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From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL ADVANCES CULTURE & RECREATION INITIATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) continued to wage his campaign to develop southern West Virginia's cultural and recreational potential during testimony today before a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

Rahall asked the Subcommittee on Interior to appropriate \$170,000 to the National Park Service to develop plans for the Glade Creek Visitor Facility. The facility, authorized as part of Rahall's West Virginia River bill enacted late last year, would be located in the vicinity of the I-64 Glade Creek Bridge in Raleigh County. The Congressman also requested \$1.6 million in operational, planning and acquisition funds for the Gauley River National Recreation Area, also established by his Rivers bill.

To facilitate the implementation of his Coal Mining Heritage Initiative, Rahall sought \$140,000 for a National Park Service coal mining heritage study in southern West Virginia. The study was authorized by a Rahall bill enacted last year and will focus on identifying and evaluating sites of cultural and historical significance to the region's coal mining heritage, including the establishment of a "Coal Heritage Trail."

"These actions are part of my effort to cultivate a cultural and recreational infrastructure in southern West Virginia upon which economic development can be based," Rahall said. "We have already made progress by gaining the necessary authorizations for several of these projects, and now we must work to obtain the necessary funding."

The Congressmen noted that additional projects are "on the drawing board" while others, such as the proposed New River Parkway, continue to come closer to becoming a reality. Rahall has already secured construction funds for the segment of the parkway that would run along the New River in Raleigh County.

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In Mingo County, Rahall envisions continued progress in the development of Matewan's historic and cultural resources. As part of a Rahall request, the National Park Service is working with the Matewan Development Center to devise a strategy that combines economic development with conservation planning.

Meanwhile, in what he called the "embryonic stages" is an effort to enhance Mercer County's tourism potential by gaining federal recognition of Bramwell's "coal baron era" homes and nearby coal camp. Rahall anticipates that other coal heritage projects throughout southern West Virginia will be proposed after completion of the National Park Service study and the release of the Coalways study conducted by Dr. Mack Gillenwater of Marshall University.

"All of these initiatives must be carefully planned and taken step-by-step to ensure their ultimate success. Expanding a region's economic base is not something that happens overnight, but with enough innovation, persistence and commitment progress is sure to be made," Rahall noted.