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**IN A POSITIVE STEP FORWARD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, SANTA BARBARA CITY  
COUNCIL APPROVES CHANGES TO THE CRUISE SHIP PROGRAM**

*Santa Barbara, CA* — On April 9, 2024, the Santa Barbara City Council voted in favor of improving the City of Santa Barbara’s Cruise Ship Program with measures to limit the number of ships calling on Santa Barbara and prioritize those ships with advanced pollution prevention technology and solid environmental compliance records.

By a vote of six to one, the City Council accepted most of the recommendations approved by the City’s Harbor Commission on February 15, 2024, including a cap on the number of visiting cruise ships to twenty per year. In addition, the Council voted to go slightly further than the Commission by requiring ships to have onboard advanced wastewater treatment systems by 2025 and to reduce their speed to ten knots when transiting the Santa Barbara Channel, to better protect wildlife and air quality. The City Council also directed the Harbor Commission and Waterfront Staff to continue developing a suite of environmental best practices to assist in making decisions about which ships will visit Santa Barbara.

“We applaud the Santa Barbara City Council for listening to the public and taking important steps to align the City’s cruise ship program with our community’s priorities. Councilmembers acted to ensure that the program better accounts for many of the risks that cruise ships pose to public health and the marine environment,” said Ted Morton, Executive Director of environmental nonprofit Santa Barbara Channelkeeper.

Community members became alarmed when the annual number of cruise ships visiting Santa Barbara expanded to a record high of thirty ships after COVID restrictions were lifted.

In 2022, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper asked the City to conduct a public assessment of its cruise ship program.

In response to Santa Barbara Channelkeeper’s and other community member concerns over the number of visiting ships, minimal programmatic oversight, and the risks posed to public health and sensitive

ecosystems, the City began an assessment of the City's cruise ship program through the formation of a cruise ship subcommittee of three Harbor Commissioners. During these meetings, community members' comments overwhelmingly supported significant improvements to the City's program.

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper actively participated in this process as the lead environmental organization and developed a set of recommendations intended to better safeguard public health as well as the wildlife and sensitive habitats of the Santa Barbara Channel. Many of Channelkeeper's recommendations, were incorporated into those presented to the City Council, including reducing and capping the number of visiting ships to no more than eighteen per year, requesting ships to lower speeds to prevent whale strikes, and prioritizing ships with advanced pollution prevention treatment technology and a record of compliance with environmental regulations.

Channelkeeper's advocacy also included providing key perspectives at meetings and panel discussions, and organizing a sign-on letter, which was supported by many local environmental organizations.

"This is a positive step," said Morton. "We're pleased that the City Council voted to prevent further expansion of the cruise ship program and prioritize visiting ships that demonstrate a commitment to prevent pollution. This decision benefits our coastal communities and our sensitive marine environment."