



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC)

FINAL MINUTES

SOUTHMAC 45 (VIDEO CONFERENCE)

5 NOVEMBER 2025

SUB-ANTARCTIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SouthMAC)**CHAIR:** Geoff Richardson**Date:** 5 November 2025**Venue:** Video Conference, 1300-1630.**Attendance**

Name	Position
Members	
Geoff Richardson	Chair
Dr Lyn Goldsworthy	Conservation Member
Rhys Arangio	Industry Member
Dr Philippe Ziegler	Scientific Member
Selina Stoute	AFMA Member
Executive Officer	
Rachel Downes	Executive Officer
Observers	
Elissa Mastroianni	Manager Antarctic Fisheries, AFMA
Brett McCallum	AFMA Commissioner
Wayne Bray	AFMA Compliance Officer

Introduction**Agenda item 1 – Preliminaries****1.1 Welcome and apologies**

1. SouthMAC 45 was opened at 1:03pm AEDT on 5 November 2025 by the Chair, Geoff Richardson. The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which each participant was attending and paid respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.
2. SouthMAC **NOTED** apologies from Sally Carney (AAD member), Megan Kybert (AAD Invited participant) and Malcolm McNeill (industry member).
3. SouthMAC **NOTED** that AFMA Management had discussed agenda items and recommendations with industry member Malcolm McNeill who had confirmed his support for the recommendations.
4. Members **NOTED** that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of developing the meeting minutes.

1.1 Declaration of interests

5. Interests declared at the meeting are documented in Attachment A.
6. The Chair invited all members and observers to declare any potential conflicts of interests with any of the agenda items for the meeting. The Chair noted the industry member would likely have a potential conflict of interest with respect to Agenda Items 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4. In response, the Chair proposed that the industry member be included in the discussions of each of those items but not participate in the formation of any recommendations. This approach was supported by the Industry member and all other members.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

7. The discussion of one AFMA Research Application was added to 'Other Business.' The agenda ([Attachment B](#)) was adopted without amendment.

Agenda item 2 – Actions arising from previous meetings

8. SouthMAC **NOTED** that there were no current action items arising from its previous meetings.

Agenda item 3 – Member updates

3.1 Member update

9. SouthMAC **NOTED** the following verbal updates:

Industry Member

10. The *FV Cape Arkona* undertook the annual Random Stratified Trawl Survey (RSTS) at HIMI at the start of the season. The RSTS, similar to recent years, showed high catches relative to a decade ago, noting many recruits are being seen in the survey.
11. The RSTS was followed by commercial trawling for icefish in March, catching around 500t.
12. There were high catch rates for toothfish in April which is atypical. Winter fishing was not as successful for Austral, noting this was not the case for ALF.
13. Toothfish quota for the season at HIMI was reached last week. Overall, the results for the end of the season were positive with larger average size and higher catch per unit effort (CPUE) than the last few years.
14. There was some sperm whale depredation in April-June this season. Typically, whales are seen at the end of the season but fishing has finished before November when they are usually sighted.
15. The new boat, the *FV Austral Odyssey*, will be ready for next season to fish William's Ridge in SIOFA, followed by plans to longline at HIMI from 1 April.

Scientific Member

16. The *RV Nuyina* has completed a voyage to HIMI to undertake land and sea-based activities and will be heading back in December 2025/January 2026 to undertake further research activities, including seabird counts and water column sampling for biodiversity and fish prevalence in the territorial waters and marine reserve around HIMI.

Conservation Member

17. The conservation member noted the several papers put forward by the Antarctic Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) to CCAMLR this year, many of which would be interest to Australia.
18. The member reported that the IUCN recently passed a high seas fishery resolution to encourage the phase out of destructive bottom trawling. While Australia abstained from the resolution, the

member advised that it was supported by a significant majority and will likely feed into the broader UNGA bottom fishing review next year.

19. The member further advised that IUCN also agreed a resolution to encourage countries belonging to the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) to recognise the intrinsic (including wilderness and aesthetic values) of the Antarctic. The member noted that this recognition is spelt out in the Madrid Protocol and is working with the IUCN to progress their resolution.

