



News from the Committee on Natural Resources

Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II - Chairman

1324 Longworth House Office Building - Washington DC, 20515 - <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>

The Weekly Preview February 9 – 13, 2009

On the House Floor:

- During the week, the **House of Representatives** is expected to consider the following bill, subject to a rule:
 - [S. 22](#) (Bingaman): “*Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009*”

This Week's Hearings:

Can't make it to our hearings or markups in person? Stay connected with our live and archived video and audio webcasts, available at <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>.

- On Wednesday, the **Committee on Natural Resources** will hold the first in a three-part series of oversight hearings on offshore drilling during the month of February. With the expiration of the moratorium protecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts from offshore drilling, a big question facing the Congress and the Obama Administration is where and how new oil and gas exploration should occur. The first hearing will feature perspectives from environmental, tourism, and fishing groups. The following witnesses are scheduled to testify: Mr. Ted Danson, Oceana; Mr. Philippe Cousteau, Ocean Conservancy; Ms. Carolyn McCormick, Managing Director, Outer Banks (NC) Visitors Bureau; Mr. D.T. Minich, President, St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau; Mr. Zeke Grader, Executive Director, Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations; Mr. Bruce Allen, Co-Founder, Stop Oil Seeps California; and Mr. Jefferson Angers, President, Center for Coastal Conservation. The **Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources** will continue the in-depth look at offshore drilling through a number of hearings beginning in March.

Visit the Committee's Web site to access [witness testimony](#) following the conclusion of the hearing. (*February 11, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., Room 1324 Longworth House Office Building*)

- On Thursday, the **Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources** will hold a legislative hearing on the ["Coal Ash Reclamation, Environment, and Safety Act of 2009" \(H.R. 493\)](#), legislation introduced by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick Rahall to establish federal standards to ensure the structural integrity of impoundments used to dispose of coal ash – the residue which remains after the combustion of coal at electric utility power plants. H.R. 493 directs the Interior Department to set uniform design, engineering and inspection standards for coal ash impoundments like the one which collapsed at a power plant in Tennessee in December 2008. These standards would be similar to the requirements the agency already has in place for impoundments that hold coal waste generated at mines, as mandated by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. The legislation would also require a comprehensive inventory and assessment of coal ash impoundments nationwide. The Subcommittee will hear from federal and state officials, as well as individuals representing industry and environmental groups.

Visit the Committee's Web site to access [witness testimony](#) following the conclusion of the hearing or to view the [press release](#) or [fact sheet](#), released upon introduction of H.R. 493, with additional information. (*February 12, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., Room 1324 Longworth House Office Building*)

In Case You Missed It:

- On January 15, Chairman Rahall introduced a joint resolution invoking the Congressional Review Act to overturn the highly controversial gutting of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) pushed through by the Bush Administration during its waning days in office. [H.J. Res. 18](#) seeks to overturn the last-minute, ill-advised action by the Bush Administration to do away with the ESA's cornerstone Section 7 consultation process, a move that essentially gives federal agencies an unacceptable degree of discretion to decide on their own whether or not to comply with the law. Visit the Committee's Web site to view the [press release](#) or [fact sheet](#) with additional information.
- On January 22, Chairman Rahall and Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Chairman Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the ["Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act of 2009" \(H.R. 644\)](#), legislation to prevent mining for uranium and other minerals on approximately one million acres near the Grand Canyon. The legislation will withdraw the lands near the Grand Canyon from mineral exploration under the 1872 Mining Law. Visit the Committee's Web site to view the [press release](#) with additional information.
- On January 27, Chairman Rahall introduced legislation to reform the antiquated 1872 Hardrock Mining Law that has allowed large corporations to extract hardrock minerals from public lands in the West with no royalties paid to the American people. The ["Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2009" \(H.R. 699\)](#) would end the financial and environmental abuses permitted by the 1872 Mining Law by imposing a royalty on the production of hardrock minerals on federal lands, similar to the royalties paid by coal, oil and gas industries for the disposition of these public resources. Visit the Committee's Web site to view the [press release](#) with additional information.

- On February 3, Chairman Rahall called for the replacement of the current U.S. Commissioner to the International Whaling (IWC), amid growing criticisms that holdover political appointees of the Bush Administration are proposing to dismantle the current worldwide ban on commercial whaling. Visit the Committee's Web site to view the [press release](#) and the text of the letter.
- On February 3, Chairman Rahall urged the Commerce Department to dismiss efforts by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to control offshore aquaculture permitting in federal waters. In October 2008, Rahall called on the Gulf Council and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to discontinue their haphazard approach to the development of an offshore aquaculture permitting system on a Council by Council basis. Visit the Committee's Web site to view the [press release](#) and the text of the letter.
- On February 4, the Committee on Natural Resources held an organizational meeting to adopt the [Committee Rules](#) and agree to an [oversight plan](#). Visit the Committee Web site to view the [Committee Members](#) and Subcommittee assignments for the 111th Congress.

Quotable Quote:

"I am pleased to welcome such a diverse group of Members, both new and returning, to the Natural Resources Committee. The broad array of issues under our jurisdiction - from national parks and forests, to oceans and wildlife, and public lands and waters - affects and enriches the lives of millions of Americans, including those residing in the U.S. Territories and on Indian reservations. Although the Members of this Committee may hail from different corners of the Nation, both near and far, we share a common interest in working to fulfill our many stewardship and trust responsibilities."

– *Chairman Rahall, after announcing the [roster of Members](#) who will serve on each of the four Subcommittees for the 111th Congress on February 4, 2009.*

Calendar:

Click on the text within the calendar to be linked directly to our Web site.

Monday 2/9	Tuesday 2/10	Wednesday 2/11	Thursday 2/12	Friday 2/13
		Full Committee Oversight Hearing: "Offshore Drilling: Environmental and Commercial Perspectives" (10:00 AM)	Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources: Legislative Hearing on H.R. 493 (10:00 AM)	

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