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**For Immediate Release: June 28, 2016**

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## **Three Southern California Clean Air and Climate Projects Win EPA Recognition**

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will recognize three Southern California groups for their innovative work on clean air and climate projects. The 2016 Clean Air Excellence Awards are given to state, local, tribal, and private sector programs that educate the public in improving air quality or reducing harmful air pollutants or greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

“Our winners from the public and private sectors have shown true environmental leadership,” said Deborah Jordan, EPA’s Acting Deputy Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. “We applaud these pioneering efforts to cut harmful air pollution and improve public health through a range of innovative approaches.”

A total of seven groups and individuals were recognized nationally this year, the three Southern California winners are:

**Community Action Award:** Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (Santa Barbara, Calif.) – Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies. The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District established a voluntary vessel speed reduction program for ships coming to and from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to lower the risk of ship strikes on endangered whales. By reducing ship speed to 12 knots, they reduced more than 500 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions and 12 tons of ozone-forming nitrogen oxide emissions, and no whales were hit by these ships. Partners in this effort are the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, Environmental Defense Center, and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

**Regulatory and Policy Innovations Award:** Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (Bishop, Calif.) – Owens Lake PM<sub>10</sub>. The project involves cleanup of the dried Owens Lake bed, which generated substantial emissions of PM<sub>10</sub> (particulate matter 10 microns in diameter or less). At 48.6 square miles, it is the largest PM<sub>10</sub> emission control project in the world, and has led to annual air pollution reductions of 75,000 tons.

**Transportation and Energy Innovations Award:** University of California at Irvine (UC Irvine) Transportation Services (Irvine, Calif.) – Sustainable Transportation. UC Irvine Transportation Services has implemented a suite of sustainable transportation projects across campus. These projects have led to annual reductions of over 40.1 million vehicle miles traveled and 21,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Clean Air Excellence awards program was established in 2000, and recognizes individuals that serve as pioneers in their fields, advance public understanding of air pollution and improve air quality. Entries are judged by the EPA and the Clean Air Advisory Committee, and winners will be recognized later today at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

More information on the award winners: <https://www.epa.gov/caaac/clean-air-excellence-awards>

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# Capps Congratulates Local Community Partnership for Receiving National Clean Air Excellence Award



*Award presented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

Jun 28, 2016 | Issues: Energy & Environment

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WASHINGTON – Today, Rep. Lois Capps (CA-24) recognized the partners behind the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* project for winning the Clean Air Excellence Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The award was presented today by Janet McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator for the EPA Office of Air and Radiation in Washington, D.C.

Out of almost 50 entries nationwide, the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* project was selected by the EPA Office of Air and Radiation in the Community Action category for its impact, innovation, and replicability. The project reduced ship speeds in the Santa Barbara Channel in order to reduce air pollution and protect endangered whale species. It won in the Community Action category, which applies to innovative partnerships of diverse community stakeholders. The project's partnership includes the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, the Environmental Defense Center, and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

**“Congratulations to these range of organizations involved in the *Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies* project for this incredible accomplishment,” Capps said. “It is truly impressive to see so many diverse groups coming together to reach a common goal that benefits both our environment and endangered species. This program highlights that innovative approaches to protect our environment have great potential and can be incredibly successful. I am proud to see the Central Coast once again leading the way with this collaborative approach and applaud the project’s partners for this national recognition.”**

This project follows two years of earlier iterations, including a 2014 trial and 2015 strategy development effort. The 2016 project will include new elements such as additional incentives and the opportunity for ship captains to submit detailed reports of whale sightings. More information in the partner organizations' press release can be found [here](#).

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