



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Management Advisory Committee (ScallopMAC) Meeting 41

Meeting minutes

29 April 2026

10:00–12:00 hr

Online



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Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Management Advisory Committee (ScallopMAC)

Meeting 41 – 29 April 2026

Agenda

Time (AEDT): 10:00–12:00 hr

Location: Online

Interim Chair: Clayton Nelson

Approx. time	Agenda item	Purpose	Presenter
10:00 (15 min)	1. Preliminaries		
	1.1 Welcome and apologies	For action	Chair
	1.2 Declaration of interests	For action	Chair
	1.3 Adoption of agenda	For action	Chair
	1.4 Minutes from previous meeting	For noting	Chair
	1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings	For noting	AFMA
10:15 (15 min)	2. Management update	For noting	AFMA
10:30 (30 min)	3. Climate and Ecosystem Update	For advice	AFMA/CSIRO
11:00 (30 min)	4. 2026 season recommendations	For advice	AFMA
	TACs for Commercial and Doughboy Scallops		
	Season opening and closing dates		
	Spatial closures		
11:30 (15 min)	Break		
11:45 (15 min)	5. Logbook determination 2026	For noting	AFMA
12:00	Close of meeting		

The Interim Chair opened the meeting at 10:00.

Agenda Item 1. Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair, Clayton Nelson, welcomed members, participants and observers to the meeting.
2. Apologies were noted from Daryl McPhee, Sylvia Zukowski and Andrew Watts, with John Hammond also absent.
3. The Scallop Management Advisory Committee (the MAC) members noted the Acknowledgement of Country, that the meeting was being recorded and commenced proceedings.

1.2 Declaration of Interest

4. Members were invited to update or clarify declared interests.
5. Updates noted:
 - **Stuart Richey** advised he is no longer Chair of CFA but remains a Board member.
 - **Steven Mantzaris** clarified he is a processor only and does not hold Commonwealth or State fishing concessions.
6. The Chair outlined the conflict-of-interest process, noting that members with conflicts may participate in discussion but must leave the meeting for decision-making on relevant agenda items.

7. Membership

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Clayton Nelson	Chair	No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Brendan Kelaher	Scientific Member	ScallopRAG Chair. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Andrew Watts	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions
Stuart Richey	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State fishing concessions, Commonwealth fish receiver permit and State processing licences
John Hammond	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
John Cull	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions
Steven Mantzaris	Industry member	Fish receiver
Caleb Gardner	Economic member	Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Organisation is known to submit research funding applications for consideration by ScallopMAC

Dr Mark Grubert	AFMA member	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Yvette Lamont	Executive Officer	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Bob Lister	Invited participant, Industry	Executive Officer, Scallop Fishermen’s Association of Tasmania. Represents all Bass strait central zone fishers and processors. No financial interest in the fishery.
Brad Milic	Observer, Atlantis Fisheries Consulting Group	Employed by Atlantis Fisheries Consulting Group, representing industry clients. Also employed by Australian Longline Fishing which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in Antarctic and sub-Antarctic fisheries and New and Exploratory fisheries under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR.
Natalie Couchman	Presenter	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Steph Brodie	Presenter	CSIRO employee, no interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Sally Weekes	Observer, AFMA Management	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

8. The MAC adopted the agenda as final.
9. It was noted that Brad Milic joined the meeting at this point

1.4 Minutes of previous meeting

10. That ScallopMAC noted that the minutes of the ScallopMAC 40 meeting on 20 June 2025 have been finalised and are available on the [AFMA website](#).

1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings

11. The executive officer summarised the outstanding actions from Meeting 40. Members sought clarification on the status, scope and intent of the proposed research into the 11-arm sea star (*Asterias amurensis*) outbreaks, noting that industry had not yet been consulted on the content of the research scope.
12. Industry members emphasised that:
 - The impacts of 11-arm sea stars on scallops were already well understood from an operational perspective, particularly predation pressure and loss of settlement.
 - The priority for industry was management response and mitigation, not further confirmation of known impacts.

- There may be merit in framing research to include wider ecological impacts (e.g. impacts on *Angasi* oysters), which could strengthen the case for broader management or intervention options.

