

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2026

Vice Admiral Joseph R. Buzzella
Commander, Pacific Area
United States Coast Guard
Coast Guard Island, Building 21
Alameda, California 94501

Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro Soler
Assistant Administrator of Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway, 14th Floor
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Mr. Joel Taubenblatt
Bureau Chief
Wireless Telecommunications Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Vice Admiral Buzzella, Mr. Piñeiro Soler, and Mr. Taubenblatt,

We write regarding the use of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) to improve mariner safety and help reduce the risk of vessel strikes on whales along the West Coast. We also request information on current interagency coordination related to the approval and deployment of AIS messaging.

AIS has long supported maritime safety by providing mariners and vessel traffic operators with real-time information on vessel movements and conditions on the water. More recently, non-governmental organizations, in coordination with your respective agencies, have leveraged AIS messaging along the East Coast to provide location-specific alerts to vessels operating in speed reduction zones. This partnership demonstrates how AIS messaging can complement existing maritime safety tools by providing mariners with timely alerts on whale activity, navigational hazards, weather conditions, and other risks on the water.

Expanding this capability is particularly relevant along the West Coast, where vessel traffic and whale activity increasingly overlap. As of July 2026, at least 145 eastern North Pacific gray whale strandings have been reported along the West Coast, following 179 in 2025. While NOAA has identified several factors contributing to gray whale mortality and strandings, vessel strikes remain a significant cause of death, particularly in high-traffic areas such as the waters approaching San Francisco Bay. Organizations continue to test and use AIS messaging along the West Coast, but stakeholders have reported multi-year regulatory approval timelines that have slowed broader deployment. While these approvals help ensure AIS messages do not interfere with safe navigation, improved coordination among federal agencies could reduce delays while maintaining necessary safeguards.

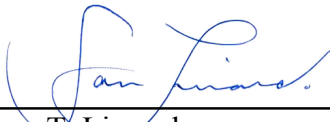
Given the continued overlap between whale activity and vessel traffic, there are additional opportunities to expand AIS messaging along the West Coast. We commend your progress and encourage your agencies to build on these efforts with regional partners to identify opportunities for AIS messaging to improve mariner safety and marine mammal protection, including locations where existing infrastructure could support its deployment. Accordingly, we respectfully request responses to the following questions by October 30, 2026:

1. Have your agencies identified areas along the West Coast where expanded AIS messaging could support voluntary vessel speed reductions, marine mammal protection, or other mariner safety efforts?
2. What existing federal facilities, including bridges, towers, or other suitable coastal facilities, could support AIS transceivers operated by regional partners?

3. Are your agencies evaluating opportunities to transmit information from existing whale detection and monitoring programs directly to mariners through AIS along the West Coast?
4. What factors have contributed to multi-year approval timelines for some AIS deployments, and what steps can your agencies take to streamline the approval process while maintaining necessary navigation and spectrum safeguards?

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your commitment to ensuring the safety of mariners and marine life.

Sincerely,



Sam P. Liccardo
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



James C. Moylan
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress