



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Expanding Tourism Opportunities In West Virginia

To capitalize more aggressively on West Virginia's developing tourism potential, I have added more than \$15 million to a 1992 appropriation bill for an array of Fish and Wildlife Service, national parks, and forest-related projects in our state.

West Virginia's long-time motto, "Wild, Wonderful West Virginia," has struck a chord among an increasing number of vacationing Americans who have visited our state in recent years.

My amendments to the 1992 Interior Appropriation Bill will enhance West Virginia's tourism potential by building on the National Park Service presence in the state, by financing the expansion of the West Virginia Wildlife Refuge, and by providing better facilities for visitors to the Monongahela National Forest, one of West Virginia's premier natural assets.

As Chairman of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I added \$5.6 million for planning and construction projects at the New River Gorge National River; \$5.6 million for planning and construction at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, including a conservation laboratory for park service artifacts; and nearly \$2 million for planning and design of the Wheeling National Heritage Area,

which will be the newest National Park unit in West Virginia, launched in the past two years through my initiative.

Also, my amendments included \$1.24 million for construction of tourist-related improvements in the Monongahela National Forest. Further, I added \$1 million to this bill to purchase additional Ohio River Islands to expand West Virginia's only National Wildlife Refuge. This is in addition to the \$2.1 million in federal funds that I have secured over the past two years to establish the Wildlife Refuge and acquire approximately 21 islands.

In a separate appropriation bill, which has already been approved by Congress and signed into law by the President, I added \$400,000 to the Appalachian Regional Commission budget to continue operations of the Appalachian Tourism Development Center at Concord College in Mercer County.

West Virginia is America's sleeping tourism giant. I believe that the improvements and projects contemplated by my amendments and related efforts that I am working on to make our state more appealing for tourism, will go far toward creating more jobs for West Virginians and developing a more viable and prosperous tourism industry in scenic West Virginia.