



SHIP SAFETY BULLETIN

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Subject: Protecting killer whales in the waters of southern British Columbia, 2026

This bulletin replaces [Ship Safety Bulletin No. 09/2025](#)

Scope

This bulletin is for all vessels, including pleasure craft, that are navigating the waters of southern British Columbia.

This bulletin does not apply to:

- a vessel or person in distress, or helping a vessel or person in distress
- a vessel or a person responding to a pollution incident
- a vessel or a person avoiding an immediate or unforeseen danger
- a vessel or an employee of the Government of Canada or a peace officer who is working, a person who is helping them or is present at the request of the Government of Canada, or vessels carrying these people.

Purpose

This bulletin describes vessel requirements under the [Interim Order for the Protection of the Southern Resident Killer Whale \(*Orcinus orca*\) in the Waters of Southern British Columbia, 2026](#), which came into force June 1, 2026.

Keywords:

1. Southern Resident Killer Whales
2. Minimum approach distance
3. Vessel Restricted Zones

Questions concerning this Bulletin should be addressed to:

AMSD
Transport Canada
Marine Safety and Security
Tower C, Place de Ville
330 Sparks Street, 11th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N8

Contact us at: marinesafety-securitemaritime@tc.gc.ca or 1-855-859-3123 (Toll Free).

Context

Southern Resident killer whales are listed as endangered under the [Species at Risk Act](#). They are vulnerable to underwater noise and physical disturbances from marine vessels. Some waters in southern British Columbia are critical feeding sites for the Southern Resident killer whales. Vessels can impact the whales' ability to find food and communicate with each other.

The Minister of Transport issued the [Interim Order for the Protection of the Southern Resident Killer Whale \(*Orcinus orca*\) in the Waters of Southern British Columbia, 2026](#) because of these threats and to support the survival and recovery of the Southern Resident killer whales.

The measures listed in this Interim Order were developed to reduce the impacts of vessel noise and other disturbances on the Southern Resident killer whales and create a temporary refuge for them. See Figure 1 for details.

What you need to know

Under the Interim Order all vessels must stay at least 1000 metres away from Southern Resident killer whale(s).

There are two speed restricted zones at Swiftsure Bank and two vessel restricted zones at Saturna Island and Pender Island.

There is also a voluntary speed reduction zone in Tumbo Channel (Figure 2). All vessels are asked to stay under a speed of 10.0 knots over ground when safe to do so.

1000 metres approach distance prohibition

Vessel approach prohibitions came into effect on **June 1, 2026, and will be in place until May 31, 2027**.

Vessels must stay at least 1000 metres away from Southern Resident killer whales in:

- the Salish Sea south of Campbell River (Figure 1); and
- the waters that are their critical habitat (Figure 1)

This ban doesn't apply to vessels in transit (travelling directly from one point to another), or to people conducting certain authorized activities under the *Species at Risk Act*, *Marine Mammal Regulations*, or *Fishery (General) Regulations*.

If you have questions about these authorizations, please email TC.QuietShips-Naviressilencieux.TC@tc.gc.ca.

Vessel restricted zones

The vessel restricted zones are in effect **from June 1, 2026, to November 30, 2026**.

Vessels are banned from navigating in two vessel restricted zones (Figure 2), which include waters:

- off the southwest coast of North Pender Island (Figure 2); and
- off the eastern tip of Saturna Island (Figure 2)

This measure doesn't apply to:

- practical traffic that is accessing a home, business or any other establishment providing a service, and is travelling:
 - directly between Pender Island and Saturna Islands
 - between one of those islands and a location beyond the vessel restricted zones (Figure 2) or a mooring buoy within those zones; or
 - between a mooring buoy in the zones and a location beyond those zones
- human powered vessels navigating the 20-meter transit corridor alongside the Pender and Saturna Island zones (See Figures 2 and 3 for more information)
- people and vessels conducting certain authorized activities under the [Species at Risk Act](#), [Marine Mammal Regulations](#), or [Fishery \(General\) Regulations](#)
- people and vessels fishing under a license issued under the [Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licences Regulations](#) for food, social or ceremonial purposes, or for domestic purposes under a treaty within the meaning of [Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 \(PDF, 95.4 KB\)](#); and
- Indigenous peoples and vessels exercising an existing right, other than fishing, for non-commercial purposes under [Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 \(PDF, 95.4 KB\)](#)

Speed restricted zones

The speed restricted zones are in effect **from June 1, 2026, to November 30, 2026**.

