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To the Editor:

Recreational fishing is a major attraction in Monmouth County. In addition to being an enjoyable pastime, fishing helps to support New Jersey's \$16 billion tourism industry. Unfortunately, there are many threats to the recreational fishing industry.

One of the issues of primary concern is the proliferation commercial fishing gear on artificial reefs. This equipment can reduce access for boaters and snag recreational anglers' lines and propellers. In addition, commercial fishermen dominate many of these sites by setting up fishing gear that can catch large volumes of fish leaving fewer fish for recreational fishermen.

In order to grant recreational fishermen access to artificial reefs without having to negotiate a maze of commercial fishing gear, I have sponsored Senate Bill 336 that would ban commercial fishing on New Jersey's artificial reefs. This legislation would prohibit any fishing gear, other than rod-and-reel, hand line, spear, or recreational gig from being used within 100 feet of an artificial reef.

I had previously sponsored this bill in the Assembly where it died on the last day of the 2006-2007 session. The current bill was approved by the Senate Environment Committee on February 21st and is awaiting a vote in the Senate. I have also sent a letter to Senate President Richard Codey urging him to post this measure for a vote in the Senate as soon as possible.

In order to rally support for this measure, I recently held a "Take Back Our Reefs" rally to urge the passage of this legislation at the Taylor Pavilion in Belmar. I greatly appreciate the fishermen and members of the community who attended to demonstrate their support in preserving the rights of recreational fishermen.

Sincerely,
Sean T. Kean
Senator, District 11