



SHENANDOAH
NATIONAL PARK TRUST



FIELD NOTES

Newsletter | Summer 2026

Celebrating
Shenandoah
National Park's



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The Bigger Picture:

How Photos are Revealing the State of Shenandoah's Streams



When it comes to water, Shenandoah National Park is a vital piece of the eastern landscape. The headwaters for many of the region's rivers can be found within park borders, and native fish journey up into mountain streams to begin a new cycle of life.

Park staff have been monitoring water levels at three sites for over 30 years.

"We look at resources that are fundamental to the park, to understand the status of resources and potentially intervene," explained Evan Childress, Shenandoah's Chief of Natural and Cultural Resources.

In the case of streamflow, where direct intervention isn't possible, the data informs management decisions, particularly around protecting fish populations in times of drought. Recent hydrology work has revealed that streamflow can vary widely, even in different sections of the same river, proving that the three gauges are not collecting enough information to understand conditions across the entire park.

To address this challenge, Childress applied for a grant from the Trust to maintain the current gauges and install approximately 35 cameras at sites where water levels could be visually monitored.

Daily photos provide relative data, which the park is using to train a computer model to analyze water levels — requiring only a few field measurements to translate images into real, quantifiable numbers.

"The park is part of the landscape, and understanding how these rivers are changing is important not just to the park, but to surrounding communities and all the way out to the Chesapeake Bay," Childress said.

Over time, he hopes this data will reveal long-term trends and contribute to public understanding. "The Trust is an essential partner for this kind of work. There are lessons we can only learn by looking at something for a long time," he added. The Trust is proud to work with park staff in new ways to sustain healthy streams flowing through Shenandoah. ▲

Dear friends,

This summer, we celebrate a milestone 90 years in the making. Shenandoah National Park has been sheltering wildlife, preserving history, and welcoming millions of visitors to one of America's most beloved wild places for nine decades. It is a moment worth celebrating, and one that reminds us just how much this park means to so many.

Yet even as we celebrate, the work of protecting Shenandoah has never been more urgent. Trails wear under the weight of increasing visitation. Climate

pressures stress the park's fragile ecosystems. And tightening federal budgets leave critical needs unmet. The park we love faces real challenges and meeting them requires more than good intentions—it requires committed partners like you.

That is why your generosity means everything to us. Every gift you make empowers the Shenandoah National Park Trust to step in where it matters most—funding trail restoration, supporting wildlife conservation, and ensuring that the experiences that have defined this park for 90 years continue to be possible for the next 90. Because

of you, Shenandoah does not just endure; it thrives.

As we mark this remarkable anniversary, we are deeply grateful for your belief in this place and in its future. Thank you for being part of Shenandoah's story. ▲

Hope to see you on the trails!



Jessica Cocciolone
Executive Director
Shenandoah National Park Trust

 NPS | N. Lewis



Inside Shenandoah

J. Tracy Stakely | Superintendent | Shenandoah National Park



Dear Friends of Shenandoah National Park,

As Shenandoah National Park enters its ninth decade, I am reminded daily of the profound and lasting impact of your generosity. The support offered by you—and by those who have cared for this place over generations—continues to strengthen the park's natural and cultural legacy. Your commitment sustains work that reaches well beyond park boundaries, benefiting communities across Virginia and contributing to research and stewardship efforts that will shape the future of Shenandoah for years to come.

This summer's newsletter features several ways your partnership makes a difference. Expanded streamflow monitoring is providing essential data

to help protect the park's watersheds and the downstream communities that rely on them. Your investments also bolster programs like Stewards of Shenandoah, where dedicated staff, including Morgan Housden and Margo Roseum, are helping people of all ages connect deeply with the natural world and cultivate a lifelong ethic of care.

