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BOB BEAL Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Comm
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SUBJ " SUMMER FLOUNDER SCOPING

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for holding Public meetings on summer Flounder and allowing comments from the recreational fishermen.

I am representing the Strathmere Fishing and Environmental Club which is made up of over 200 recreational fishermen and women. Our primary fish is the Summer Flounder and we were hurt this year due to regionalization and NJ going into a region with NY. We are located in Southern NJ and clearly there are 2 different fisheries within NJ... Barnegat Inlet south is significantly different than the area to the north of the inlet and more in line with areas to our south like Delaware and Maryland. Assuming regionalization continues we would want to see the State split and Southern NJ being put into a region with Delaware instead of NY.

Several of our members have kept detail data on their catches and when we review that data we find the yearly average size of summer flounder in our area is 14.65" over an 8 year period . This only varies .5" up and down over the 8 years. We also find the largest flounder of the year arrive early April and we continue to see decent size fish through most of May but beginning in June we find an abundance of much smaller fish with July seeing the smallest of the year. Ability to catch and keep summer flounder in April would be an economic boom to Marina's and Tackle shops in all of South Jersey. A size reduction would reduce a significant number of short fish going back dead or dying. We as a large recreational fishing club would ask you to consider the fact the fact that NJ has 2 much different fisheries where summer flounder is concerned . One reason for the difference is the fact that Southern NJ is blessed with numerous shallow inlets and shallow bays that warm up quickly in the early Spring

When reviewing American Littoral Society tagging data we find 80% of summer flounder tagged in our area and not re-caught for 12 months or longer are re-caught 50 miles north of original tagging or further north. This clearly indicates a northerly

migration of Summer flounder following their spawning well offshore which results in a larger average size north

Another negative factor with current regulations calling for a minimum size of 18" is 95% of summer flounder over 18" are females and full of early maturing eggs when they are caught in our area .A smaller size limit which is made up primarily of males has the potential of increasing the spawning population and assuring the future of summer flounder

Finally in regards to the Recreational/ Commercial Split we would like to see that split be 50/50 as opposed to the 60% commercial 40% recreational that exist today. Currently the commercial size is 14", a much better method for protecting the stock would be to eliminate the Commercial size limit and once the regulated poundage is met the Qtr is closed . This would save a lot of fish under 14" being thrown back dead

Summer Flounder provides a significant economic impact to this area and as a result of higher size regulations and there clearly has been a reduction in fishermen targeting summer flounder through-out South Jersey and that is affecting Marina's, Tackle shop, Motels ,and restaurants in the area

THANK YOU for getting into this study and we are looking forward to your next report.

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