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Nick Rahall

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RAHALL'S REMINING PROVISIONS PASSED BY CONGRESS

Washington, D.C. -- The U.S. House of Representatives today passed legislation containing Rep. Nick Rahall's (D-WV) provision to provide an incentive to the coal industry to remine abandoned coal mine lands. Rahall's provision was included in the passage of the House/Senate conference agreement reauthorizing the Clean Water Act.

"It is rare we are able to enact legislation such as this provision which so clearly dovetails efforts to develop our coal resources with those aimed at mitigating environmental damage," Rahall told his colleagues. "Throughout the Appalachian Region, abandoned coal mine lands exist which, due to erosion and acidic discharges, pose a serious threat to water quality."

Rahall's remining provision will enable industry to enter abandoned coal mine sites and engage in mining under modified water quality standards established on a case-by-case basis. The end result of this effort will be the reclamation of the site and, as such, an improvement in water quality over that which existed at the site prior to remining.

"While the 1977 surface mining law created an abandoned mine reclamation program to address this situation, the funds raised from industry to implement reclamation projects will never be sufficient to address more than 10% to 20% of the Nation's abandoned coal mine sites," Rahall pointed out. "Because many of these abandoned coal lands still contain valuable coal deposits, industry has made an effort to remine them, and, as such, reclaim the sites."

In many instances, coal remining is not economically and technically feasible because industry becomes liable for treating the pre-existing water discharges under stringent national effluent guidelines. "I am confident that my remining provision will prove valuable in alleviating this situation," Rahall stated.