



Australian Government  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



## Media Release

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# Protecting marine wildlife in the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery – 27 April 2011

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), Dr James Findlay, today announced a number of changes to management arrangements for the Gillnet, Hook and Trap (GHAT) Sector of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery.

“These changes are designed to offer better protection to non-target species in the fishery, particularly Australian Sea Lions, and to improve data collection on interactions with threatened, endangered and protected species,” Dr Findlay said.

The changes will take effect from the start of the fishing year, 1 May 2011, and will be put in place through a Temporary Order under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*, and through specific Directions under the Act.

AFMA has been working with fishers, researchers and conservation groups for some time to improve management of fishery interactions with threatened, endangered and protected species. However recent independent data collection and research has prompted AFMA to strengthen management arrangements to afford better protection to sea lions and other protected species including dolphins, seabirds and some shark species.

Dr Findlay announced that additional measures will include extension of existing closures to gillnet fishing around 31 sea lion colonies. This brings the total area of closures around the 48 sea lion colonies off South Australia to 18,500 square kilometers.

All gillnet vessels operating in the remaining open areas off South Australia will be subject to 100 per cent coverage by independent scientific observers or cameras.

“It is clear that some vessels have not been accurately reporting interactions with protected species as required as a condition of their access to the fishery. Accurate information on the level of fishery interactions with non-target species is essential to ensure that our fisheries are managed in an ecologically sustainable manner,” Dr Findlay said.

In all other areas of the Gillnet, Hook and Trap (GHAT) Sector beyond South Australia, observer or camera coverage will be increased to ten per cent to allow more accurate information on fisheries interactions with other species to be obtained.

Responding to new information, AFMA has also put in place measures to minimize interactions with seabirds.

In addition to AFMA’s existing independent at-sea observer program, for the first time AFMA will allow the use of electronic monitoring through vessel based cameras to meet the formal requirement for independent observations in the fishery. This move follows a number of trials of the new camera systems to show that the cameras are a valuable and cost-effective tool in fisheries monitoring especially with respect to rare events such as fishery interactions with threatened species.



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To assist fishers in taking up the new technology and reduce the cost of the additional data requirements, the Government has provided \$300,000 in 2010-11 to install the cameras on up to 10 vessels.

Recognising the impact these closures and other management changes may have on some gillnet fishing businesses, Dr Findlay announced that the Temporary Order will allow fishers with a significant history of gillnet fishing off South Australia to use hook fishing methods instead of gillnets. Hook fishing methods have been shown to be less likely to catch species of conservation concern in the fishery.

Dr Findlay stressed the need for fishers in all AFMA-managed fisheries to accurately record species interactions in accordance with existing requirements and thanked GHAT fishers for their ongoing support for sustainable management and understanding of necessary changes in the fishery.

More information on the new arrangements and the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery, including a map of the areas closed to gillnetting, is available on the AFMA website, [www.afma.gov.au](http://www.afma.gov.au).