

## Welcome

As Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, I would like to welcome you to the Committee's Web site. This site is intended to provide the public with insight into the goals and objectives of the Committee, as well as to keep visitors informed of the progress we are making to address the legislative issues affecting our nation's precious natural resources.

Having served on this Committee for half of my life and throughout my entire tenure in Congress, I am incredibly humbled by the opportunity to preside over it as Chairman. In so many ways, this Committee exercises responsibility over matters that enrich America and all Americans – from the natural and historic heritage of our National Parks and forests to the majesty of our oceans and wilderness areas.

As our nation continues to grow, facing a future of boundless potential, we have a duty to oversee development of energy sources and hardrock minerals while also ensuring that our natural treasures are preserved for our nation's most precious resource of all – the people, the heart and soul of America.

Stone monuments are built to great men and women. But the monuments to the truly worthy of men and women, in public life at least, are those which celebrate and preserve this nation's most significant and outstanding natural resources. They are monuments to those who have the courage, the conviction, and the vision to realize that while the wealth and prosperity of our country includes public works, wrought of concrete and steel, it also includes its wild lands, scenic vistas, and unique fish and wildlife.

By ensuring the responsible use and development of our natural landscape, we can also ensure the protection of God's creations – the vital plant and animal life human society depends upon. Every time we honor the public's right to know and to participate in federal actions that affect the people's lives, we assert our commitment that honest and ethical management should prevail throughout the government agencies that have authority over our nation's bounty.

In carrying out our responsibility to humankind, we must continue to ensure justice and vitality for Native Americans, who have nurtured and cherished our land from long ago, and who continue today as stewards of some of its greatest beauties and natural gifts. Likewise, we must ensure the same rights and democratic ideals for all American citizens, whether they reside in our territories or any of our nation's regions.

In whole, our diverse natural resources perform countless functions that are too often taken for granted – providing water and sustenance for the body, solace for the spirit, inspiration for the mind, and beauty for the eyes. Our actions today determine our nation's future and the futures of generations to come. Keeping

those thoughts always close to our hearts, we can fulfill our God-given duty to be good stewards of our world, its people and its natural wonders.

With Warm Regards, I am

Sincerely,

Nick J. Rahall, II  
Chairman