



U.S. Congressman

Nick Rahall*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 17, 1992CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 226-7761**NEW FEDERAL FISH HATCHERY FOR SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA
Key House Panel Approves Rahall's Funding Request**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- At the request of U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), a key House appropriations panel has approved \$900,000 to undertake the necessary studies and begin construction of a new federal trout hatchery in southern West Virginia. The hatchery site is located in McDowell County.

"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 said.

The funding follows through on Rahall's successful effort during the last Congress to pass legislation to authorize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in consultation with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources to construct the new federal fish hatchery. Yesterday, the Subcommittee on Interior of the House Appropriations Committee approved the money as part of the fiscal year 1992 Interior Appropriation bill.

According to Rahall, there is a pressing need for a new fish hatchery to provide stocked trout for southern West Virginia lakes and streams. Currently, there is inadequate hatchery capacity to meet demand, and, existing hatcheries are too distant from many southern West Virginia lakes and streams to make trout distribution feasible.

"The DNR is appreciative of the assistance and cooperation from Congressman Rahall in obtaining funds for this project. This is another step in fulfilling our goal to bring a hatchery to McDowell County to improve trout fishing in southern West Virginia," said DNR Director Ed Hamrick.

The DNR believes the best site for the hatchery is the headwaters of Elkhorn Creek 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. It is estimated that the site could support an annual production capacity of 25,000 pounds of trout.

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

Currently, the Bowden National Fish Hatchery near Elkins is the major federal trout raising facility in West Virginia. The Leetown National Fisheries Center in Kearneysville concentrates on fishery related research while operations at the White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery are limited to raising eggs for nationwide use.