world. He spent his career primarily in freight transportation and was very proud of his involvement in the creation of Sirius Signal's SOS Distress Light.

Bob was a member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary for 47 years and the El Cajon Elks Lodge 1812 for 61 years. Since 2019, Bob was a partner Dockwalker, always concerned about clean and safe boating.

He is survived by his wife, Dianna Jones-Simons; daughter, Leah Loyer; nephews, Greg and Steve Simons; and their families: stepson, Rob; daughter-in-law, Trish; grandsons, Josh and Matt Byrd; his best friend, Eddie Kabota; Fred the cat; and many honorary grandkids and amazing friends.

Bob will be missed and recognized for all his dedication, help, and commitment to keeping our waterways clean and safe. We are sending great care to his loved ones.



Bob Simons. Photo: Simons family.

Thank you, Partner Dockwalkers!

This was another great year, thanks to the outstanding work from Dockwalkers.

Dockwalkers are partners and environmental educators, trained to provide face-to-face boater education about clean boating practices and distribute California boater kits. They perform these duties while visiting boating facilities, boat launch ramps, and boat shows and events, as well as through presentations at yacht clubs or simply talking to boaters when the opportunity arises. Boaters receive a boater kit after completing and signing a pledge to adopt clean boat boater

practices. The questionnaire helps to improve future education efforts in the Dockwalker program and to identify [where boaters live who have received clean boating information from partner Dockwalkers and staff](#). Dockwalkers make a difference!

California State Parks' Division of Boating and Waterways, California Coastal Commission's Boating Clean and Green

Program, and The Bay Foundation would like to express our deepest gratitude to all Dockwalker partners and organizations that supported the Dockwalker program this year.

In 2023, the program partners worked together with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadrons, Lake Berryessa Watershed Partnership, Lake County, marinas, yacht clubs, and many more organizations. The program had 176 partners participating in 14 virtual and three in-person Dockwalker trainings and refresher classes in 2023. Dockwalkers distributed 7,600 California boater kits across the state, which provide boaters with the know-how and tools to reduce their environmental impact. The kits include information on clean boating practices and local pollution prevention services, an oil absorbent pillow, an oil absorbent sheet, and a fuel bib.

Working together with these dedicated partners made this year another success. Click [here](#) to see which Dockwalkers administered and returned the highest number of surveys and joined the ranks in the Dockwalker Hall of Fame. Thanks to our partners, the following awards were provided to the Hall of Fame recipients:

- Trader Joe's products
- Gift cards to Starbucks, Sprouts Farmers Market.
- California State Parks annual passes.
- Life jackets.
- Photos from the California Amateur Photo Contest.

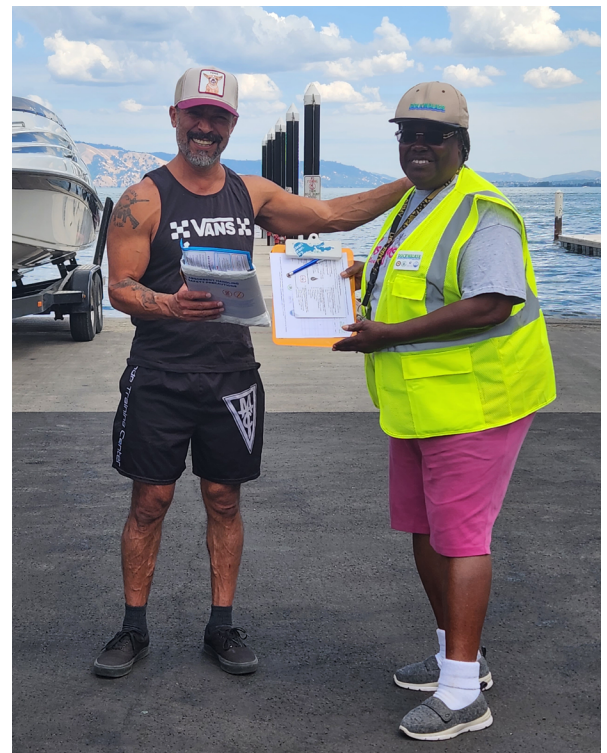
Next year, program partners will continue to offer more virtual and in-person trainings. The 2024

trainings will be featured on the Dockwalkers' website in January 2024.

Check out [these videos](#) to learn what other Dockwalkers are saying about the program.

To learn more about the Dockwalker program, visit the Boating Clean and Green Program [webpage](#) or contact Vivian Matuk, the Environmental Boating Program Manager at vmatuk@coastal.ca.gov.

Thank you to the Dockwalkers for all you do in providing clean boating education and improving the health of our waters.



Partner Dockwalker Elizabeth Moses in Clear Lake (Lake County). Photo: Elizabeth Moses.

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