

COAST DISPATCH Aug. 2, 1991

Stricter summer flounder guidelines started

OCEAN CITY (SA) — Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division officials will be in Ocean City next week to solicit some local response to stricter proposed guidelines on one of Ocean City's fishing mainstays — summer flounder.

The proposed catch size limits would affect both commercial and recreational catches in the Chesapeake Bay and Worcester County's coastal bays.

"I know a lot of fishermen aren't going to be happy with what's prop-

osed," said Alan Wesche of the DNR's Tidewater Administration, who is currently tagging flounder in the state's coastal bays.

The DNR hopes to have its summer flounder management plan completed and ready for submission to the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council by December.

The summer flounder management plan would be a part of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement between Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia,

directed towards preserving the Chesapeake Bay.

According to the Maryland DNR Fisheries Division, summer flounder (or fluke) catches have gone down considerably since 1979. In 1979, 42.9 million pounds of summer flounder were harvested, compared to only 11.5 million pounds in 1990.

In 1990, Summer flounder catches along the Atlantic Coast went down 46 percent since 1989, which represents a 60 percent decline based on the 10-year average.

"Flounder fishing on the oceanside and in the back bays around Ocean City are one of the mainstays of that port," said DNR Fisheries Division spokesman John Foster.

Recommendations from the federal Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council requested that all states reduce the harvest of commercial and recreational fisheries by 47 percent.

One strategy proposes raising the recreational minimum size for flounder. See Flounder--Page 20

Flounder

Continued from Page 17
der from 13 inches to 14 inches.

Also proposed are seasonal restrictions, which would be consistent with Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) regulations.

Minimum commercial limits would remain at 13 inches, however, a larger minimum net mesh size and quota system would be imposed.

Maryland and Virginia would also continue to work with the MAFMC to enact further mesh size restrictions for the offshore flounder fishery to protect immature flounder.

To improve the habitat and water quality, new regulations are aimed at maintaining the Chesapeake Bay agreement to reduce toxic compounds from entering estuarine waters.

The proposal also seeks to identify habitat requirements for summer flounder, including water quality factors that affect the growth and survival of the fish.

The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 7, at the Ocean City Firehouse on Keyser Point Road in West Ocean City. ■