

News

From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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WV BIG WINNER UNDER RAHALL FISH & WILDLIFE BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- West Virginia would be the beneficiary of over \$1 million per year for fish and wildlife enhancement programs under legislation introduced by Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) and favorably acted upon today by a Congressional subcommittee.

As modified by Rahall's Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, H.R. 4181 would dedicate 50% of all revenues collected from federal mineral leases on acquired public lands to a newly established State Fish and Wildlife Assistance Fund. Under an allocation formula, states would receive annual grants from the fund for a wide range of game and nongame fish and wildlife habitat management activities.

"Due to the allocation formula in my bill, West Virginia's share of these mineral receipts would increase by 500% over their current level," Rahall said. "In drafting this formula I made sure that those states with a great deal of interest in fishing and hunting activities, which are often the smaller and more rural states such as West Virginia, are the largest net gainers."

Currently, there is no dedicated fund for mineral revenues derived from bonuses, rentals and production royalties collected from federal leases on acquired lands. Once these revenues are collected by the government only a small portion, in many instances 25%, is returned to the state.

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In the case of West Virginia, this amount is usually around \$200,000. However, because of the fund established by H.R. 4181, West Virginia would see this amount increase to over \$1 million.

"I envision West Virginia using this funding for activities such as fish stocking and the improvement of fish and wildlife habitat for both game and nongame species," Rahall said.

Rahall said he will bring the bill before the full Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in the near future.