3.2 AFMA update

20. SouthMAC **NOTED** the written update provided by AFMA ([Attachment C](#)), in particular:

- a) Seal interaction numbers have returned to low levels, following a higher number of reports in 2021. SARAG 73 noted that this confirms their previous advice (from SARAG 69, August 2023) that interaction levels are variable and generally low with no clear geographic hotspots or seasonal patterns evident.
- b) The HIMI Regulations have been amended to allow the use of new trawl gear after consultation with SARAG and SouthMAC. The amendments are in place for the current season.
- c) The move on rule at HIMI for take of 2t or more of skates or rays was triggered once this season. The vessel and observer notified AFMA, moved the required distance, and there were no further move on rules triggered.
- d) There is a current Australian government priority to identify regulatory reform opportunities and improve productivity growth, provided that fisheries and conservation objectives and performance were not impacted. Although acknowledged as already being part of AFMA's operations and SouthMAC's business, AFMA encouraged the MAC to consider this when making recommendations. SouthMAC noted they had a track record of considering efficiencies in a timely manner, e.g. the out-of-session consideration of SARAG advice leading to the addition of new offal discharge areas in the HIMI fishery earlier this year.

Agenda Item 4 – Total Allowable Catches for the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery

4.1 – Patagonian Toothfish TAC

21. SouthMAC **CONSIDERED** the results of the [updated MITF stock assessment for 2025](#) and the following information and advice:

- a) [SARAG 73](#) advised that no further work is required prior to adopting the assessment and using it as a scientific basis for calculating a recommended TAC.
- b) The 2025 stock spawning biomass (SSB) is estimated to be at 0.66 relative to unfished levels, above the target reference point of B50. As in previous assessments, the SSB is higher in the Northern region (0.83) than the Southern region (0.36).

- c) Rough seafloor conditions and large marine reserve areas mean most of the North area cannot be fished, resulting in fewer tag releases and recaptures and higher uncertainty in the population in the North. In providing its advice SARAG 73 noted that even though there is uncertainty in the biomass estimate in different areas, the assessment provides a reliable basis upon which to base management advice.
 - d) Applying the CCAMLR decision rule to the stock assessment results presented a range of TAC options. In making their TAC recommendation, SARAG 73 noted that with no significant changes to the fishery, their selection criteria should mirror the last TAC setting decision, with a TAC selected based on the average recent South:North catch split (80:20) and assuming 200t taken in the Aurora Trough
 - e) SARAG 73 agreed that previous climate change advice, including data collection methods, still applied and was a sufficiently precautionary approach to allow for adaptive fisheries management. SouthMAC also **NOTED** that the MITF 2025 Climate and Ecosystem Status reports had been provided as an attachment to the paper for this item.
 - f) Considering the above, SARAG 73 recommended a TAC of 404t for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 fishing seasons at MITF.
22. SouthMAC **NOTED** that work is underway to investigate potential alternative harvest control rules through Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) that will address the issues relating to high variability in TACs among assessments and implications of the spatial differences evident in the fishery and **SUPPORTED** this work. This work is due to SARAG in 2026 and is the best practice approach to building climate resilience into fisheries management of the MITF.
23. SouthMAC **NOTED** that industry is interested in pursuing a Randomised Longline Survey (RLS) in MITF, similar to the RSTS in the HIMI Fishery. Industry is keen to understand whether an RLS that covers currently unfished areas in the North (including within marine reserve) would assist in reducing the uncertainty in biomass estimates for the area and fishery.
24. For the purposes of recommending the TAC, the industry member left the meeting.
25. Having considered the 2025 stock assessment, the application of the CCAMLR decision rule, advice from SARAG, and applying the same catch rate scenario across different regions in the fishery as applied previously, the remaining SouthMAC members **RECOMMENDED** a TAC of 404 t for Patagonian toothfish for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 MITF fishing seasons.

4.2 – Bycatch Limits

26. SouthMAC **NOTED** the following:
- a) Bycatch limits of 50t per species have been in place since 2007, and have never been reached. Annual bycatch figures at MITF have been well below the 50t limit since 2007.

