



SHENANDOAH
NATIONAL PARK TRUST

FIELD NOTES

Newsletter | March 2022

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"What Are You Bringing To The Park?"

For as long as she can remember, Ember Rensel had been pulled in two directions. Nature gave her joy, but writing brought her fulfillment.

Working with the Shenandoah National Park Trust — first through the Appalachian Conservation Corps, and now as an intern for the Trust itself — showed her that she could do both. "I didn't have to let go of the outdoors to get to the writing," she explains.

During Rensel's senior year of college, she applied for a six-month interpretation and education internship in Shenandoah National Park, through the ACC. She loved leading school groups on field trips in the Park.

One group included a little girl who had recently emigrated from Ukraine and spoke almost no English. She watched, intent, as Rensel demonstrated how you could gently overturn rocks to find salamanders. A moment later, "she was just off through the forest, finding all these salamanders." Her mother cried tears of joy as she watched.

As part of her work, Rensel also researched and presented a program on "The Hidden Figures of Shenandoah" — three women who shaped the culture and formation of the Park. They include

This spring, Rensel will be interning with the Trust: auditing their website, building a grant database, and working closely with the Park's media office.

Addie Pollock, co-owner of Skyland Resort, who donated the land that's now the Lumberlost Trail; Emma Susan Weakley, a beloved icon of the Blue Ridge Mountains who was known for her hospitality; and First Lady Lou Henry Hoover, who with President Herbert Hoover developed Rapidan Camp.

At the end of the program, Rensel invited those present to reflect on what they, too, might contribute. "You're just a guest and a visitor here, but what are you bringing to the park?" she asked. "And what are you taking away?"

Rensel took a position in Washington, D.C. to work in communications for the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance program, but her heart remained in Shenandoah.

Her now husband, David Heishman, proposed in February — at Blackrock Summit, fittingly — and she hoped to return to the Park.

This spring, Rensel will be interning with the Trust: auditing their website, building a grant database, and working closely with the Park's media office. It's profoundly meaningful, she says, to be "circling back to work with the Trust again, when they really set the course of my adult life; [so] I could do all the nature and outdoor stuff that I really love and still write."





Dear friends,


Early spring is one of my favorite times in Shenandoah. The wind is wild and the weather unpredictable. You may still see icicles on waterfalls, or you may glimpse the first blooms of hepatica and bloodroot brightening the forest floor. The entire park is filled with the promise of new growth.

The Trust, too, is anticipating a season of growth. Take a look at the field guide included in this newsletter to see all the exciting projects we're undertaking, including maintaining trails, removing invasive species, educating visitors about bear safety and hosting a new class of Shenandoah Youth Corps participants.

This work can't be done without you, our loyal supporters. I'm so grateful for your generosity of spirit! You make it possible for so many people to experience and enjoy Shenandoah, growing a new generation of Park lovers who will cherish this place we all love.

See you on the trail,


Jessica Cocciolone
Executive Director

 Andrew Sentipal



Inside Shenandoah

This time of year, we see the days getting longer, the forest beginning to bud out and flocks of spring-migrating birds.

For me, it feels like a period of transformation and anticipation. I know the forest will transform into a cathedral of greens, the chorus of birdsong will increase, and the Park will welcome many more visitors than we have seen over the winter.

I hope that when you come, you will see the lasting impacts your support is making on the Park and the experiences of visitors:

You're making Shenandoah a safe haven for black bears.

One of our biggest concerns is bears becoming habituated to humans because visitors don't store food and dispose of trash properly. Your support allows us to hire staff to educate visitors and enforce the rules.


You're saving Boulder Cabin.

This summer, with your dollars, the Trust is supporting the rehabilitation of the historic Boulder Cabin at Skyland. Once restored, this picturesque cabin will provide workspace as well as living accommodations for our artists-in-residence to hone their crafts while sharing their perspective and art with Park visitors.

You're teaching kids to love the Park.

Connecting kids to nature is key for ensuring national parks remain relevant for future generations. Your philanthropy allows us to hire rangers and provide aid for schools to visit Shenandoah National Park — both in person and virtually.

You can see the Park is very fortunate to have supporters like you and the great partnership of the Shenandoah National Park Trust. We want you to know that your support is greatly appreciated by me, the entire park staff, and the 1.6 million+ visitors we'll see this year.

Warm regards,  Patrick M. Kenney | Shenandoah National Park Superintendent

Celebrating Diversity in the Outdoors — and Banff's Return!



