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PRESS STATEMENT

The West Virginia Congressional Delegation has worked long and hard on this legislation. It is unique among measures of this nature in that it enjoys the support of such a wide range of interests -- from the local chamber of commerce to environmental groups, from whitewater rafting enthusiasts to the National Rifle Association. The bill has even been endorsed by the United Mine Workers of America.

In 1978, we established the New River Gorge National River. I was the House sponsor of that measure. In 1988, under my legislation, on two major tributaries of the New River we are establishing the Gauley River National Recreation Area which includes a segment of the Meadow River, and the Bluestone National Wild and Scenic River.

I expect great things from the Gauley River National Recreation Area, which would be established on the 25 mile segment of the river below Summersville Dam. I think it appropriate to remember what President Lyndon Johnson said when he dedicated the Summersville Project on September 3, 1966. He said: "We have come here to consummate an act of faith in the future of West Virginia."

This legislation builds upon that act of faith; for the future of West Virginia and the Nation as a whole. With this bill we are protecting some outstanding natural resources for their natural, scenic, cultural and recreational values. In the process, we are establishing in West Virginia the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States. In effect, this legislation will put this region on every travel and tourism map in the Nation.

With today's House action, we also added an authorization and directive to the National Park Service to construct a scenic overlook and visitors facility with access from Interstate 64 at the Glade Creek area of the New River Gorge National River. This is an extremely important project to the development of the park, and the whole region.

With such a facility, travelers on I-64 will be given the opportunity to stop and learn about what southern West Virginia has to offer. There are also safety considerations associated with this facility as it will mitigate traffic and congestion near the Glade Creek Bridge caused by parking along the side of the interstate.