

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 27, 1987

CONTACT: JERRY BURKOT
202-225-3452

ACTION SET ON RAHALL RIVERS BILL

WASHINGTON, DC - Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) announced today that a congressional subcommittee will take action on his West Virginia rivers bill on May 5, 1987. Following subcommittee action, the measure will be considered in the full Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and then brought before the full House of Representatives.

The "West Virginia National Interest River Conservation Act" was the subject of a Subcommittee on National Parks hearing on April 23. During the hearing, unanimous support was expressed for enactment of the legislation with the exception of the National Park Service. That agency, under the Reagan Administration, has opposed the establishment of any new units of the national park system nationwide.

"Rivers such as the New and Gauley are magnets for both our more traditional recreational pursuits of fishing and canoeing as well as for the burgeoning interest in whitewater activities," Rahall said. "The greatest economic benefits will be received through the conservation of these river resources rather than through other developments which would diminish their pristine values."

Among those expressing support for the bill at the hearing were the Fayette and Summers County Chambers of Commerce, the City of Summersville, the New River Parkway Authority, Mr. Charles Connor of Beckley Newspapers, national and local conservation organizations, and both commercial and private river users.

In a statement submitted for the record, the Fayette Chamber of Commerce noted: "The New River Gorge area is the jewel in the crown of West Virginia's scenic splendor but we must have federal support, protection and the expertise of the National Park Service to develop the splendid opportunities that are here."

The National Park Service, while opposed to the bill, recognized that "there is public support for federal involvement in the protection of these rivers."

World champion canoeist John Lugbill said that protection of the Gauley River "is the only way to assure that this river's beauty and challenge will be available to future generations."

In speaking to the provision of the bill to control black flies, Charles Connor of Beckley Newspapers said "people, in my view, should have precedence over insects which cause such severe distress to the human population."

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy stated "river corridor protection is a way to enhance the high quality of outdoor recreation and natural experiences available in this increasingly important segment of our economy."

Rahall said that he is preparing an amendment to the bill which will mitigate concerns raised over a provision relating to the management of water releases from the Bluestone Dam.

"This bill has a great deal of support," Rahall stated. "But I want, to the extent possible, a consensus bill and this is what we will achieve with my amendment."