

And the Winner Is ... the Slowest!

Every week this summer, I've been out on the lake sailing at least once. One of the big things I've learned so far is that you want to be your fastest to win in a regatta. But in the waters of California, cargo ships are doing the opposite: racing to go slower. I'm Alex, and this is my response to the NYT article, "And the Winner Is ... the Slowest!"

Every year, cargo ships off the shore of California participate in a contest to go slow. Shipping companies with the slowest ships literally win! It may seem weird, but there's a good reason behind the race: whales.

In areas off the coast of California, there live endangered whales, including fin, blue, and humpback, and around 80 of these whales get killed every year by ship strikes! One solution to this issue is to enforce a speed limit on boats, minimizing the chance of a fatal whale strike. The Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies contest is one way this solution is being applied. Essentially, if a company slows down a significant amount of its boats to at least 10 knots, it can win an award.

Recently, in the 2023 season, the contest had 33 participating companies. With the cooperation of all the companies, fatal whale strikes were reduced by 58%! Not only did the contest cut the number of deadly strikes in half, but the slower boats also decreased CO2 emissions and noise pollution!

Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies reminds us that sometimes we just need to slow down and paying attention to the world around us.