L to R: Chuck Millsaps, Great Outdoor Provision Co.; Jessica Coccione, SNPT; Earl B. Hunter Jr., Black Folks Camp Too.



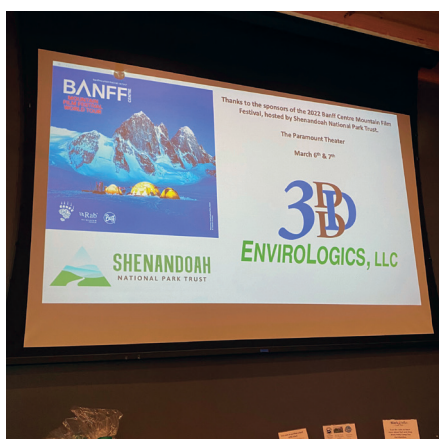
To welcome back the Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival after a pandemic-related hiatus, on February 10th the Trust hosted a Banff Kick-Off Party for our Banff Adventurer members at Three Notch'd Brewing Company in Charlottesville. This inaugural event featured a dynamic keynote speaker: Earl B. Hunter, Jr., Founder and President of Black Folks Camp Too. Almost 100 people gathered to hear Hunter speak about his company's mission.

Founded in 2019, Black Folks Camp Too is a marketing company that helps outdoor brands connect with Black consumers by creating inclusive content, organizing events and developing marketing plans. "Our mission is to remove fear, and to add knowledge, and invite more Black folks to go camping and enjoy the outdoor lifestyle with any and everyone," he says. Any effort to make outdoor recreation welcoming to people of all races, ages and genders must be more than "kumbaya": "It has to be sincere, it has to be meaningful, it has to be measured, so that it can be sustainable and delightful."

The Shenandoah National Park Trust is committed to increasing diversity in

outdoor spaces. The staff and Board of Trustees believe that substantive change can be achieved through collaboration and cooperation with as many partners and community members as possible, and we will continue to work together to achieve this worthy goal.

The Trust would especially like to thank all the dedicated individuals and organizations who supported this event, and especially our Banff Adventurer members. If you would like to learn more about becoming a Banff Adventurer and get updates about the film festival, please visit www.snptrust.org/banff.



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— Earl B. Hunter Jr., Black Folks Camp Too



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Why We Give: Brett Brenner and Brian Reid

Brett Brenner and Brian Reid both grew up in the Midwest, without a mountain in sight. Brenner was raised in Kansas, while Reid's family owned a farm in Wisconsin. "As a result, Reid says, "going to parks and national parks was not something that we had much time to do."

It wasn't until college, when a friend showed him a slideshow of a recent camping trip, that Reid took an interest in the outdoors: "It looked like so much fun, what he did, to go to parks and go camping," he says. When he moved to Washington, D.C. in 1989, he discovered Shenandoah.

One of his favorite places was White Oak Canyon Trail, a challenging waterfall trail near Syria, Va. He has fond memories of hiking there in the sweltering summer, then cooling off in one of the many swimming holes along the trail.

As much as he and Brenner loved the Park, they'd never heard of the Trust. Then, eight years ago, longtime donor Teal Baker invited them to a party she was hosting on behalf of the Trust.



Inspired by the presentation they heard, they became active supporters. They deeply value the work the Trust does with children. "It's been interesting to watch how they've been able to, through the pandemic, still have rangers do programs and really remain connected to the schools," Brenner says. Especially important, Reid adds, is how the Trust reaches out to students from under-resourced areas who may not even have heard of Shenandoah National Park.

"I think it's important for people to know that the park is there. That it is accessible," Brenner says. "It's easy when you're in D.C. to forget that it's just down the street, more or less. A long street, but down the street."

Mark Your Calendar!

National Park Week

(online and in-person events):

■ April 16 – 23, 2022

Volunteer Day in the Park

■ April 23, 2022

Give Local Piedmont

(online giving day):

■ May 3, 2022

Rapidan Society's Weekend in the Park:

■ July 22, 2022

Fee-Free Days in Shenandoah

Park admission (normally \$30 per vehicle) is waived on these days:

- Saturday, April 16
First day of National Park Week
- Thursday, August 4
Anniversary of the Great American Outdoors Act
- Saturday, September 24
National Public Lands Day
- Friday, November 11
Veterans Day



See
Your
Impact!



Did you miss our 2021 Impact Report?
Scan this QR code with your phone to see
how your support is shaping Shenandoah.



Photo: Dan Farrell