- b) [SARAG 73](#) considered an analysis of bycatch trends in the fishery, as per request of [SARAG 69](#). SARAG noted that there are a small number of bycatch species commonly caught in the MITF and that most bycatch is below 500kg. There were no concerning trends identified and the 50t per species limit remained appropriate.
- c) The recent MITF Ecological Risk Assessment found no high-risk species.
- d) SARAG recommended the bycatch analysis be conducted every two years in line with setting the MITF bycatch limits.

27. For the purposes of recommending the bycatch limits, the industry member left the meeting.

28. On the basis that the current 50t per species limit remain precautionary and no concerning bycatch trends have been identified, the remaining SouthMAC members **RECOMMENDED** maintaining the bycatch TAC of 50t per species for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 MITF fishing seasons.

Agenda Item 5

5.1 – HIMI Trawl Capacity Determination 2025

- 29. SouthMAC **NOTED** that a minimum quota holding of 25.5% (thereby limiting participation to three trawlers) has been in place since 2012, with the current [Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery \(Trawl Fishing Capacity\) Determination 2020](#) set to cease on 1 December 2025.
- 30. SouthMAC **NOTED** the draft *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery (Trawl Fishing Capacity) Determination 2025* to be considered by the AFMA Commission at their meeting on 11-12 November 2025. The proposed determination retains the current three trawler limit and, subject to approval, would replace the current trawl capacity determination.
- 31. SouthMAC **SUPPORTED** the proposed *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery (Trawl Fishing Capacity) Determination 2025*.

5.2 – Patagonian Toothfish TAC

32. SouthMAC **NOTED** that:

- a) the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) are conducting a HIMI Management Campaign research voyage in December 2025 to conduct land and marine based assessments, unrelated to commercial fisheries management.
- b) the AAD have advised AFMA that they may take up to 1 t of Patagonian toothfish and 2 t of Mackerel icefish as part of the research.
- c) to ensure compliance with CCAMLR catch limits, it is AFMA Management's intention to recommend to the AFMA Commission that it account for proposed research catch when determining the Patagonian toothfish and mackerel icefish TACs for the HIMI Fishery. That is

to determine the Patagonian toothfish TACs 1 t less than the recommended TAC for that species and the Mackerel Icefish TAC 2 t less than the recommended TAC for that species (Agenda item 5.3).

33. SouthMAC **NOTED** the advice from the industry member and scientific member that whilst the research allowance was minimised, it would be beneficial if there was flexibility to 'transfer' any uncaught research allowance to industry. This would reduce the risk of uncaught catch and more flexible research planning. SouthMAC **NOTED** that such an arrangement was not currently possible under the [Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002](#), but that there could be opportunity to consider amendments to the plan in future.

34. SouthMAC **CONSIDERED**:

- a) that there had been no updated stock assessment for 2025 with considerable effort and resources focused instead on developing an improved stock assessment for 2026. This approach is fully supported by SARAG.
- b) that [CCAMLR 43 \(2024\)](#) agreed a catch limit for Patagonian toothfish for HIMI of 2,120 t for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 seasons (see [CM 41-08 \(2024\)](#)).
- c) that [SARAG 73](#) recommended the TAC be set at the same level agreed by CCAMLR for Patagonian toothfish in the HIMI Fishery. In making this recommendation, SARAG 73 agreed that:
 - i) their previous climate change advice still applied this year;
 - ii) their conclusions on the negative bias likely present in the stock assessment drawn in 2024 still hold. If anything, the progress and results of additional work strengthens the RAG's position on the model-based (rather than biological) issues with the stock assessment and supports applying the same approach this year.

35. SouthMAC **SUPPORTED** the progress of the updated HIMI Patagonian toothfish stock assessment through the HIMI Technical Working Group and noted that this work has been well received at WG-FSA-2025.

