

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL SAYS FUNDS APPROVED FOR MINE RECLAMATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The House Appropriations Committee has approved \$150 million in state grants for the coming fiscal year under the Abandoned Mine Reclamation program, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) announced today.

"This program is aimed at eliminating the health and safety threat faced by coalfield residents from old abandoned coal mine lands," Rahall said. "These federal funds are essential in our ongoing efforts to quench burning refuse piles, seal old mine openings, address subsidence problems, reclaim abandoned impoundments and stabilize orphaned surface mined lands through regrading and revegetation."

Rahall noted that West Virginia's share of the fiscal year 1989 funds will be determined by several factors, including the number of projects submitted by the State to the federal Office of Surface Mining. The congressman, who chairs the Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources which is charged with oversight of the program, said he encourages the West Virginia Department of Energy to aggressively pursue the funds.

In addition to the more traditional projects undertaken in West Virginia, Rahall said the State should also consider submitting certain types of water supply projects as well. "I will certainly work with the State in obtaining approval of high priority projects involving the replacement and repair of water supplies in instances where the water was contaminated by abandoned deep mines," Rahall noted.

Rahall also said the Committee approved \$10 million nationwide for the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP). Unlike the state grant program, RAMP funds are administered by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). According to Rahall, the SCS is already planning \$2.2 million worth of projects located in Raleigh, Wyoming and McDowell Counties for fiscal year 1989.

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In other program areas, Rahall announced that at his urging the Committee approved \$1.2 million for the National Mine Land Reclamation Center. West Virginia University is the lead university in the newly established Center and the funds will be used to devise more efficient and cost-effective reclamation techniques. Funds were also approved for Bureau of Mines programs involving acid mine drainage and subsidence control research.

The congressman said he was especially pleased with the Committee's approval of other recommendations made by his Subcommittee in the areas of mine health and safety technologies, such as those involving the mitigation of respirable dust generation, ground control and methane prevention.

"I firmly believe that additional resources must be dedicated toward providing the maximum amount of health and safety protections for our underground coal miners," Rahall said.