



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**CONTACT: STEPHEN SPINA****TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1989****PHONE: (202) 225-3452****RAHALL ANNOUNCES MILLIONS FOR WEST VIRGINIA**

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II (D-WV) announced today that the House of Representatives has passed the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1990. The Interior Appropriations Conference Report will earmark a total of \$150 million to the states under the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program.

Rahall noted that West Virginia is one of the highest annual recipients of these funds, which are used to mitigate health, safety and environmental hazards associated with abandoned coal mine lands. This amount is a full \$30 million more than the Bush Administration's request.

"These funds will go to help a number of initiatives of the Bureau of Mines," added Rahall. "Included are increased funding for the mine, health and safety technology program in areas involving the mitigation of respirable dust, noise, methane, fires, and explosions in underground coal mines. The bill also provides for greater resources to be directed toward land subsidence and acid mine drainage problems which afflict the coalfields."

Also provided for in the bill are funds to help in the development of the New River Gorge National River. These funds will go to completing the park headquarters, an appropriate visitors center, and to acquiring the rest of the land within the river gorge.

"The legislation before us would provide \$3.325 million in construction funding, another \$1.05 million in planning monies and necessary operations assistance for the New River Gorge National River, and \$175,000 to the National Park Service to formulate general management plans for the newly established Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River," said Rahall.

Rahall's legislation achieved the protection of these valuable lands. Taken together, the New, Gauley, and Bluestone comprise the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States.

Also included in the bill is \$125,000 for the New River Parkway Authority. This funding will be used to continue efforts to construct the New River Parkway along a segment of the National River thereby allowing tourists and West Virginians alike to travel along the river and admire its beauty along with facilitating access to such landmarks as Sandstone Falls.

Rahall also discussed a unique program that he has devoted considerable effort to-- West Virginia's "Coal Heritage Initiative." The Interior Bill

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grants \$100,000 for the National Park Service to conduct a study into this area.

"This is perhaps one of the most exciting new enterprises that we are pursuing in Southern West Virginia. During the last Congress I gained the enactment of legislation authorizing the National Park Service to study and identify sites of cultural and historical significance involving southern West Virginia's coal mining heritage, evaluate the sites and identify a 'Coal Heritage Trail' linking these sites together with existing federal and state parks units and recreational lakes," said Rahall.

"My goal is to foster the coordinated development and promotion of outstanding natural, scenic, recreational, cultural, and historic resources within southern West Virginia with access by interstate highways and scenic roadways."

Rahall also announced \$2.5 million for the Respirable Dust Center at West Virginia University, which engages in research to reduce the incidence and severity of black lung disease, and \$1.5 million for the National Mine Land Reclamation Center at WVU, which seeks new and improved methods to reclaim abandoned coal mine lands.

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II (D-WV) announced today that the House of Representatives has passed the Coal Heritage Trail and Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program. The House of Representatives passed the bill by a vote of 315 to 100. The bill authorizes \$100 million for the Coal Heritage Trail and \$100 million for the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program.

Rahall noted that West Virginia is one of the poorest states in the nation. He said that the bill will help to improve the state's economy by creating jobs and increasing the state's tax base. He also said that the bill will help to protect the state's environment by cleaning up abandoned mine lands.

"These funds will go to help a number of initiatives of the Bureau of Mines," added Rahall. "Included are increased funding for the mine health and safety technology program in areas involving the mitigation of respirable dust, noise, methane, fires, and explosions in underground coal mines. The bill also provides for greater resources to be directed toward land subsidence and acid mine drainage problems which afflict the coalfields."

Also provided for in the bill are funds to help in the development of the New River Gorge National River. These funds will go to completing the park headquarters, an appropriate visitor center, and to acquiring the rest of the land within the river gorge.

"The legislation before us would provide \$1.325 million in construction funding, another \$1.02 million in planning money and necessary operations assistance for the New River Gorge National River, and \$125,000 to the National Park Service to formulate general management plans for the newly established Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River," said Rahall.

Rahall's legislation achieved the protection of these valuable lands. Taken together, the New, Gauley, and Bluestone comprise the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States.

