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Jerry Fite

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 1986

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## RAHALL SAYS HOUSE-PASSED WATER BILL WILL HELP WEST VIRGINIA

Washington, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) says that the water projects bill passed by the House today will be very beneficial to West Virginia, particularly with regard to flood protection and transporting our coal to marketplaces via inland waterways. The passage of this historic conference agreement marks the first passage of a water resources bill by Congress since 1978.

"This legislation is long overdue as our water resources infrastructure is in dire need of rehabilitation," Rahall said. "Many of our ocean ports are not deep enough to meet the challenges posed by increased competition in international shipping. Our locks and dams on the inland waterways are crumbling and threaten the viability of barge commerce. And in many regions such as West Virginia, flood waters continue to ravage the land, creating hardships, and jeopardizing the health and welfare of the people."

"I am pleased to see two projects, which I have worked on since my first day on the Public Works Committee ten years ago, finally coming to fruition," Rahall said. "Included in the House/Senate conference agreement is funding for the Winfield Locks and Dam on the Kanawha River, and funding for rehabilitation and construction of new locks at Gallipolis on the Ohio River." Rahall cited the 3 1/2 day delays in July at Gallipolis as something which this project will help to eliminate. "Delays such as these are extremely costly to the coal and shipping industries and must be alleviated. The long overdue improvements to these facilities will result in more efficient movement of steam and metallurgical coal from southern West Virginia to markets throughout the nation."

Although the legislation calls for increased cost-sharing with local entities, those West Virginia flood control projects on the Tug Fork for which construction has begun are exempted from the requirement, Rahall said. These projects are located at Williamson, West Williamson, and Matewan. According to Rahall, for other Tug Fork projects planned at Steptown, Crum, Kermit, and in McDowell County, a provision was inserted in the legislation to give the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the discretion to exempt them from cost-sharing requirements if it is found they are in economically depressed regions. "It is my intention to persuade the Corps at the appropriate time that these projects should not be required to meet this new cost-sharing criteria," Rahall said.

The bill also provides funding for flood protection in Logan County. "Among the flood control projects authorized by the bill is one I sponsored in subcommittee located along the Island Creek Basin in Logan County," Rahall said. "Flooding in the Island Creek Basin area has resulted in significant financial and personal loss over many years. The people of Logan County are deserving of the relief from the persistent, destructive flooding which the project will provide."

This final conference agreement between the House and Senate also contains a historic provision that will provide for a program of water releases from the Summersville Dam to facilitate whitewater rafting on the Gauley River. "This U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project represents the first of its kind to have an explicit authorization for whitewater recreation," Rahall noted. "I think that this will be a shot in the arm for our recreational industry in West Virginia."

The agreement will now go to the President for his signature.