36. For the purposes of recommending the TAC, the industry member left the meeting.

37. The remaining SouthMAC members **RECOMMENDED** a TAC of 2,120 t for Patagonian toothfish for the 2025/26 HIMI fishing year, noting that if this recommendation is accepted, the AFMA Commission will set a commercial TAC at 2,119t for Patagonian toothfish for HIMI for the 2025/26 fishing year.

5.3 – Mackerel Icefish TAC

38. SouthMAC **NOTED** the HIMI Management Campaign research voyage as discussed under agenda item 5.2. SouthMAC **NOTED** that as part the research voyage, AAD plan to take up to 2t of mackerel icefish in the 2025/26 fishing year.

39. SouthMAC **CONSIDERED** the results of the [updated mackerel icefish stock assessment 2025](#) and the following information and advice:

- a) [SARAG 73](#) recommended setting a mackerel icefish TAC of 1,429 t for 2025/26 and 1,126 t for 2026/27 fishing years for the HIMI Fishery based on the application of the CCAMLR decision rule for mackerel icefish using the results of the updated stock assessment.
- b) CCAMLR-44 agreed to a TAC of 1,429 t for Division 58.5.2 (i.e. HIMI) for the 2025/26 season; and
- c) in recommending a TAC for Mackerel icefish in the HIMI Fishery, SARAG 73 considered evidence available in the stock assessment (Appendix C of the stock assessment report) and agreed there was no evidence for changes in population parameters or processes that could be due to the effects of environmental variability or climate change detected in the mackerel icefish fishery. SouthMAC also **NOTED** that the HIMI 2025 Climate and Ecosystem Status reports had been provided as an attachment to the paper for this item.

40. For the purposes of recommending the TAC, the industry member left the meeting.

41. The remaining SouthMAC members **RECOMMENDED** a TAC of 1,429 t for mackerel icefish for the 2025/25 HIMI fishing year, noting the AFMA Commission will set a commercial TAC of 1,427 t of mackerel icefish for the 2025/26 HIMI fishing year.

5.4 – Bycatch Limits

42. SouthMAC **CONSIDERED** the following information and advice:

- a) the results of the 2025 RSTS showed that biomass estimates for most of the by-catch species subject to a TAC were similar to the survey averages in recent years. The slightly lower biomass of grey rock cod was likely due a lack of sampling in their preferred areas, noting the patchy distribution of this species.
- b) [SARAG 73](#) recommended to maintain the current bycatch limits for 2025/26 as shown in **Table 1**.
- c) CCAMLR 44 agreed to retain the current bycatch limits for 2025/26.
- d) stock assessments for skates, grey rockcod, unicorn icefish and both macrourid groups are scheduled for 2027. The timing of these will be confirmed by AAD at SARAG in August 2026.

Table 1 Current HIMI Fishery bycatch limits (2024/25 fishing years) and recommended bycatch limits for 2025/26 fishing year

Species	TAC (tonnes)
Caml grenadier (<i>Macrourus caml</i>) and Whitson's grenadier (<i>M. whitsoni</i>)	409
Bigeye grenadier (<i>M. halotrachys</i>) and Ridge tailed rattail (<i>M. carinatus</i>)	360

Unicorn icefish (<i>Channichthys rhinoceratus</i>)	1,663
Grey rockcod (<i>Lepidonotothen squamifrons</i>)	80
Skates and rays (<i>Bathyraja</i> spp.)	120
All other species (each)	50

- e) The conservation member noted caution on the delays in updating bycatch assessments, especially noting potential climate change and ecosystem effects. The science member confirmed that although bycatch assessments have been delayed due to other priorities AAD have received FRDC funding for this work, they are scheduled, and they will be undertaken.
43. SouthMAC **DISCUSSED** skate tags and recaptures, noting that tag colour and a greater focus on toothfish tags could account for some of the low recapture rates of skates. SouthMAC **NOTED** that after implementing a monetary incentive for finding recaptured skate tags Austral have seen an increase in reporting of skate recaptures the past season.
44. For the purposes of recommending the bycatch species limits, the industry member left the meeting.
45. On the basis that there have been no concerning bycatch trends, the remaining SouthMAC members **RECOMMENDED** maintaining the current bycatch limits for the 2025/26 HIMI Fishery fishing year (as listed in in **Table 1**).

