



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Australian Sea Lion bycatch triggers- changes to fisheries management arrangements to further protect Australian Sea Lion sub-populations in the Gillnet, Hook and Trap Fishery

Background; In April 2011 AFMA put in place changes to the existing Australian Sea Lion (ASL) Management Strategy which modified fishing arrangements in the Gillnet, Hook and Trap (GHAT) fishery. These changes came into effect at the start of the current fishing season, 1 May 2011.

At that time, and taking into account advice provided through the Australian Sea Lion Working Group, AFMA determined that a 1.5 per cent bycatch rate (representing 1.5% of the female breeding population during a breeding cycle or 52 female sea lions) was likely to be sufficiently precautionary in identifying trigger levels for Australian Sea Lion bycatch in the seven management zones identified in the ASL Management Strategy. For comparison, the Goldsworthy et al. (2010) report estimated the overall bycatch rate in the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery was, in the period of study (2007-2009), was 4.25 per cent.

After further review, and in response to advice subsequently provided through the Working Group, AFMA agreed the triggers should be amended. While the trigger levels provided adequate protection for the overall Australian Sea Lion population off South Australia and the meta-populations within each of the regions, they could not be guaranteed to demonstrably protect each of the sub-populations (breeding colonies), several of which have been recognised as being at risk becoming locally extinct.

AFMA has therefore decided that a more precautionary approach is appropriate. Recognising that precise expert scientific advice is not available indicating exact zone based or population wide triggers, AFMA has determined that an overall bycatch level of 15 animals per year is likely to be sufficiently precautionary. This level, combined with other measures, is considered to provide an appropriate level of protection to the overall Australian Sea Lion population and sub-populations in the area of the fishery.

New zone boundaries and trigger limits: AFMA sought, and has now accepted, expert advice on how this overall total could be applied across the seven existing management zones, including Australian Sea Lion colonies of most concern in the fishery. Advice has also been provided and accepted on effective zone boundaries. This advice is summarised in the map at [Attachment A](#) and the table below.

Zone	Trigger
A	1
B	2
C	2
D	1
E	2
F	2
G	5
Maximum population wide total	15

Additional management arrangements: To enable real time management of the fishery, concession holders are now required to immediately report the capture of Australian Sea Lions either by advising any AFMA observer deployed on their vessel or by directly contacting AFMA by telephone (02 6225 5506 or 0427 016 859). If an interaction is not reported immediately the vessel or operator involved may be required to carry an AFMA observer at all times in future when fishing, rather than have the opportunity to use electronic monitoring systems (EMS).

As well as this, any pinniped (fur seal or sea lion) captured in the future in the Australian Sea Lion Management zone will now be considered to be an Australian Sea Lion for the purpose of the trigger limits unless there is evidence to show otherwise. This evidence may include, but is not limited to detailed photographs, observer reports (note biological samples can only be taken consistent with any approval under the *Environment Protection and Biological Diversity Act 1999*). The advice of AFMA should be sought on a case by case basis as practical when an animal is captured.

Where an interaction with an Australian Sea Lion occurs, every attempt should be made to determine the sex, age and colony from which it came from to determine if additional measures are required.

Where zone trigger levels are met (or exceeded) the zone will be closed to gillnet fishing for eighteen months from the date of the last mortality. At any time, if the overall mortality number of 15 is exceeded, the entire Australian Sea Lion Management Zone will be closed for a period of 18 months from that time.

This much lower trigger is achievable considering historical interaction rates recorded by AFMA since the introduction of the ASL Management Strategy and the protection provided to breeding colonies in the most vulnerable areas by current closures.

The trigger limits shown below would apply to each fishing year, with effect from the start of the current fishing season (1 May 2011).

The Australian Sea Lion Strategy can be found at <http://www.afma.gov.au/managing-our-fisheries/fisheries-a-to-z-index/southern-and-eastern-scalefish-and-shark-fishery/notices-and-announcements/australian-sea-lion-management-strategy-and-sessf-closure-direction-no-3/>. Details of recent changes in the fishery can be found at <http://www.afma.gov.au/managing-our-fisheries/fisheries-a-to-z-index/southern-and-eastern-scalefish-and-shark-fishery/notices-and-announcements/>.

The arrangements announced in this paper update AFMA's Australian Sea Lion Management Strategy.

