14TH MEETING OF THE SPRFMO COMMISSION

Panama City, Panama, 2 to 6 March 2026

COMM 14 – Prop 11

PROPOSAL TO:

☒ Amend ☐ Create	CMM 09-2017 - Conservation and Management Measure for minimising bycatch of seabirds in the SPRFMO Convention Area
Submitted by: New Zealand, ACAP	

Summary of the proposal:

This proposal updates CMM-09 to reflect the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) Best Practice Advice on seabird bycatch mitigation. Key changes include:

- Clarification of offal management requirements, including the removal of hooks from biological waste before discharge, and encouragement of light management practices to reduce seabird interactions.
- Strengthened mitigation requirements for demersal longline vessels, including mandatory simultaneous use of line weighting, bird scaring lines, and night setting, unless very low seabird mortality is demonstrated.
- Revised provisions for vessels demonstrating low seabird mortality, subject to specific mitigation and monitoring conditions, including minimum observer coverage and allowance for daytime setting in high-latitude summer operations.
- Enhanced specifications for trawl mitigation measures, including the addition of net binding, updated bird scaring line requirements, and clearer guidance on managing net monitoring cables.
- Minor structural, technical and editorial improvements to improve clarity and assist compliance.

Background:

A review of the seabird bycatch mitigation measures in CMM 09-2017 was included in the Scientific Committee's 2023 workplan as adopted by the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the SPRFMO Commission (COMM11) (COMM11-WP17_rev1). Accordingly, the Executive Secretary of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) presented a review of relevant SPRFMO CMMs against ACAP Best Practice Advice to SPRFMO SC11 (SC11-Obs04), and a workshop to prioritise and draft amendments to CMM-09 presented in SC11-Obs04 was included in the Scientific Committee 2024 Workplan as adopted by the Commission (CMM12-Doc6_rev1). At the 12th Annual Commission Meeting (COMM12), New Zealand advised that it would work with Peru and ACAP to run an informal intersessional process and discussion at the Scientific Committee with the aim to update the CMMs and have this adopted by the Commission.
Proposed changes to CMM-09-2017 were presented at the Thirteenth Meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC13). The substantive changes captured in this proposal were discussed and endorsed by SC13 as outlined in paragraph 188 and Annex 23 of the SC report.

Objective of the proposal:

The purpose of this proposal is to strengthen the alignment of CMM-09 with ACAP Best Practice Advice for seabird bycatch mitigation.

Has the proposal financial impacts or influence on the Secretariat work?	☐ Yes ☒ No

To be filled out by the Secretariat:

Ref: COMM14-Prop11	Received on: 11 January 2026

CMM 09-2026

Conservation and Management Measure for minimising bycatch of seabirds in the SPRFMO Convention Area

(Supersedes CMM 09-2017)

The Commission of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation;

CONCERNED that some species of albatrosses and petrels are threatened with global extinction;

RECOGNISING the need to strengthen mechanisms to protect seabirds in the Pacific Ocean;

NOTING the overlap in the distribution of albatrosses and petrels with fishing effort in the Convention Area as shown in SWG-11-INF-02 (rev 1) and SWG-11-INF-02a;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that Article 3 (1) of the Convention requires, in giving effect to its objective, that the conservation and management of fishery resources shall take into account best international practices, that fishing shall take into account the impacts on non-target and associated or dependent species, and shall apply the Precautionary Approach;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds);

FURTHER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries concerning best practices to reduce incidental catch of seabirds in capture fisheries;

NOTING the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) has established best practice seabird bycatch mitigation measures for trawl and demersal longline fisheries;

NOTING that best practice seabird mitigation is supported by ongoing research and improvements;

FURTHER NOTING that the Scientific Committee endorsed the ACAP best practice guidance;

ADOPTS in accordance with Article 8 and 20 of the Convention, the following Conservation and Management Measure (CMM):

General Provisions

1. Members and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CNCPs) shall require vessels flying their flag and using demersal longlines, to implement seabird mitigation measures, as described in Annex 1.
2. Subject to paragraph 3, Members and CNCPs shall require vessels flying their flag and using trawl gear to implement seabird mitigation measures, as described in Annex 2.
3. Vessels using trawl gear that discharge no biological material shall be exempt from applying the seabird mitigation measures described in Annex 2. This provision shall be subject to periodic review or review when new information is available.
4. Use of mitigation measures detailed in this CMM are subject to safety considerations for vessels and crew in accordance with international law.
5. Members and CNCPs shall implement this CMM by 31 July 2015 unless decided otherwise by the Commission based on the results of the Scientific Committee's consideration of the issue at its 2014 meeting.
6. Members and CNCPs are encouraged to adopt measures that require vessels flying their flag to follow the latest ACAP seabird handling advice, as relevant to the fishing method, to ensure that seabirds captured or entangled alive during any fishing operations in the Convention Area are released alive and in as good condition as possible. Research into the survival of released seabirds is encouraged.