Agenda Item 6 – Summary of CCAMLR 44 meeting outcomes and revised Conservation Measures

6.1– Summary of CCAMLR 43 meeting outcomes and revised Conservation Measures

46. SouthMAC **NOTED** the update from various SouthMAC members on the outcomes of CCAMLR 44.
47. Members noted industry's gratitude to the Australian delegation at CCAMLR-44.

Agenda item 7 – Ecological Risk Management Strategy – MITF and HIMIF

48. SouthMAC **NOTED**:

- that Fisheries Management Paper 14 ([FMP 14](#)), sets out AFMA's approach for both undertaking ERAs and administering Ecological Risk Management (ERM) responses in pursuit of its fishery management objectives, particularly Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- that in line with FMP 14, AFMA Management has drafted a Sub-Antarctic Bycatch Strategy 2025 (the Bycatch Strategy) to replace the currently outdated Sub-Antarctic Bycatch and Discarding Workplan 2013.
- that the [HIMI ERA was finalised in 2018](#) and the 2025 MITF ERA is currently being finalised. There were no species identified as high risk in either ERA.

49. SouthMAC **CONSIDERED** the draft Bycatch Strategy, in particular Section 6 'Bycatch workplan action items' and **ENDORSED** the draft noting some members may provide some technical comments out of session.

Agenda item 8 – Other Business

AFMA application for research funding

50. SouthMAC **NOTED** the AFMA Research Application 'Stock assessment and MSE of the Macquarie Island toothfish fishery: 2027-2031'. SouthMAC **ADVISED** that they supported the application, noting it is important research, critical for the fishery and good value for money. As a co-investigator on the proposed research project, the scientific member did not comment on the proposal.

Biennial RSTS

51. The industry member noted that consistent with previous SARAG discussions, industry remains interested in moving towards a biennial RSTS, once the HIMI Patagonian toothfish stock assessment is finalised. Further industry also remains interested in exploring alternate funding opportunities for the RSTS through the AFMA Research Committee (ARC).

Changes to offal dumping areas in the HIMI Fishery

52. The industry member thanked SouthMAC for considering the three new additional offal dumping areas out of session. The member reported that the areas were utilized this season, which saved fuel, time, carbon emissions and overall provided a productivity gain.

Agenda item 9 - Next meeting

53. SouthMAC **NOTED** that the next meeting would be held Thursday 5 November 2026, with the exact time to be agreed out-of-session.
54. The Chair thanked all SouthMAC members and closed the meeting at 3:03pm.

Attachment A

Members, invited participants and observer's declarations of interests recorded at SouthMAC 45, 5 November 2025.

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Geoff Richardson	Chair	Mr Richardson is the Chair of the Northern Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC). Mr Richardson has no interests pecuniary or otherwise.
Dr Philippe Ziegler	Scientific member	Dr Ziegler is employed by AAD and is the Fishery scientist responsible for Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery (HIMIF) work, including the HIMI stock assessments. Dr Ziegler has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic and his salary is not connected to any research grants noting that he is a principle and co-investigator on current FRDC projects. Dr Ziegler is also a scientific member of SARAG, and the Scientific Representative for Australia to CCAMLR.
Malcolm McNeill	Industry member	Mr McNeill is the Managing Director of Australian Longline Fishing Pty Ltd (ALFPL) which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in, the sub-Antarctic fisheries and New and Exploratory fisheries under the jurisdiction of Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Mr McNeill is a member of the Ross Sea Industry Client Group. Mr McNeill remains a Board member of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators (COLTO). Mr McNeill was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA.
Rhys Arangio	Industry member	Mr Arangio is employed by Austral Fisheries P/L (Austral Fisheries) as the General Manager of Science and Policy. Austral Fisheries owns Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) in the Australian sub-Antarctic fisheries, which include waters under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR. Mr Arangio is the Executive Officer of COLTO, as well as being a member of SARAG. He was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company, nor of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA and has an interest in all agenda items.

