



U.S. Congressman

**Nick Rahall***WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**NEW RIVER BILL BEGINS TO ROLL**  
***House Panel Receives Testimony on Rahall***  
***Wild and Scenic Study Measure***  
**Feds & State Express Support - APCO Controversy Aired**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** -- Three residents of southeastern West Virginia presented testimony today before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands on behalf of U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall's (D-WV) measure aimed at requiring a Wild and Scenic Rivers Act eligibility determination to be made on the 17-mile segment of the New River from the West Virginia-Virginia state line to the Bluestone Lake.

Appearing before the Subcommittee were State Delegate Mary Pearl Compton of Union who represents Monroe and Summers Counties in the West Virginia House of Delegates, Jim McNeely of Bluefield and Robert Zacher of Lindside.

"This bill is a product of the people, by the people, and for the people," Rahall said in reference to the wide-spread public support for the measure.

According to Compton: "It simply comes down to this. We view this segment of the New River as a wonderful and beautiful place. A place of hike, picnic, fish, hunt and boat. A place to bring our children and grandchildren to play. The type of place that is fast becoming extinct in the Eastern United States."

Zacher noted: "A delicate and symbiotic relationship exists between wildlife and the people who live in this part of the New River Valley."

At the hearing, a representative of the National Park Service, which would conduct the study required by the bill, told the Subcommittee that the Department of the Interior has no objection to the measure. Similarly, in a letter addressed to Rahall released at the hearing, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Director Ed Hamrick wrote of his agency's support for the legislation. Compton also noted that the Rahall bill responds to the wishes of the people of West Virginia as well as of the West Virginia Legislature when it passed a resolution in March she sponsored (H.C.R. 41). The resolution recommended that a Wild and Scenic River Act study be done on the New River.

During the hearing, the contentious issue of the proposed APCO 765,000 volt powerline--slated to cross the segment of the New River that is the subject of the Rahall bill--was aired. Representing Appalachian Power, Edward Berlin, an attorney with a Washington, D.C., law firm (Swidler & Berlin) testified that "federal agencies will be loathe to permit a line that would cross the New River within the study area." In order to be constructed as proposed, the powerline requires rights-of-way across federal lands managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the New River), the Forest Service (Jefferson National Forest) and the National Park Service (Appalachian Trail).

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**"I am not here to debate whether or not a new powerline of this magnitude is necessary," Rahall said. "I am, however, here to say that we are opposed to the proposed routing of this powerline across the New River in West Virginia. This proposal is viewed not only as a threat to the integrity of the outstanding and significant values of the river, but as an assault on the very fabric of life in the New River Valley Region."**

**He concluded: "While the New River is known as the second oldest river in the world, I am here to say that time is fast running out for this particular segment if we, in this body, do not act."**

**Compton said: "Today, the integrity of this river is being threatened. It is being threatened by a proposed 765,000 volt electric transmission line that would cross the New River and then proceed to plow through Monroe and Summers Counties on its deadly path through the Jefferson National Forest into Virginia."**

**According to McNeely: "As a major river valley now virtually untouched by industrial or residential development, the New River valley within the Bluestone Project Area has taken on a significant scarcity value as other areas of the river have seen development. Immediate threats, such as the proposed powerline, would seriously degrade that value."**

**In reference to the proposed powerline Zacher, who testified on behalf of Common Ground, stated: "As proposed, its 200 foot high towers and 200 foot wide herbicide killed dead zone would bisect the Bluestone Wildlife Management Area. Its 60 decibel sizzling and crackling noise would pierce the still evening air at Anderson's Ridge overlooking the river, and it would induce electric currents in any conducting objects near it, such as fences, canoes, fishing and camping gear, guns, bicycles, people and animals."**

**Under the "New River Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 1992" the Secretary of the Interior would conduct a study to determine whether the river segment is eligible for inclusion under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and report to the Congress within a one-year period. The designation of a river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act normally entails a two-step process, starting with enactment of legislation to require an eligibility study. Based on the study's findings, Congress then considers legislation to designate the river as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.**

**The purpose of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is to preserve, in their free-flowing condition, river segments which possess outstanding scenic, recreational, fish and wildlife, historic and cultural values. In West Virginia, a segment of the Bluestone River is designated as a National Scenic River while both the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the New River Gorge National River designations include protections from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. All three rivers were the subject of Rahall sponsored legislation.**