13. AFMA advised the research was still at scoping stage, had not yet been approved for funding, and would be circulated to members before progressing further. Members acknowledged the value of documenting ecological, economic and fishery impacts to ensure decision-makers are better informed should similar outbreaks occur again.

Agenda Item 2 – Management update

14. AFMA outlined recent internal staffing changes and confirmed continuity of work programs despite reduced fishery activity. Members discussed whether the current level of management effort and cost recovery remained appropriate given:

- Prolonged low or zero scallop availability.
- No planned biomass survey for 2026.
- Minimal fishing activity in both scallop and squid sectors.

15. AFMA responded that while large variable costs (such as surveys) would not be incurred, baseline governance costs remain unavoidable, including:

- Harvest strategy review obligations.
- Commission and WTO accreditation requirements.
- Statutory consultation through RAG and MAC processes.

16. Members questioned the cost-effectiveness of holding in-person meetings under current fishery conditions. There was broad agreement that online meetings should be the default unless strong justification exists for face-to-face engagement.

17. Industry also sought clarification on the withdrawal of MSC certification, with industry representatives explaining that:

- The cost of maintaining and renewing certification was no longer commercially viable.
- There was no price premium for MSC-certified scallops under current market conditions.
- Withdrawal was a purely economic decision, not linked to sustainability concerns.

Action 1: AFMA to provide MAC and RAG members with options for **online meetings** for August 2026 to reduce costs and advise members as early as possible.

Agenda Item 3 – Climate Change and Ecosystem Update

18. CSIRO and AFMA provided a presentation on recent climate trends and forecasts. Members discussed several key themes:

Temperature trends

19. Members noted:

- The **warm winter of 2025**, followed by cooler summer conditions, aligned with observations from industry and other primary producers (including agriculture).

- There was strong interest in **bottom temperature data**, as scallops are benthic and surface temperatures alone may not adequately explain biological responses.
- CSIRO confirmed bottom temperature anomaly modelling was included and is increasingly being emphasised in assessments.

Climate drivers and forecasts

20. The forecast development of a potentially strong El Niño event prompted discussion about historical parallels with the 2015–16 period. Members recalled that:
- The 2015–16 El Niño coincided with the beginning of a significant scallop recovery after several poor years.
 - There were no scallops observed in parts of Bass Strait prior to that recovery.
21. While members acknowledged that climatic drivers do not operate uniformly or predictably, there was cautious optimism that upcoming conditions may support future recruitment, provided other pressures (such as predation) are addressed.

Ecosystem indicators and productivity

22. CSIRO noted reduced chlorophyll-a levels during spring 2025, suggesting lower ecosystem productivity. Members discussed whether this may have contributed to:
- Poor scallop condition.
 - Increased vulnerability to predators such as sea stars.
23. Industry observations of delayed seasonal cycles (e.g. spawning, growth, agricultural phenology) were recorded as valuable contextual information for future reports.

Agenda Item 4 –2026 Season Recommendations

24. The AFMA member introduced the Agenda Item and asked the MAC to discuss the 2026 season recommendations and provide advice to the AFMA Commission on TACs, closures and season dates for the BSCZSF 2026 fishing season.

Total allowable catches

25. AFMA explained that, under the Harvest Strategy, the absence of a 2026 biomass survey triggered the application of default TACs. Members agreed that:
- The default settings were precautionary.
 - The commercial TAC of 150 tonnes would enable prospecting and information gathering, rather than full-scale fishing.
 - Any downward revision would provide little additional conservation benefit and could unnecessarily constrain knowledge acquisition.
26. Members also clarified that the agenda item was necessary to ensure MAC actively considered, rather than automatically accepted, the harvest strategy defaults.

Spatial closures

27. Members discussed whether historic closure areas should carry over automatically. The consensus view was:

- With very low expected effort, closures were unlikely to provide additional protection.
- Maintaining open access would maximise information on scallop presence, mortality and predation.
- Industry was unlikely to target historically closed areas regardless of regulatory settings.

Season dates

28. Members discussed alignment with state fisheries and practical considerations for vessels transiting Bass Strait. The agreed approach balanced:

- Regulatory certainty through a defined opening date.
- Biological protection through retention of the 31 December closing date to protect newly settled scallops.

