

Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area (Proposed) Resolution in Support of Congressional Designation

WHEREAS, Friends of Shenandoah Mountain, a local broad-based coalition of organizations, businesses, faith groups, and individuals, has proposed Congressional designation of a 90,000-acre tract of George Washington National Forest (GWNF) land on Shenandoah Mountain between Route 33 and Route 250 as a National Scenic Area with four embedded Wilderness areas;

WHEREAS, 38,650 acres of the Proposal lie within Rockingham County, with 33,422 acres proposed for National Scenic Area designation and approximately 5,200 acres proposed for Wilderness designation;

WHEREAS, the Board supports protection of high-quality water resources on the GWNF;

WHEREAS, the Proposal area on Shenandoah Mountain supplies pure drinking water for Bridgewater, Harrisonburg and parts of Rockingham County, and includes the watershed for Switzer Dam;

WHEREAS, Wilderness designation of Skidmore Fork, the watershed for Switzer Reservoir, would provide the strongest protection for critical water resources for the City of Harrisonburg and some Rockingham County residents;

WHEREAS, Proposal boundaries will be set back from Harrisonburg's Switzer Reservoir, and access road, which are located in part on City land and in part on National Forest land, at a distance recommended by the City to allow for flexibility to meet future needs;

WHEREAS, Harrisonburg's Dry Run Reservoir and its access road, located in part on City land and in part on National Forest land, will be completely excluded from the SMNSA Proposal;

WHEREAS, designation of the Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area (SMNSA) would protect the headwaters of the Dry River, Gum Run, Black Run, Skidmore Fork, Hone Quarry Run, and Briery Branch streams, which are a regional stronghold for native brook trout;

WHEREAS, the Board supports outdoor recreational activities in the National Forest, including hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, mountain biking, scenic driving, nature study, rock climbing, and horseback riding;

WHEREAS, in a letter dated 03/15/2012, the Board endorsed the collaboration of the George Washington National Forest stakeholder group, which has recommended the proposed SMNSA and four embedded Wilderness areas for Congressional designation, in conjunction with an increase in active management across the National Forest;

WHEREAS, the GWNF Land and Resources Management Plan recommends the SMNSA for Congressional designation;

WHEREAS, the SMNSA Proposal has been endorsed by over 400 businesses and organizations and by numerous neighboring landowners, many of which are in Rockingham County;

WHEREAS, all current access roads within the Proposal area would remain open and maintained, to the extent possible;

WHEREAS, the proposed boundaries of the SMNSA will be adjusted by 350 feet to allow for widening and improvement of Route 33;

WHEREAS, Route 924, the state-maintained access road to the crest of Shenandoah Mountain, would continue to be maintained by VDOT and, if necessary, realigned;

WHEREAS, the National Scenic Area legislation will be written to support:

- maintenance of and improvements to existing dams and reservoirs within the Proposal, including Briery Branch and Hone Quarry reservoirs in Rockingham County,
- tapping into existing reservoirs for municipal use, and
- establishment of new reservoirs, if needed, for the public good;

WHEREAS, recreational facilities, such as Hone Quarry Picnic Area and Campground, and historic structures of cultural significance (High Knob Fire Tower, built by the CCC and World I Veterans, and Hone Quarry Picnic Shelter, built by the CCC) could be maintained;

WHEREAS, trails will be maintained and new trails constructed, either by the GWNF or by volunteer groups;

WHEREAS, prescribed fires may be conducted in the SMNSA;

WHEREAS, wildlife clearings in the SMNSA may be maintained and some new clearings may be added;

WHEREAS, pests and non-native invasive species may be controlled, as determined necessary by the Forest Service;

WHEREAS, fire and rescue procedures and policies that would pertain to the Skidmore Fork Wilderness have been reviewed by the Rockingham County Fire Chief and deemed acceptable;

WHEREAS, members of the public may continue to gather firewood in the National Scenic Area with a National Forest permit;

WHEREAS, designation of the SMNSA pertains to National Forest land only and would in no way restrict private property rights of landowners adjacent to or within the area;

WHEREAS, designation of the SMNSA would support and enhance the local tourism economy and quality of life for county residents;

WHEREAS, designation of the SMNSA would not adversely affect Rockingham County's ability to receive payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) payments;

WHEREAS, Rockingham County will not be subject to any viewshed requirements or development restrictions on lands not under management of the GWNF; and that all zoning and land use ordinances of Rockingham County for lands not under the management of the GWNF remain solely the authority and discretion of the local governing body;

WHEREAS, should, at some future date, the local governing body determine that negative, unintended consequences are occurring because of these designations, the local government body has the authority and right to seek removal of these designations by all means at their disposal.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors supports Congressional designation of the Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area and embedded Skidmore Fork Wilderness.

Given under our hand this tenth day of March
in the year two thousand twenty-one, A.D.



Rick L. Chandler, Chairman
Supervisor, District 3



Dewey L. Ritchie
Supervisor, District 1



Sallie Wolfe-Garrison
Supervisor, District 2



William B. Kyger, Jr.
Supervisor, District 4



Michael A. Breeden
Supervisor, District 5

Attest:



Stephen G. King
County Administrator