All vessels, including pleasure craft, must stay under a speed of 10.0 knots over ground in the two speed restricted zones near Swifsure Bank (Figure 3), when safe to do so.

This speed limit does not apply to vessels without a motor.

Voluntary speed reduction zone

The voluntary speed reduction zone is in effect **from June 1, 2026, to November 30, 2026**.

All vessels are asked to stay under a speed of 10.0 knots over ground in Tumbo Channel (Figure 2), when safe to do so.

NAVWARN broadcasts

The Canadian Coast Guard issues and publishes NAVWARNs:

- by radio, and
- on their [Navigational Warnings site](#)

As a mariner, you must make sure you have accurate and up-to-date information about the measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales as outlined in NOTMARs and NAVWARNs.

Compliance and enforcement

You must comply with this Interim Order and any NAVWARNs broadcast and published by the Canadian Coast Guard in relation to this Interim Order.

Any person or vessel that does not comply with this Interim Order may:

- face an administrative monetary penalty of up to \$250,000; or
- be fined up to \$1 million; and/or
- be sent to prison for up to 18 months upon summary conviction

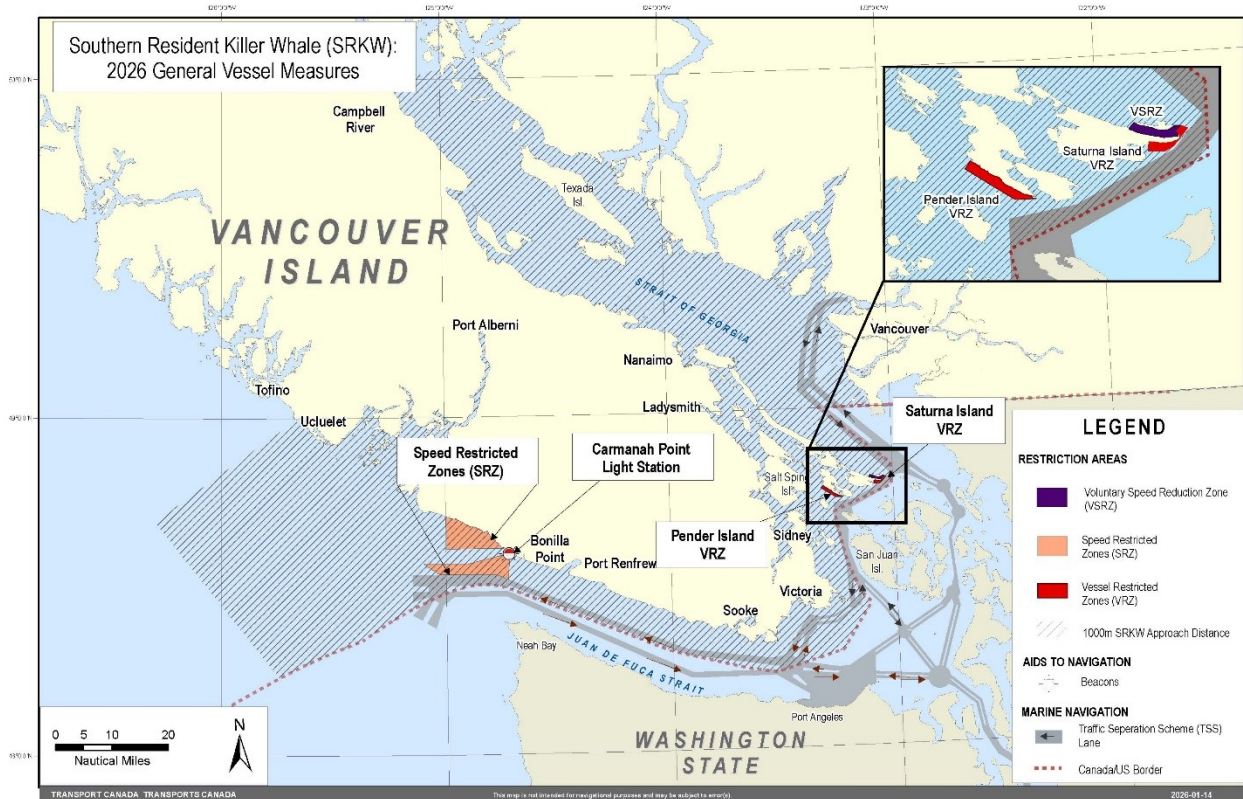
Report a killer whale in distress

If you see an injured, stranded, entangled or dead killer whale, please contact:

- BC Marine Mammal Response Network: 1-800-465-4336
- VHF Channel 16

Figure 1: 2026 Measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales

This map is for visual representation only and must not be used for navigation or enforcement.

