

JEROD HARMAN

PRESIDENT, WEST VIRGINIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Written Testimony on S. 2555

The proposed "New River Gorge National Park and Preserve" designation

I appreciate the opportunity that our sportsmen's organizations had to be a part of this process and to communicate openly with our Senators in attempts to create the New River National Park and Preserve. We worked diligently to make reasonable requests that made common sense. Simply put, our requests were to make the New River Gorge area better for the sportsmen and be considerate to all visitors. Unfortunately, we did not get what we asked for in order to gain support from the sportsmen for the proposal.

Sportsmen and women, and our youth would give up a lot of good hunting ground if this proposal passes. This is a major problem with our sportsmen. Additionally, the future regulations for privately owned land within park boundaries are now in question and that is not acceptable to the landowners and the sportsmen who hunt there. We asked for trapping to be permitted, and it was not. There is no exception for archery hunting in the language of the 500' barrier, and that should be favorably considered.

The potential exists for user fees within the new National Park designation, and this creates yet another concern for the sportsmen. Also, new jurisdiction of the outfitters for hunting and fishing around the New River would create additional and unnecessary red-tape.

These are some of the concerns that the sportsmen's groups needed to be addressed for our support of a National Park and Preserve designation. Our simple requests have not been met, and the loss of additional hunting ground and potential access is completely unacceptable to the sportsmen. We, the sportsmen, are going to be some of the biggest losers, and we strongly oppose the designation change for the New River Gorge.

Should changes be made to the proposal that support the sportsmen's requests and could potentially get us all on common ground, we look forward to receiving them for consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerod Harman

President

WV Wildlife Federation