7. Members and CNCPs shall record data, in accordance with CMM 02-2025 (Data Standards) and through existing observer programmes and other approved means such as electronic monitoring, on all interactions with seabirds. In addition, Members and CNCPs are encouraged to record data on seabird observations.

8. Members and CNCPs shall report the information collected in paragraph 7 above annually to the Secretariat in accordance with both subparagraph 1(d) and its associated Annexes, and subparagraph 2(c) and Annex 7(I) of CMM 02-2025 (Data Standards). Members and CNCPs are also encouraged to report these data in their National Reports to the Scientific Committee.

9. Members and CNCPs with vessels flying their flag and fishing in the Convention Area are encouraged to explore light management procedures to reduce the risk of seabird interaction, with consideration of relevant light mitigation guidelines (e.g., National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds developed by Australia).

10. In their annual national science reports to the Scientific Committee, Members and CNCPs shall report annually, on the seabird mitigation measures used by each vessel flying their flag and fishing in the Convention Area, as well as any observed seabird interaction data and the level of observer coverage focussed on recording seabird bycatch.

11. The Scientific Committee will report on the number and location of seabird interactions annually and provide advice and recommendations to the Commission on possible improvements to further mitigate seabird interactions, including *inter alia*, the potential use of trigger limits to manage the incidental catch of seabirds in the SPRFMO Convention Area. Further, the Scientific Committee shall consider any relevant advice from the ACAP Advisory Committee.

12. Nothing in this measure shall affect the rights of Members and CNCPs to apply additional or more stringent compatible measures to their flagged vessels conducting demersal longline or trawl fishing in the Convention Area.

13. Nothing in this measure shall affect the rights of Members and CNCPs to apply higher levels of observer coverage to monitor the effectiveness of mitigation measures or collect data on seabird interactions, including mortality rates.

14. The Scientific Committee will annually review any new information on new or existing mitigation measures and on seabird interactions from observer programmes or other research and provide advice to the Commission on the need to implement particular measures for specific gear types or fisheries, or make other amendments to this Measure.

ANNEX 1

Seabird Mitigation Specifications for Demersal Longline Fishing

1. To minimise incidental interactions with seabirds in demersal longlines, all demersal longline vessels shall:
    a) prohibit discharge of any biological material during shooting and hauling, where possible, to avoid attracting seabirds to the vessel; and
    b) where it is necessary to discharge biological waste due to operational safety concerns, ensure that a minimum of two hours occurs between any discharge of batched waste and that the batched waste is discharged rapidly on the opposite side of the vessel to the hauling bay; and
    c) remove all hooks from any biological waste before it is discharged.
2. Demersal longline vessels shall implement the combined use of the following three measures simultaneously to have the greatest chance of effectively mitigating seabird bycatch:
    a) a line weighting regime, as specified in paragraph 9. Noting the objective of this measure is to maximise hook sink rates close to vessel sterns to reduce the availability of baits to seabirds;
    b) bird scaring lines, as specified in paragraph 10. Noting the objective of this measure is to actively deter birds from baited hooks;
    c) setting at night, between the times of nautical dark and nautical dawn.
3. Notwithstanding paragraph 2, demersal longline vessels fishing at latitudes of 50^{O}S or higher during the summer months (November – February) are permitted to set during daylight hours provided that the vessel applies the measures specified in paragraphs 2(a) and 2(b) and:
    a) does not catch a total of three or more seabirds during a fishing season; and
    b) ensures a minimum of 30% observer coverage or electronic monitoring, of which at least 10% of fishing effort must be covered by human observers, that is adequately representative of the spatial and temporal distribution of the fishing effort/time
4. Where a Member or CNCP has maintained spatially and temporally appropriate observer coverage for the previous 5 consecutive years at levels greater than 10% and recorded a seabird mortality rate less than 0.01 birds/ 1000 hooks, that Member may choose to:
    a) require its vessels to apply simultaneously only two of the three measures specified in paragraph 2; and
    b) ensure a minimum of 30% observer coverage or electronic monitoring, of which at least 10% of fishing effort must be covered by human observers, that is adequately representative of the spatial and temporal distribution of the fishing fleet.
5. Should a flagged vessel of a Member or CNCP applying paragraphs 3 or 4 catch a total of three or more seabirds during a fishing season, the Member or CNCP will be required to:
    a) ensure the vessel implements the combined use of all three measures detailed in paragraph 2 simultaneously for at least one year from the time of the mortalities;
    b) report details of the event to the Secretariat within seven days; and
    c) report details of the event in their national report.

