



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

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HOUSE OF REPS PASSES RAHALL WV TROUT HATCHERY PLAN
Innovative Proposal Would Use Abandoned Coal Mine Water

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) today announced that the U.S. House of Representatives has passed his legislation to establish in southern West Virginia a new federal trout hatchery that would use water from an abandoned coal mine.

"I view this project as not only necessary to serving the needs of West Virginia sportsmen but as an economic opportunity for McDowell County and all of southern West Virginia," Rahall noted.

Rahall and West Virginia Governor Gaston Caperton formulated the plan to construct a new federal trout hatchery in southern West Virginia to address the dual fold problem of inadequate hatchery capacity to meet demand, and, existing hatcheries being too distant from many southern West Virginia lakes and streams to make trout distribution feasible.

"This would be the first hatchery in the country that would depend on water from an old coal mine," Rahall said. "In a sense, we are developing a new industry by finding innovative uses, such as fish farming, for abandoned coal mines."

Rahall, who tacked the provision onto a catch-all western water resources bill pending before the House Interior Committee last November, was able to obtain House approval for a \$2.5 million authorization for the necessary studies and construction costs to build the project, which would be undertaken by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in consultation with the State of West Virginia. The bill, H.R. 2567, is now pending before the Senate.

According to Rahall, it is West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Director Ed Hamrick's job to find a suitable site for the hatchery. So far, the DNR has identified two potential sites in McDowell County. Of the two, the best candidate is the headwaters of the Elkhorn Creek of the Tug Fork near the McDowell-Mercer County line. The project is feasible due to the existence of mine discharges that have been tested as being an excellent source of non-acidic cold water. In fact, it is estimated that this site could support an annual production capacity of 25,000 pounds of trout.

"Since springs with sufficient flow to support a trout hatchery do not occur in southern West Virginia, the only source of large volumes of cold water are mine discharges. Mine discharges in that area of West Virginia are generally not acidic and could be suitable as a hatchery water supply," DNR Director Ed Hamrick wrote in a letter to Rahall.

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