

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RECREATION TO BE MANDATED AT CORPS PROJECTS

HOUSE PASSES RAHALL INITIATIVE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. House of Representatives today approved a major recreation initiative sponsored by U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) as part of the "Water Resources Development Act of 1988."

The legislation authorizes recreation as a specific purpose of a number of projects operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers including Bluestone Lake, Beechfork Lake, East Lynn Lake and the R.D. Bailey Lake projects in southern West Virginia.

"This legislation says that it is time for the Corps to expand its horizons and provide additional recreational opportunities at these facilities," Rahall said. "Anybody who has visited some of these lakes and tried to go fishing or boating during certain high useage times of the year knows what I am talking about."

Rahall said the Corps of Engineers has often viewed recreation as being incidental to these projects, which were originally authorized for flood control and low-flow augmentation purposes. The Congressman believes his legislation will crack the institutional resistance that has developed over the years within the Corps to expanding recreational opportunities at it's facilities.

The recreation authorization includes downstream whitewater recreation, recreational fishing, and boating on water at the project. It also specifically authorizes recreation on project lands as well. "I would note that the project land recreation authorization is intended to gain greater Corps cooperation in the planning of recreational projects such as campgrounds, lodging facilities and related infrastructure requirements," Rahall stated on the House Floor.

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The legislation also directs the Corps of Engineers to cooperate with the National Park Service to conduct a study on modifying the operation of the Bluestone Lake Project in order to facilitate the protection and enhancement of biological resources and recreational use of the waters downstream from the project within the New River Gorge National River.

"Recently, the Corps suspended its Bluestone project modification study and issued a report which, while outlining a number of alternatives, made no recommendation and deferred further investigations," Rahall said in explaining how this tactic does not solve those problems which plague the facility. In conducting the study, the legislation requires that the public be given an opportunity to comment. A report is to be submitted to the Congress at the end of a one-year period.

"This is a matter of extreme importance, not only to the biological integrity and recreational development of the New River Gorge National River, but to the region's economy as well," Rahall concluded.