Also included in the bill is \$125,000 for the New River Parkway Authority. This funding will be used to continue efforts to construct the New River Parkway along a segment of the National River thereby allowing tourists and West Virginians alike to travel along the river and enjoy its beauty along with facilitating access to such landmarks as Sandstone Falls.

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REMARKS OF REP. NICK J. RAHALL, II
FY 90 INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. Speaker. In southern West Virginia we are working to diversify our economy through the conservation and promotion of some of our most outstanding natural, scenic, recreational, cultural and historic resources.

The legislation before us today, the Conference Report on the Fiscal Year 1990 Interior Appropriations bill, includes a number of provisions relating to this effort. These funding items, contained in the appropriation for the National Park Service, will enable us to more fully develop the potential of the National Park System units which have been established in southern West Virginia, as well as to engage in some exciting new initiatives in the region.

Over 10 years ago I worked to gain the establishment of the New River Gorge National River in southern West Virginia, and just last year, two other units of the National Park System, the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River, as part of the West Virginia National Interest River Conservation Act.

Today, the New River Gorge National River is still in the embryonic stages of development. We have yet to complete the park headquarters, an appropriate visitors center and have acquired only about 55% of the land within the river gorge.

For this reason, as visitation continues to rise at the New River, it is essential that adequate resources be provided for the types of infrastructure developments which the public expects from their national parks.

The legislation before us would appropriate \$3,325,000 in construction funding, \$1,055,000 in planning monies and necessary operations assistance for the New River Gorge National River. In addition, it would provide \$175,000 to the National Park Service to formulate general management plans for the newly established Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River.

Taken together, the New, Gauley and Bluestone comprise the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States. As we consider the fact that the United States continues to lose some its most pristine and wild rivers and streams to developments such as dams and hydroelectric powerplants, the fact that in West Virginia these river segments will remain protected is of national significance.

The Conference Report also includes \$125,000 for the New River Parkway Authority. This funding will be used to continue efforts to construct the New River Parkway along a segment of the National River and as such, facilitate visitor access to several of its outstanding features such as Sandstone Falls. In this regard, I would note that construction funding has already been earmarked for the parkway under a provision I sponsored in the last highway bill.

Perhaps one of the most exciting new enterprises we are pursuing in southern West Virginia involves efforts to preserve our unique cultural identity through what I call the "Coal Heritage Initiative." During the last Congress I gained the enactment of legislation authorizing the National Park Service to study and identify sites of cultural and historical significance involving southern West Virginia's coal mining heritage, evaluate the sites and identify a "Coal Heritage Trail" linking these sites together with existing federal and state park units and recreational lakes.

My goal is to foster the coordinated development and promotion of outstanding natural, scenic, recreational, cultural and historic resources within southern West Virginia with access by interstate highways and scenic roadways.

Under the Conference Report, \$100,000 will be available to the National Park Service to conduct the study authorized by Title VI of P.L. 100-699. Based on this study, as well as the recently completed report entitled, "The Coal Road: A Survey of Southern West Virginia Mining Tourism Potential," conducted by the Marshall University Center for Regional Progress, I would anticipate that we will have completed the necessary groundwork to support federal legislation designating a coal heritage site or sites as national historic parks under the National Park System.

While these park-related matters are of great importance, I would also note that there are several essential measures in this legislation relating to our coal-based economy in southern West Virginia. Approved in this appropriation legislation is \$150 million to the states under the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program. West Virginia is one of the highest annual recipients of these funds, which are used to mitigate health, safety and environmental hazards associated with abandoned coal mine lands. The amount in the bill is \$30 million more than the Administration's request.

The legislation also makes funding available for a number of Bureau of Mines initiatives. Included are increased funding for the mine, health and safety technology program in areas involving the mitigation of respirable dust, noise, methane, fires and explosions in underground coal mines. The bill also provides for greater resources to be directed toward land subsidence and acid mine drainage problems which afflict the coalfields.

I would also note that specifically earmarked by the appropriation measure are \$2.5 million for the Respirable Dust Center at West Virginia University, which engages in research to reduce the incidence and severity of black lung disease, and \$1.5 million for the National Mine Land Reclamation Center at West Virginia University, which seeks new and improved methods to reclaim abandoned coal mine lands.

Mr. Speaker, this is good legislation and I urge its adoption.