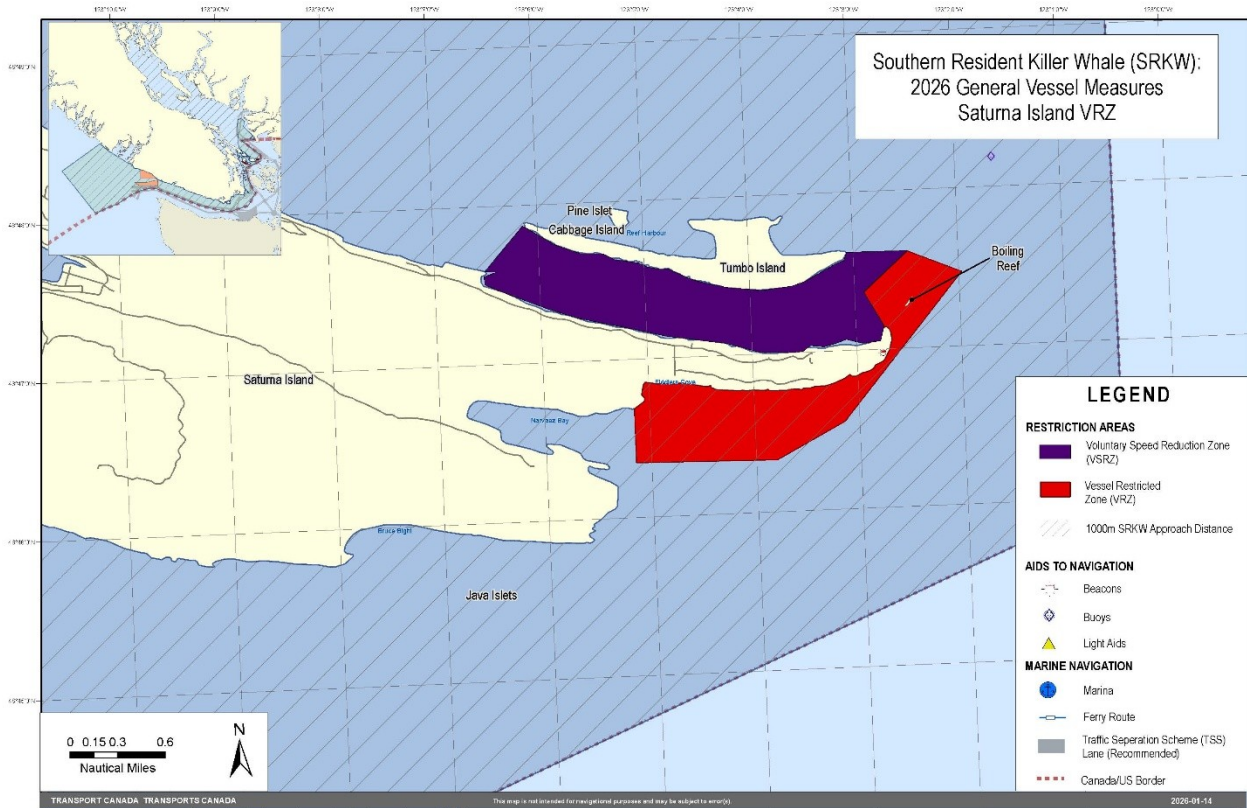


More information: [2026 management measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales](#)

Figure 2: Vessel Restricted Zones – Saturna