

## NJ DEP BACKS GEAR RESTRICTIONS ON REEFS

In a letter to the New Jersey Outdoor Alliance and Reef Rescue, one of its affiliate organizations, released late last week, Dave Chanda, director of the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, relayed that Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa Jackson supports legislation now pending in the state Senate and Assembly that would ban unattended fishing traps from artificial reefs.

If passed, the legislation – Senate Bill 336 and Assembly Bill 1519 – would restrict fishing on reefs to hook-and-line and spear only at the two reef sites located in state waters, which are the Sandy Hook and Axel Carlson reefs.

“To completely alleviate conflicts on reefs, the Department will petition the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) for similar regulation on the remaining 13 reef sites located in the Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ),” Chanda wrote. “The efforts of your organization have not gone unnoticed and we are hopeful that this matter will soon be resolved.”

The Senate bill has been released from committee and awaits a full hearing and vote. The Assembly bill was reportedly going to be posted for a hearing on Thursday, June 12, but its fate was uncertain at press time.