6. Should any Member or CNCP applying paragraphs 3 and 4 catch a total of three or more seabirds during a fishing season on any of its vessels, the Scientific Committee should review all seabird bycatch observer data for that fishery and make recommendations on any necessary amendments to this measure.

7. Further measures that may be implemented include:

    a) bird deterrent curtains at the hauling bay as specified in paragraph 11, responsible offal management, and avoiding peak areas and periods of seabird foraging activity;

    b) using two (paired) bird scaring lines simultaneously for vessels ≥24 m in length whenever fishing gear is being set from the vessel;

    c) any other experimental measure to reduce seabird bycatch, provided the required measures in paragraphs 1 and 2 are still implemented.

8. Where trot lines are used, the use of cachalotera nets is considered to be best practice mitigation, although global minimum standards are not yet developed. Members are encouraged to report details of gear configuration used to the Scientific Committee.

9. Line weighting regimes deployed in accordance with paragraph 2(a) of this Annex shall be in accordance with the following specifications: Line weighting must meet or exceed the minimum standards listed here for each type of bottom line gear.

    a) For externally weighted systems, vessels must use a longline weighting regime that achieves a demonstrable minimum longline sink rate of 0.3 metre/second to 15 metre depth for gear. Specifically:

        i. External weighted lines in Spanish system and trot lines must use a minimum of 8.5 kg mass at intervals of no more than 40 m if rocks are used, 6kg mass at intervals of no more than 20 m for concrete weights, and 5 kg weights at intervals of no more than 40 m for solid metal weights.

        ii. External weighted lines in autoline must use a minimum 5 kg mass at intervals no more than 40 m, which must be released from vessels in a manner that avoids tension astern (tension astern may lift sections of the longline already deployed out of the water).

    b) For vessels using internally weighted longlines, these must have a lead core of at least 50 g/m and sink instantly with a linear profile and achieve a sink rate of greater than 0.2 metre/second

10. Bird scaring lines deployed in accordance with paragraph 2(b) of this Annex shall be in accordance with the following specifications:

    a) One or more bird scaring lines must be carried at all times and must be deployed whenever fishing gear is being set from the vessel;

    b) The bird scaring line must be attached to the vessel so that when deployed the baits are protected by the streamer line, even in cross winds;

    c) The bird scaring line shall use brightly coloured streamers long enough to reach the sea-surface in calm conditions (“long streamers”) placed at intervals of no more than 5 m for at least the first 55 m of streamer line and shall be attached to the line with swivels that prevent streamers from wrapping around the line;

    d) The bird scaring line may also use streamers a minimum of 1 m in length (“short streamers”) placed at intervals of no more than 1m.

e) If the bird scaring line that is in use breaks or is damaged, it must be repaired or replaced so that the vessel meets these specifications before any further hooks enter the water.

f) The bird scaring line shall be deployed so that:

i. it remains above the water surface to a distance where the hooks have sunk to a depth of 15 m, or

