Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area

Economic Benefits to Rockingham County

The scenic forested mountain areas in and around Rockingham County are already vital to the county’s economic well-being. Strengthening land-use protections via Congressional designation of the proposed Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area (SMNSA) will preserve and magnify those benefits and build prosperity for Rockingham’s citizens and economy for generations to come.

Key economic benefits:

Tourism. The beautiful mountains and clear streams of the GW National Forest are a major draw for tourists to Rockingham County, who injected almost $232 million into the county’s economy in 2018, employing 2200 people and generating over $6,000,000 in local tax receipts. The tourism sector has grown steadily in recent years, and multiplier effects of tourist spending mean additional jobs and income for county residents. Establishing the SMNSA will raise the region’s tourist profile as one of the East’s premier outdoor-recreation destinations. Future growth will be propelled as visitors – campers, weekenders, hikers, mountain bikers, hunters, fishermen, birders and others – are attracted to Rockingham County’s world-class scenery and outdoor recreation opportunities in growing numbers.

Clean Water for Agriculture. Farming is vital to the economic health of Rockingham County, and farmers depend for their livelihood on clean water. Farmers along North River, Dry River, and Briery Branch would enjoy a water supply permanently protected from the effects of industrial development, such as fracking for natural gas. The SMNSA would also help ensure a reliable supply of pure water for future generations of residential and business users.

Broad-based Economic Value. In addition to the direct benefits to Rockingham’s tourist and other businesses, JMU scientists estimate that lands within the SMNSA proposal already generate $13.7 million per year in other local benefits, including the value of the water supply, energy savings, and carbon dioxide sequestered by forested hills. Designation of the SMNSA would grow this value and sustain less quantifiable natural values – like the beauty of the forest, the native trout streams, and the rich variety of wildlife – all of which make Rockingham County such a healthy, vibrant, and desirable place to live and raise a family.