



Foundation Document Overview

Shenandoah National Park

Virginia



Contact Information

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Purpose



SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK preserves and protects nationally significant natural and cultural resources, scenic beauty, and congressionally designated wilderness within Virginia's northern Blue Ridge Mountains, and provides a broad range of opportunities for public enjoyment, recreation, inspiration, and stewardship.



Significance

Significance statements express why Shenandoah National Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Shenandoah National Park provides visitors with the opportunity to explore mountain peaks, hidden hollows, cascading streams, accessible wilderness, and stunning natural beauty within just 90 miles of Washington, DC. The park's outstanding scenery, historic lodges, and broad range of world-class recreation opportunities, including more than 500 miles of hiking trails and the iconic Skyline Drive, provide visitors with a "western park experience" in the east.
- Shenandoah National Park is a natural and scenic landscape conserved as a national park after a long history of prior settlement and human use. The park is an outstanding example of nature's regenerative ability and a testament to the benefits of America's conservation ethic.
- Encompassing more than 300 square miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah National Park protects an abundance of native and globally rare animal and plant populations, habitats, migratory bird populations, and the endangered Shenandoah salamander, which lives nowhere else in the world. As one of the largest preserved areas in the Mid-Atlantic region, the park provides an ideal place for scientific research and understanding of the Central Appalachian Biome.



Fundamental Resources and Values

- Shenandoah National Park showcases the geology and high elevation hydrology of the Appalachians, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world. The high elevation ecosystems and headwaters preserved in the park help contribute to the ecological integrity of valuable cold-water resources downstream. All headwater streams in the park flow to the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the eastern United States.
- The first Civilian Conservation Corps camp in a national park system unit was established in Shenandoah National Park; the Corps left an indelible mark on the landscape that still contributes to the unique character of the park.
- The Commonwealth of Virginia, private businesses, and local citizens, with the support of the federal government, banded together to advocate for the creation of a national park in the eastern United States through purchase and condemnation of privately owned land. The land acquired by the Commonwealth of Virginia was later donated to the American people and entrusted to the National Park Service to ensure its protection for current and future generations.
- In 1950, more than a decade before the 1964 Civil Rights Act became law, Shenandoah National Park, by order of the Secretary of the Interior and despite regional practices, became a legally desegregated public space with fully integrated visitor facilities.
- President Herbert Hoover constructed Rapidan Camp to serve as the summer White House during his presidency (1929–1933) due to its outstanding recreational opportunities and serene mountain setting. The camp, which President Hoover later donated to the federal government as a presidential retreat, was the site of many national and international policy meetings and is now designated as a national historic landmark.



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Healthy, Functioning Ecosystems**
- **Wilderness Character**
- **Iconic Destinations**
- **A Broad Range of Visitor Experiences**
- **Skyline Drive**
- **Scenic Beauty**
- **Clean Air**
- **Partnerships and Volunteerism**
- **Evidence of Human Uses of the Land**

Shenandoah National Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Historic Structures**
- **The Park Collections**

Description

Shenandoah National Park lies along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains in north central Virginia, less than 90 miles southwest of Washington, DC. The park stretches about 80 miles north to south and consists of more than 197,000 acres, including nearly 80,000 acres of designated wilderness. The park straddles habitats of both the northern and southern Appalachians and supports a rich assemblage of approximately 2,100 species of flora and fauna. Rock outcrops punctuate this otherwise forested habitat.

Skyline Drive, a world-famous park tour road, traverses the length of the park for 105 miles and provides opportunities for outstanding views of the Shenandoah Valley and the Piedmont from the Drive's numerous overlooks. The park boasts 500 miles of hiking trails, including 101 miles of the famous Appalachian Trail, as well as several historically significant landmarks including Skyland, Rapidan Camp, and structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