29. Discussion also covered whether vessels travelling to Tasmania could engage in limited Commonwealth fishing before the season formally opened. AFMA clarified that:

- Fishing outside the season would require a scientific permit, supported by a defensible research purpose.
- AFMA could advise further if industry wished to pursue that option.

Recommendation 1: The Commercial Scallop TAC be set at 150 t and the Doughboy Scallop set at 100 t.

Recommendation 2: No spatial closures be implemented for the 2026 season.

Recommendation 3: The fishing season open on 1 June 2026 and close on 31 December 2026

Agenda Item 5 – Logbook Determination

30. AFMA outlined planned changes to mandatory data reporting, including:

- Full implementation of electronic logbooks.
- Introduction of electronic catch disposal records to support real time monitoring, particularly for exploratory zones under the revised harvest strategy.

31. Members sought clarity on timing, noting references to both “mid 2026” and “by the end of 2026”. AFMA advised that:

- While systems are already available, final implementation depends on formal determination approval.
- A transition period may be required, particularly for ECDRs.

32. Members emphasised the importance of clear and early communication to avoid compliance risks.

Action 2: AFMA to provide members with clarification on timing and implementation arrangements for the new logbook determination once confirmed

Agenda Item 10 – Other business

33. Members revisited the need for clarity around 11-arm sea star management, including:
- Whether sea stars could be legally landed, disposed of or trialled for commercial use (e.g. fertiliser).
 - Inconsistencies between Commonwealth, state and environmental agency positions.
 - The risk that poorly designed removal activities could worsen impacts (e.g. fragmentation or spawning responses).
34. Members agreed that research and management responses should be carefully designed to avoid unintended outcomes.
35. Fuel availability and costs were raised as a significant operational constraint, reinforcing earlier comments about minimising unnecessary activity and travel

Action 3: AFMA to circulate the scope of proposed research on 11-arm sea star impacts to MAC members once available.

Close of meeting

36. The Interim Chair thanked members and participants for their contributions
37. The meeting was closed at 11:23 am.

Attachment A - Register of interest

Table 1 declared interests

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Clayton Nelson	Interim Chair	No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Brendan Kelaher	Scientific Member	ScallopRAG Chair. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Andrew Watts	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions
Stuart Richey	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State fishing concessions, Commonwealth fish receiver permit and State processing licences. Board member of CFA.
John Hammond	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
John Cull	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions
Steven Mantzaris	Industry member	Processor of catch from commonwealth fisheries.
Caleb Gardner	Economic member	Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Organisation is known to submit research funding applications for consideration by ScallopMAC
Dr Mark Grubert	AFMA member	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Yvette Lamont	Executive Officer	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Bob Lister	Invited participant, Industry	Executive Officer, Scallop Fishermen's Association of Tasmania. Represents all Bass strait central zone fishers and processors. No financial interest in the fishery.
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Natalie Couchman	AFMA	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Steph Brodie	CSIRO	CSIRO employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Sally Weekes	Observer, AFMA Management	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.

Attachment C – Action items and recommendations

Table 3. Actions from meeting 41

Agenda Item	No.	Action	Entity Responsible	Timeframe
2	1	AFMA to provide MAC and RAG members with options for online meetings for August 2026 to reduce costs and advise members as early as possible.	AFMA	ASAP
5	2	AFMA to provide members with clarification on timing and implementation arrangements for the new logbook determination once confirmed	AFMA	Upon formal determination approval.
10	3	AFMA to circulate the scope of proposed research on 11-arm sea star impacts to MAC members once available.	AFMA	Upon completion of draft scope circulate to members for comment.

Table 4. Recommendations from meeting 41

Agenda Item	No.	Recommendation	Entity Responsible	Timeframe
4	1	The Commercial Scallop TAC be set at 150 t and the Doughboy Scallop set at 100 t.	AFMA	Provide advice to AFMA commission.
4	2	No spatial closures be implemented for the 2026 season.	AFMA	Provide advice to AFMA commission
4	3	The fishing season open on 1 June 2026 and close on 31 December 2026	AFMA	Provide advice to AFMA commission