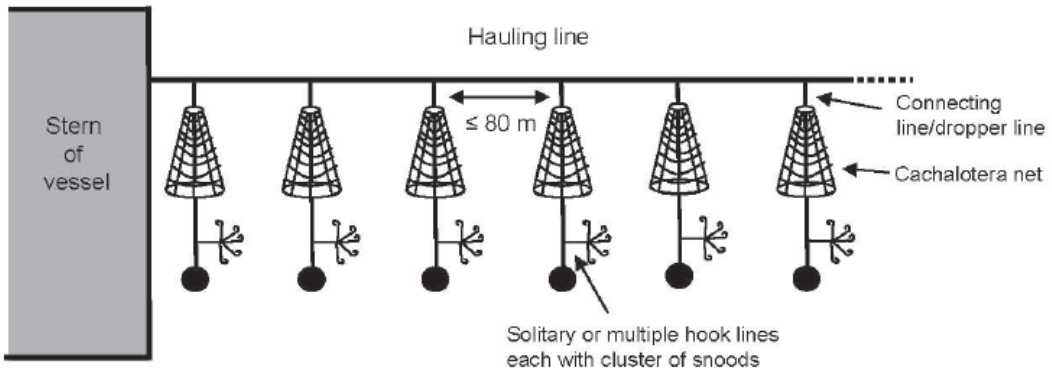
ii. it shall be a minimum of 150 m in length and suspended from a point on the vessel at least 7 m above the water in the absence of swell.

11. Bird deterrent curtains deployed in accordance with paragraph 4(a) of this Annex shall be in accordance with the following specifications: these devices must be constructed in order to achieve the following operational characteristics:

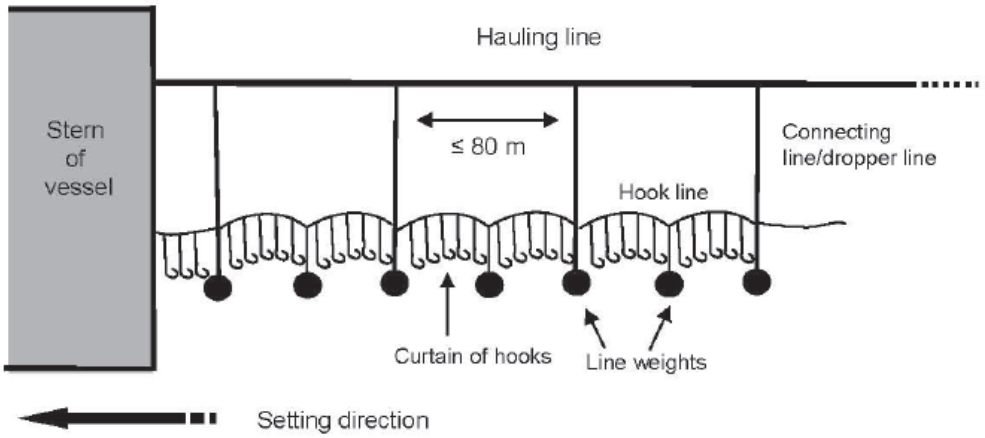
a) deterrence of birds flying directly into the area where the line is being hauled;

b) prevention of birds that are sitting on the water surface from swimming into the hauling bay area.

Typical configuration of trotline method



Typical configuration of Spanish system



ANNEX 2

Seabird Mitigation Specifications for Trawl Fishing

1. To minimise the incidental mortality of seabirds associated with trawl fishing the following measures shall be used in combination:

    a) Deploy, while fishing, bird scaring devices to deter birds away from warp cables and net monitoring cables, where their use cannot be avoided, as follows:

        i. Two bird scaring lines, as specified in paragraph 2, or,

        ii. where operational practices prevent the effective deployment of bird scaring lines, such as deep-water trawls targeting bathymetric features, a bird baffler, as specified in paragraph 3, may be used instead.

    b) Use responsible discharge management to avoid attracting seabirds to the vessel:

        i. Where possible, prohibit discharge of any biological material during shooting and hauling.

        ii. Where possible and appropriate, convert offal into fish meal and retain all waste material with any discharge restricted to liquid discharge / sump water to reduce the number of birds attracted to a minimum. Where this is not feasible, vessels should batch waste for two hours or longer.

    The use of the following measures is also encouraged where possible:

    c) Clean nets after every shot to remove entangled fish (“stickers”) and benthic material to discourage bird attendance during gear shooting.

    d) Minimise the time the net is on the water surface during hauling through proper maintenance of winches and good deck practices.

    e) Apply net binding together with weights incorporated in the net belly prior to setting.