Island and Pender Island Vessel Restricted Zones

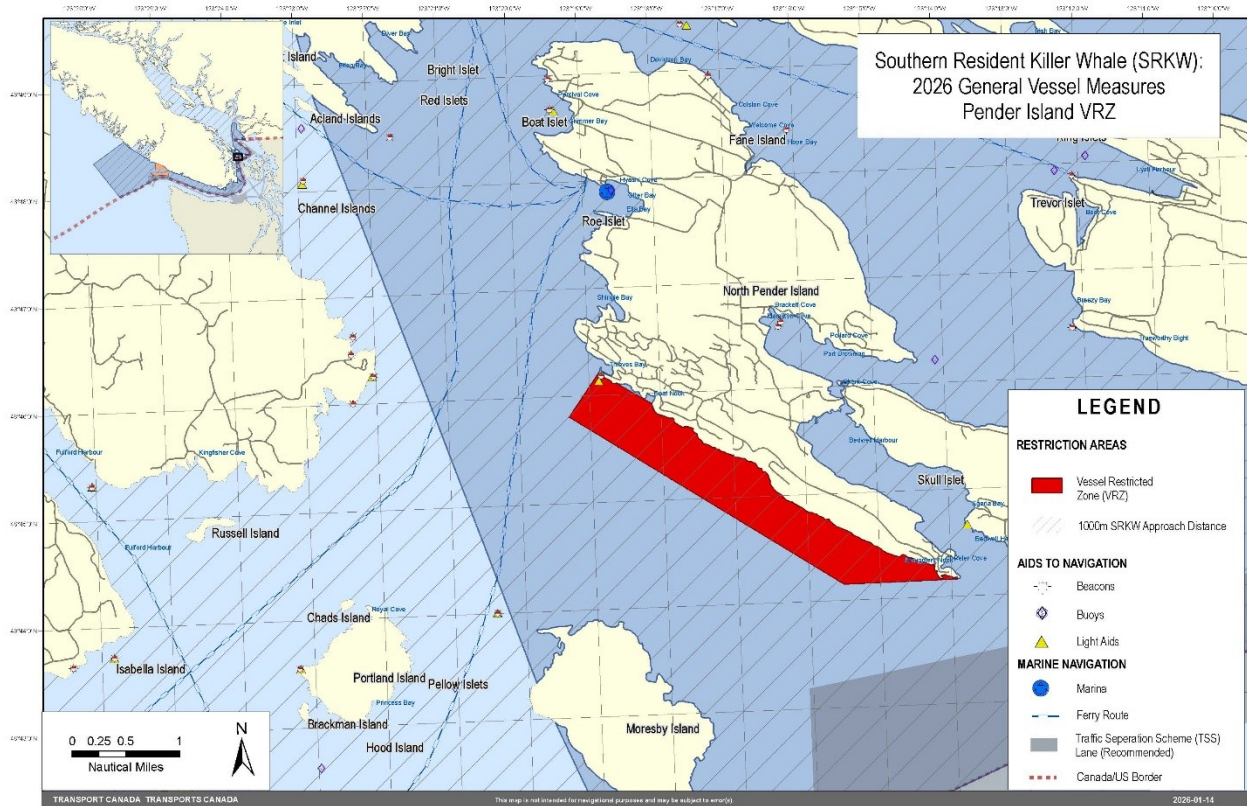
This map is for visual representation only and must not be used for navigation or enforcement.

