

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 7, 1986

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RAHALL TO MOVE EARLY ON WEST VA. RIVERS BILL

BECKLEY, WV - U.S. Rep . Nick J. Rahall(D-WV) announced today that one of the first measures he will introduce when the Congress convenes early next year will be his proposed West Virginia rivers bill. The proposal would establish the Gauley River National Recreation Area, make boundary modifications to the New River Gorge National River and create the state's first national wild and scenic rivers.

"The economy of southern West Virginia has been badly battered over the last few years, yet a budding tourism and recreation industry has shown great promise as fast becoming a major contributor to the rejuvenation of the region. Rivers such as the New and Gauley are magnets for visitors, sportsmen and whitewater enthusiasts and should be preserved for these purposes. Additional federal river park units will not only enhance these activities but result in the type of economic development associated with tourism and recreation that we have witnessed stemming from the establishment of the New River Gorge National River," Rahall said.

The proposed "West Virginia National Interest River Conservation Act of 1987" would make boundary modifications to the New River park unit in an effort to consolidate the park and provide for better management of its resources. It would also designate the whitewater segment of the Gauley River from below Summersville Dam to the vicinity of Swiss as a national recreation area. In general, the recreation area would extend from cliff-line to cliff-line and as such, include only the river gorge area.

In addition, the proposal would create the state's first national wild and scenic rivers. Rahall said the lower Meadow River from the Route 19 bridge to its confluence with the Gauley River would become a national wild river and the segment of the lower Bluestone River that is already in public ownership would be designated as a national scenic river. This section of the river runs through Pipestem, the Bluestone Public Hunting and Fishing Area and Bluestone Park with much of the river corridor already owned by the federal government. No private lands in the Bluestone River Gorge would be affected by the legislation. Also, the state's position in this area would be unchanged.

Rahall said he is still working with interested local parties as well as with his colleagues in the West Virginia Congressional Delegation in the development of the proposal but that its basic elements appear to be in place. He also said he will be seeking input from Governor Arch Moore.

"This will be a historic legislative initiative for West Virginia and it is my hope we will move forward with a consensus bill," Rahall said. The congressman added, "These tributaries of the New River possess outstanding features of national significance. Without a doubt, they should be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and the nation as a whole.