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CONGRESSMAN

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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## RAHALL BILL TO IMPROVE FISHING & HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) today introduced legislation aimed at maintaining and expanding sport fishing and hunting opportunities in West Virginia and other states.

Entitled the "Sport Fishing and Hunting Opportunity Improvement Act," Rahall's bill would establish a program through which the state would receive funding to maintain its public hunting and fishing areas, fish stocking programs, wildlife management and restoration programs and other efforts designed to maintain existing and new hunting and sport fishing opportunities.

"In West Virginia we have 41 public hunting and fishing areas, seven state and three federal fish hatcheries for our trout stocking program and a number of recreational lakes. All of these institutions are being stretched to the limit and are in need of greater public support," Rahall said.

The bill would create a State Sport Fishing and Hunting Assistance Fund, to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior, through which grants to the states would be made. Amounts deposited into the Fund would come from a portion of all revenues collected from federal mineral leasing activities on lands acquired by the federal government for public uses.

"I believe that dedicating a portion of revenues collected from federal mineral leasing activities on acquired public lands to enhance sport fishing and hunting opportunities is an appropriate utilization of federal mineral leasing receipts," Rahall stated.

These revenues are currently not earmarked for any specific purpose. The vast majority of these mineral leases are on Forest Service lands.

"In my view, it is fitting and appropriate for development oriented activities, such as oil and gas leasing, which are not necessarily conducive to fishing and hunting be made to contribute to our national commitment to wildlife resources," Rahall noted.