Saturna Island



More information: [2026 management measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales](#)

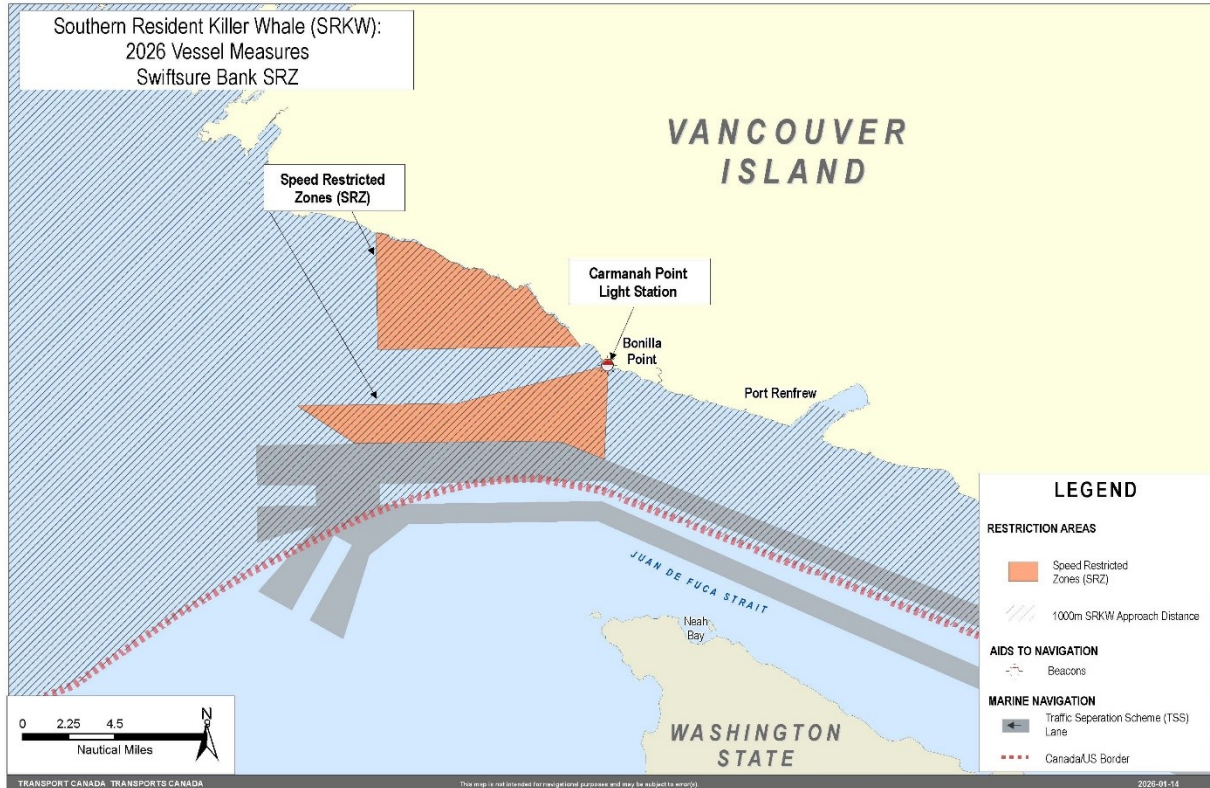
Pender Island



More information: [2026 management measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales](#)

Figure 3: Swiftsure Bank management measures – Speed Restricted Zones¹

This map is for visual representation only and must not for navigation or enforcement.



More information: [2026 management measures to protect Southern Resident killer whales](#)

¹ See [NOTMAR Annual Edition 2025](#) and [A2-Notice 5](#) for more details on the coordinates.