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Dr Lyn Goldsworthy	Conservation member	Dr Goldsworthy is a research associate at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, and a Member of the Centre for Marine SocioEcology. Dr Goldsworthy also conducts contract work for the Deep-Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC). Dr Goldsworthy has no pecuniary interest in sub-Antarctic fisheries.
Selina Stoute	AFMA member	AFMA employee, no interests pecuniary or otherwise.
Rachel Downes	Executive officer	AFMA employee, no interests pecuniary or otherwise.
Elissa Mastroianni	AFMA observer	AFMA employee, no interests pecuniary or otherwise.
Brett McCallum	Observer	AFMA Commissioner.
Wayne Bray	Observer	AFMA employee, no interests pecuniary or otherwise.



Sub-Antarctic Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC) Meeting 45 2025

Wednesday 5 November

Draft Agenda

Time (AEDT): 13:00 – 16:30 AEDT

Location: Teleconference [Microsoft Teams link](#)

Geoff Richardson

Approx time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
13:00 (30 mins)	1. Preliminaries		
	1. Welcome and apologies	For action	Chair
	2. Declaration of interests	For action	Chair
	3. Adoption of agenda	For action	Chair
	2. Actions Arising	For noting	Executive Officer
	3. Member Updates	For noting	All Members
13:30 (30 mins)	4. Total Allowable Catches for the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery		
	4.1 Patagonian Toothfish TAC	For advice	AFMA Member
	4.2 Bycatch limits	For advice	AFMA Member
14:00 (30 mins)	5. Total Allowable Catches and fishing capacity for the Heard Island & McDonald Islands Fishery		
	5.1 HIMI Trawl Capacity Determination 2025	For advice	AFMA Member
	5.2 Patagonian Toothfish TAC	For advice	AFMA Member
	5.3 Mackerel Icefish TAC	For advice	AFMA Member
	5.4 Bycatch limits	For advice	AFMA Member
14:30 (15 mins)	Break		
14:45 (45 mins)	6. Summary of CCAMLR 44 meeting outcomes and revised Conservation Measures*		
	6.1 Summary of CCAMLR 44 meeting outcomes and revised Conservation Measures, including an update on Exploratory fishery notifications and research plans	For noting	AAD Member*
15:30 (45 mins)	7. Ecological Risk Management Strategy – MITF and HIMIF	For advice	AFMA Member
16:15 (15 mins)	8. Other Business	For discussion	Chair
	9. Next Meeting	For decision	Chair
Close of Meeting			

*verbal update



SouthMAC Meeting 45 2025

5 November

Agenda item 3 Member Updates

Purpose: FOR NOTING

Recommendation

That SouthMAC:

1. **NOTE** verbal updates from Industry, Conservation and Scientific Members; and
2. **NOTE** the written update from AFMA in this paper, including the summary of gear loss and wildlife interactions for the last season at **Attachment A**.

AFMA update

Climate Risk Framework

3. The Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery (MITF) was a part of AFMA's Climate Risk Framework (CRF) trial, which has now concluded. SARAG considered the draft trial report for the MITF at their last meeting and supported the CRF as a framework. Patagonian toothfish was assessed as "very low" risk in the trial report (the full report is available at **Attachment 4D**).
4. The final CRF was approved by the AFMA Commission at its meeting on 17 September 2025. The CRF provides a risk-based, systematic, and transparent method for assessing climate impacts on Commonwealth-managed stocks and identifying adaptation options.
5. The framework, along with a CRF Trial Report detailing its development over nearly three years, will soon be available on the AFMA website. While AFMA plans to begin assessments for selected species in late 2025, a comprehensive implementation plan will be presented at the November Commission meeting, with full implementation expected to commence in early 2026.