2. Bird scaring lines deployed in accordance with paragraph 1(a)(i) of this Annex shall be in accordance with the following specifications:

    a) Two bird scaring lines must be carried at all times and must be deployed whenever the trawl net is in the water.

    b) Bird scaring lines must be attached to both the port and starboard sides of a vessel, above and outside of the warp blocks.

    c) To avoid deflection of bird scaring lines away from cables in strong cross winds, the bird scaring lines must have an in-water section that creates sufficient drag to achieve the required aerial extent and placement in strong winds, such as by attaching a buoy or cone, or another ACAP-recommended device (e.g., Tamini Tabla). It is recommended that for every metre of block height 1.2 kg of terminal object drag weight be used.

    d) The bird scaring line must be long enough to extend beyond the point at which warp and net monitoring cables reach the water surface. It is recommended that for every metre of block height 5 m of backbone be deployed.

    e) The bird scaring line must have brightly coloured streamers long enough to reach the sea-surface in calm conditions. These must be placed at intervals of no more than 5 m apart, preferably at 3 m apart.

3. Bird bafflers deployed in accordance with paragraph 1(a)(ii) of this Annex shall be in accordance with the following specifications: A bird baffler consists of two or more booms attached to the stern quarter of the

vessel, with at least one boom attached to the starboard stern quarter and at least one boom attached to the port stern quarter;

a) Each boom shall extend outwards not less than four metres from the side or stern of the vessel;

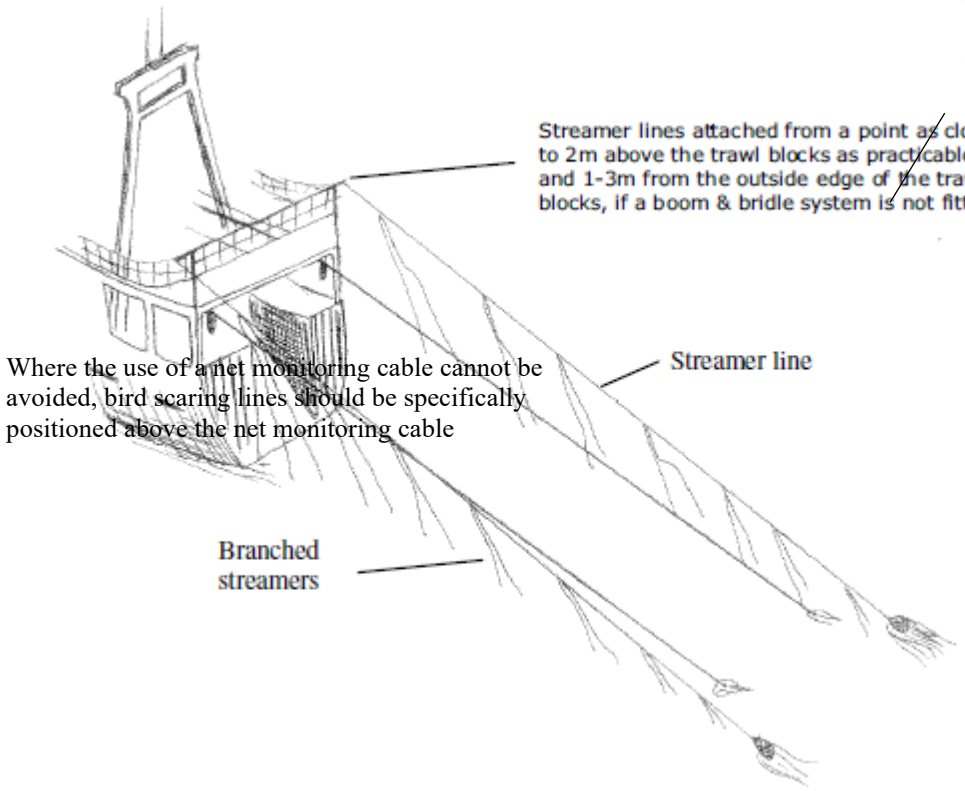
b) Dropper lines, shall be attached to the booms no more than 2 metres apart;

c) Plastic cones, rods or other brightly coloured and durable material shall be attached to the ends of the dropper lines, so that the bottom of the cone, rod or material is not more than 500 millimetres above the water, in the absence of wind and swell; and

d) Lines or webbing may be attached between the dropper lines to prevent tangling.

"Bird scaring lines"

Streamer lines should extend beyond the point at which warp and net monitoring cables reach the water's surface



"Bird baffler"