



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035-9589



Dr. Christopher M. Moore, Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 N. State Street, Suite 201
Dover, Delaware 19901

DEC 08 2016

Dear Dr. Moore:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recommendation to designate the 13 artificial reefs in the federal waters off New Jersey as Special Management Zones (SMZ). The Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) terminated Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) funding for the artificial reef program in New Jersey in April 2011. This action was taken because the use of lobster pots and fish traps by commercial fishermen was interfering with the sport fishing purpose for which the reefs were constructed with SFR funding. Federal regulations implementing the SFR Act mandate that any such interference must cease and that adverse effects must be remedied.

In 2015, the State of New Jersey took the appropriate actions to institute management control over artificial reefs in state territorial waters, so the Service allowed SFR funding for development activities on those reefs. The Service is poised to do the same for the 13 artificial reefs in federal waters if SMZs are established for them. We appreciate the Council's role in the SMZ designation process and encourage establishment of SMZs that would enable the Service to restore SFR funding of New Jersey's entire artificial reef program.

If you have any questions, please contact me via phone at 413-253-8501, or by email at colleen_sculley@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Colleen E. Sculley
Chief, Division of Wildlife
and Sport Fish Restoration

cc: Bob Longcor, NJ DFW
Russ Allen, NJ DFW
Tom Baum, NJ DFW
Rich Seagraves, MAFMC