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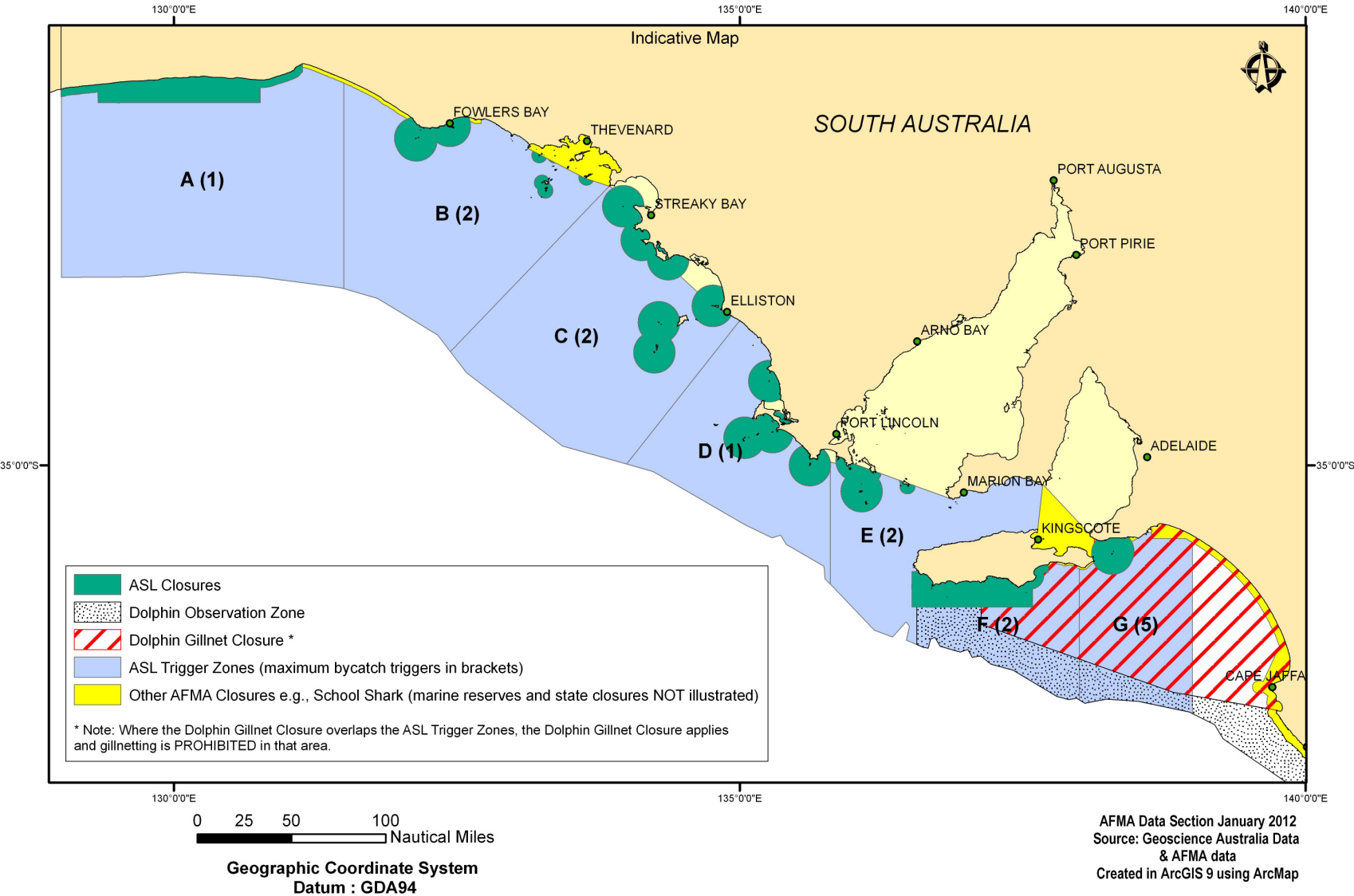
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References

Goldsworthy, S.D., Page, B., Shaughnessy, P.D. and Linnane, A. (2010) Mitigating Seal Interactions in the SRLF and the Gillnet Sector SESSF in South Australia. Final report to FRDC (Project No 2007/041) and DEWHA, SARDI Research Report Series No. 405, Adelaide, SA.

Australian Sea Lion Management Strategy
Revised Maximum Bycatch Triggers and Zones

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*For illustration only- not for navigation purposes