

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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WATER PROJECTS BILL SENT TO WHITE HOUSE RAHALL RECREATION AUTHORIZATIONS MAINTAINED

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The House of Representatives today took final action on the "Water Resources Development Act of 1988" and sent the bill to the President according to U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV). The legislation contains a Rahall sponsored provision dealing with providing recreational opportunities at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers facilities in southern West Virginia.

"This legislation contains a provision that I authored which provides for a specific recreation authorization at a number of Army Corps projects in West Virginia," Rahall stated. "The Corps should take note of this provision as it represents a clear Congressional directive that recreation activities are, in fact, an authorized project purpose of these facilities and must be accommodated in project operations."

The projects listed in the legislation include Bluestone Lake, Beechfork Lake, East Lynn Lake and R.D. Bailey Lake as well as the Summersville and Sutton facilities.

According to Rahall, the statutory recreation authorization includes downstream whitewater recreation, recreational fishing, and boating on water at the project. The legislation also specifically authorizes recreation on project lands as well which is intended to gain greater Corps cooperation in the planning of recreational projects such as campground, lodging facilities and related infrastructure requirements.

"With some initiative from the private sector and the State, this new authority should make some exciting new developmental opportunities dealing with recreation available at these projects," Rahall said.

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The legislation also contains another provision authored by Rahall which directs the Army Corps of Engineers in cooperation with the National Park Service to conduct a study and prepare a report 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 New River Gorge National River which is located downstream from the project.

Another Rahall sponsored provision in the bill prohibits the transfer of title from the federal government to the State for the Lesage/Greenbottom Swamp in Cabell County. This is an Army Corps fish and wildlife mitigation project in association with the improvements made at the Gallipolis Locks and Dam.

Rahall has been concerned that if the area was transferred to State ownership as proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers, Cabell County would lose tax revenues. Under federal ownership, Rahall said the area should qualify under the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The federal government makes PILT payments on an annual basis to local governments to compensate them for federal lands within their boundaries.

"The intent here is to proceed with a lease arrangement with the State to manage the fish and wildlife resources and recreational, cultural and historic values in the area," Rahall said.