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## **New road at Walter Dam will be boon to tourism, officials say**

By Tom Long , Staff Writer

**With a three-foot-long, red-handled scissors, U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-11, cut a red ribbon to signal the opening of the new road on top of Francis E. Walter Dam in Bear Creek Township.**

The road will allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to release water 22 times a year, up from seven. The old road, which will remain open, is under water when water levels are high. It was partly submerged during the ceremony.

Kanjorski said the project, completed with \$2.8 million in federal funds, will bring an additional \$30 million in tourism-based revenue to the area.

Kanjorski said that each additional release of water creates more opportunities for rafting and other river recreation. He estimates each release creates \$2 million in spending by people who use the river.

The dam project has been a long time coming.

Discussions about building the road have been going on for almost 10 years, said Roy Denmark, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers chief of operations. The project has been receiving funding since fiscal year 2002, he said.

The ribbon cutting was held on top on the dam, which was built in 1960. Participants from the township and Carbon County governments, Corps of Engineers and businesses that rely on the river said the project was an example of cooperation between groups that are often in conflict.

Kanjorski said the project would help fishing on the river. There should be an increase in trout spawning because of the higher water level. After the news conference, Kanjorski - dressed in a suit and tie, with waders nowhere in sight - told reporters he regretted not bringing his fishing pole.

Denmark said the project's goal was to "accommodate as much as we can in lake fishing, downstream fishing and whitewater rafting" on the Lehigh River.

Ken Powley, who runs a whitewater rafting company, said the increased water

releases will be a boon to business and will "translate to thousands of tourists."  
The project will also make driving through the area safer by reducing unexpected flooding, Kanjorski said.  
"This has just been a win-win-win situation."

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