

Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area

Economic Benefits to Augusta County

The scenic forested and mountainous areas in the western part of Augusta County are already critical to the economic health of the county. Locking in land-use protections via Congressional designation of the proposed Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area (SMNSA) will preserve and magnify those economic benefits and help ensure a prosperous future for Augusta County for generations to come.



Photograph by Brad Striebig

The proposal would designate 90,000 acres of Shenandoah Mountain in the George Washington National Forest – almost half of this in Augusta County – as a National Scenic Area with four embedded Wilderness areas, which afford the highest level of land protection. Designation as a National Scenic Area ensures that special lands are managed cohesively to protect their natural, recreational and scenic attributes while still providing economic opportunity for local communities and respecting private property rights.

Hundreds of Shenandoah Valley businesses, including many in Augusta County, support enactment of the Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area, not only because they are good environmental stewards, but because they recognize the value of effective conservation to their bottom lines. More information on the SMNSA and a full list of its supporters are at www.friendsofshenandoahmountain.org.

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Photograph by White's Wayside



Photograph by Brad Striebig

Key economic benefits of the SMNSA include:

Tourism. The beautiful mountains and clear streams of the GW National Forest are a major draw for tourists to Augusta County, who spent over \$126 million here in 2017, directly employing 1,110 people and generating \$4.3 million in local tax receipts.¹ The tourism sector has been steadily growing in recent years, and indirect or multiplier effects of tourism spending mean additional jobs and income for county residents. Establishing the SMNSA will propel future growth and help spread it county-wide by ensuring that visitors – campers, weekenders, hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, fishermen, birders and others – are attracted to Augusta's pristine western lands and their world-class biodiversity in growing numbers.

Benefits to Visitors and Residents.

GW National Forest is one of the top 10 most visited national forests in the country and lies within a two-hour drive of at least 10 million potential visitors. Surveys show that of those people who moved to counties with designated Wilderness areas, 72 percent said this was a major factor in their decision to move. Private property values rise when they are adjacent to protected lands.



Photograph by Jim Waite

Agriculture. Farming is vital to the economic health of Augusta County, where more than 1,700 farms cover 286,195 acres. Farmers depend for their livelihood on the clean water that originates in the county's western highlands. The National Scenic Area includes the headwaters of the Calfpasture, Shaws Fork, Dry, and North rivers, and would provide permanent protection of their watersheds in the proposal area. Designation of the National Scenic Area would allow continued maintenance of existing reservoirs and, if necessary, expansion of municipal water infrastructure in the proposal area.

¹ Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation