

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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CONTACT: JERRY BURKOT
202-225-3452

COMMITTEE APPROVES RAHALL W.VA. RIVERS BILL TO PROMOTE RECREATION

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall(D-W.Va.) today announced that the House Interior Committee has passed his West Virginia Rivers Bill, clearing the way for its consideration by the full House of Representatives.

Rahall hailed the committee action as a major step toward eventual enactment of his bill. "The committee's approval is indicative of the wide-spread support this measure enjoys in the House," Rahall said. "This will translate into passage by the full House of Representatives."

"The basic goal of this legislation is to preserve these river segments for recreational activities, be it fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, canoeing or whitewater rafting," Rahall said. "These rivers offer more benefits to the economy and society as a whole in their pristine condition. If we do nothing, sooner or later the rivers will be destroyed and our children will not be able to enjoy them as we have."

Under provisions of the "West Virginia National Interest River Conservation Act of 1987," federal protection would be extended to segments of major tributaries of the New River, which was established as a national river in 1978. The bill would also create a national recreation area on a segment of the Gauley River and designate portions of the Meadow, Bluestone and Greenbrier Rivers as national wild and scenic rivers.

"What I am attempting to facilitate is the establishment of an integrated network of state and federal park units in southern West Virginia that will be accessible by interstate highways and scenic parkways," Rahall said. "The river segments that are the subject of my bill will be the glue that binds these parks together with the New River Gorge National River as the backbone. I do not think we can underestimate the economic benefits such a network will have for our region of the country."

Starting from the northern end of the integrated network envisioned by Rahall is Summersville Lake and Carnifex Ferry Battlefield. Those areas would be connected by his proposed Gauley River National Recreation Area to Hawks Nest State Park and the New River Gorge National River, Babcock and Grandview State Parks.

The completion of Interstate 64 into Beckley and the proposed New River Parkway from the Sandstone Falls vicinity to Hinton will connect the area with Bluestone Lake and State Park, the proposed Bluestone National Scenic River and Pipestem State Park. Planning is also being conducted by several Mercer County residents for a Bluestone Highlands Parkway.

"We are talking about some of the finest recreational opportunities in the eastern United States of which all West Virginians can be proud," Rahall stated. "We are also talking about economic diversification for the region due to the increase in tourism that will be fostered by my legislation."

Rahall expects the bill to be considered on the House floor during the first week of June.