Gear loss and wildlife interactions

6. Gear loss in the HIMIF and New and Exploratory Fishery were similar to the previous season, while gear loss in the MITF was substantially lower (Attachment A).
7. SouthMAC will recall that following higher (n=8) seal interactions in the 2020/21 season SouthMAC 40 (May 2022) requested Southern Elephant Seal interactions for 2021/22 be analysed to explore potential interaction clustering.
8. SARAG 69 (August 2023) considered mapping and preliminary analysis conducted by AAD on seal interactions. The RAG noted that trends in elephant seal interactions have fluctuated in the past with no clear patterns of hotspots identified in the location of reported interactions. SouthMAC 42 (November 2023) noted an update from the Scientific Member on this work and noted that any updates on work on elephant seal population characteristics could be included in the standing agenda item on TEP interactions going forward.
9. Recalling their previous (SARAG 69) consideration on seal interactions, SARAG 73 (August 2025) noted that interaction numbers with seals have returned to low levels this last season. This confirms previous RAG advice that interaction levels are variable and generally low,

with no clear geographic hotspots or seasonal patterns evident at present.

Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Electronic Monitoring trial

10. The Southern Ocean Fisheries Electronic Monitoring is running as planned, with the trial scheduled to end in July 2026.
11. A Southern Ocean Fisheries (SOF) Business Reference Group (SOFBRG) which was established by AFMA to provide advice and guidance to the project has met twice since SouthMAC 44 (November 2024), in December 2024 and September 2025
12. CSIRO has progressed well with the development of artificial intelligence and machine learning models for catch monitoring using footage capture during the trial, which is communicated to Stakeholders monthly.
13. AFMA is continuing to promote Electronic Monitoring coverage in the Sub-Antarctic Fisheries by supporting the installation of an Electronic Monitoring system on the Austral Odyssey. The AFMA EM team thanks Industry and CSIRO for the continued support in this trial and are looking forward to sharing the results of the trial upon its completion next year.
14. Subject to the outcome of the trial, AFMA's intention is to consider deployment of EM on Southern Oceans vessels on an ongoing basis. To this end, we have requested a strategy be developed to progress CCAMLR recognition of EM.

Longline fishing season extension trial MITF

15. SouthMAC will recall that at its meeting on 9-10 July 2024, the AFMA Commission approved a trial of a longline fishing season extension from 1 September to no later than 21 September in the MITF subject to specific arrangements. Fishing is yet to occur under the current trial since its approval in 2024. AFMA management will advise when fishing does occur, and report on relevant data collected.

CCAMLR Exploratory Fishing Applications

16. Consistent with previous years, one Australian proposal was received for CCAMLR New and Exploratory fisheries. Notification of this proposal was considered at CCAMLR-44. Fishing in the CCAMLR New and Exploratory Fishery will commence on 1 December 2025 for the 2025-26 season.

Amendment of gear specifications in the *Fisheries Management (Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery) Regulations 2002*.

17. SouthMAC will recall that at its meeting in November 2024 (SouthMAC 44), SouthMAC, noting the advice from SARAG 71 supported the use of the new trawl gear on an ongoing basis. Specifically, to allow the use of the following ground gear:
 - a. bobbins that are 400 mm in diameter to be used. Regulation prohibited the use of bobbins that are less than 520 mm in diameter; and
 - b. rock hopper rubber discs that are 200 mm in diameter. Regulation prohibited the use of rock hopper rubber discs that are less than 400 mm in diameter.
18. Both SARAG and SouthMAC recommended that AFMA progress the implementation of the new trawl gear. To align with other Commonwealth fisheries and enable more flexible and timely responses to changes in the fishery (including obligations under CCAMLR) AFMA Management proposed transitioning gear requirements from the Fisheries Management

(Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery) Regulations 2002 to the HIMI SFR Conditions.

19. AFMA amended the HIMI SFR Conditions on 12 September 2025 to include the modifications at point 17 to permitted gear specifications for targeting mackerel icefish (*Champsocephalus gunnari*).
20. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) prepared and submitted the HIMI Management Amendment Regulations 2025, repealing Part 4 and Schedule 1 where gear requirements were previously specified, for ministerial approval at the Federal Executive Council. These were registered on 15 September 2025.

Export approval under the EPBC Act

21. On 26 June 2025 AFMA Management submitted an application to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) for the assessment of the CCAMLR New and Exploratory Fisheries under the EPBC Act. The application is used by DCCEEW to assess the management arrangements for Australia's participation in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) New and Exploratory Fisheries against the Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition and the requirements set out in relevant sections of the EPBC Act.
22. The CCAMLR New and Exploratory Fisheries was declared an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under the EPBC Act on 24 December 2015 and has been re-approved two times. The current WTO accreditation expires on 27 November 2025.
23. DCCEEW released AFMA application for public comment between 7 July and 6 August 2025 (refer to DCCEEW's website: [Australian export from New and Exploratory Fisheries in the CCAMLR Statistical Divisions 58.4.1 and 58.4.2 - DCCEEW](#)). One comment, in support of the application, was received during this process, and DCCEEW will advise on next steps and where necessary seek further information from AFMA prior to finalising their assessment.
24. AFMA is in the process of drafting the HIMI assessment which is due to DCCEEW on 9 January 2026. This will be followed by the MITF assessment which is due on 9 April 2026.

Move-on Rule at HIMIF

25. The move-on rule as per the as per the HIMI conditions 2024-25 (condition 24) for the take of 2 tonnes of more of skates and rays per haul has been triggered once this season, on 7 September 2025. The vessel and observer on board notified AFMA of the trigger and moved away from the haul location at least 5 nautical miles to which the area was not fished for five days.

Live release of small toothfish

26. SouthMAC will recall that SARAG 71 recommended that the AAD and CSIRO undertake an analysis of historical data for HIMIF and MITF, respectively, of small fish under 1kg to better understand the proportion of catch that they make up. This analysis will also inform the changes required to current sampling protocols as well as any other relevant onboard processes to ensure data on small fish continues to be captured and survival of released fish is maintained. SouthMAC will be consulted on this matter following SARAG's advice on any changes to sampling protocols having considered the results of the recommended analysis.
27. At SARAG 73, SARAG agreed to postpone the work on live release of small toothfish until the HIMI Technical Working Group (TWG) have completed their workplan and a new

Patagonian toothfish stock assessment for 2026 has been finalised.

28. Once the Patagonian toothfish stock assessment has been finalised, it is AFMA's intention, subject to resourcing, is to continue to progress this matter subject to SARAG and SouthMAC advice.

Australian Government priority to improve productivity growth

29. As requested by the Australian Government Treasurer and Minister for Finance (**Attachment B**), AFMA has provided advice to the Government on regulatory reform opportunities within fisheries that may contribute to improving Australia's productivity growth (**Attachment C**). The Government made clear that any suggested opportunities "should be concrete and tangible, have an identifiable implementation pathway, be able to be delivered within existing resources, and not compromise core regulatory objectives and protections". In preparing its advice AFMA consulted the Commonwealth Fisheries Association.
30. In addition to the initiatives AFMA has identified, the Government's prioritisation of improving productivity presents a broader opportunity for AFMA by reinforcing AFMA's desired approach to be innovative and responsive in the way it conducts its business. Without comprising AFMA's regulatory obligations, AFMA expects its MACs and RAGs to also consider opportunities to support productivity improvements when developing management advice.

Ministerial Statement of Expectations

31. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has issued AFMA her expectations of AFMA in managing Commonwealth fisheries (**Attachment D**). Ministerial Statements of Expectations (SOE) are issued by the responsible minister to a regulator to provide greater clarity about government policies and objectives relevant to the regulator in line with its statutory objectives, and the priorities the minister expects it to observe in conducting its operations. Statements of Expectations are updated with every change in Minister.
32. The Minister's expectation reinforces the important of AFMA existing priorities and align with the Government's productivity agenda. In due course AFMA will reply to the Minister with its Statement of Intent (SOI). A SOI outlines how the regulator intends to meet the SOE including how it will demonstrate progress.

Attachments

Attachment A – Gear loss and wildlife interactions for previous season

Attachment B – Letter from the Treasurer and Minister for Finance on regulatory reform opportunities

Attachment C – AFMA response regarding regulatory reform opportunities within fisheries

Attachment D – Fisheries Minister's Statement of Expectations for AFMA