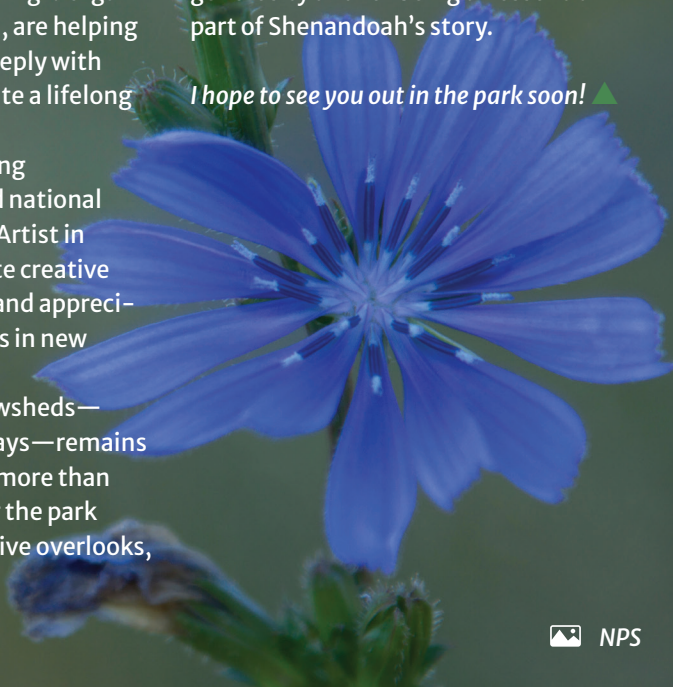
We also honor the enduring relationship between art and national parks. Programs such as the Artist in Residence continue to elevate creative voices that help visitors see and appreciate Shenandoah's landscapes in new and meaningful ways.

Preserving the park's viewsheds—treasured since its earliest days—remains central to our mission. With more than 70% of visitors experiencing the park primarily through Skyline Drive overlooks,

your support helps ensure these iconic vistas can be enjoyed by generations to come.

Thank you for your continued generosity and for being an essential part of Shenandoah's story.

I hope to see you out in the park soon! ▲



 NPS



It Takes a Village:

Community and Youth Outreach Coordinator Highlight

From deepening visitor experiences through diverse programming, to showing how park supporters can champion public lands, Community and Youth Outreach Coordinator, Morgan Housden has seen first-hand how her role creates impact.

“No two weeks look the same—we’re working with different groups, facilitating service projects, and completing numerous new trainings. It takes a village to pull everything off that visitors see,” Morgan shared.

Morgan works with many divisions across the park and has hit the ground running this past year to provide more capacity to the park’s volunteer office. In 2025, she helped co-lead a dozen volunteer service projects, conducted programs with 11 different community and youth organizations, and helped to support over 27,000 volunteer hours in the park.

As the only Trust employee operating primarily within Shenandoah National Park, she’s gained a unique understanding of what it takes to protect and preserve it for future generations.

The impact of Morgan’s position extends beyond the park’s boundary. At a recent career fair at Laurel Ridge Community College, Morgan joined a park ranger to speak with students about opportunities in public lands. Students who love the outdoors were excited to learn more about careers that they did not know existed in the park.

“Jobs you find in town can be found in Shenandoah too”, Morgan added.

The National Park Service consists of a large ecosystem of careers that support the spaces we love, and Morgan’s role is helping create those connections.

As Shenandoah enters its 90th year, cultivating future stewards through engagement has played a defining role in shaping the park’s legacy. Thanks to your support, the Trust is honored to carry that legacy forward through impactful opportunities like the ones made possible because of Morgan’s position. “It really does take a team effort between all of our partners [to connect more people to Shenandoah],” Morgan concluded. “Knowing that we’re all here to lean on each other and [make a bigger impact]—that’s what matters.” ▲



Art as an Invitation



Art is an invitation—to remember the past, make meaningful connections in the present, and plan for the future. In Shenandoah, where the landscape is steeped in complex history and inspires millions of people to visit every year, the invitation of art is both powerful and necessary.



Artwork of Shenandoah National Park
Trust Artists-in-Residence:
(clockwise from top image)
Lisa Walsh, Michael Bidun,
Kevin H. Adams, Nicki Allen, Betsy Popp.



This project is supported in part by
the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

“Seeing is a way of processing information, of making the unknown knowable and the complex understandable,” said Tracy Baetz, Chief Curator for the U.S. Department of the Interior Museum. “It’s how people gain access and a better understanding.” For many, their first encounter with National Parks may be through paintings, photos, or videos on social media.

Baetz has worked in visual storytelling around the Interior’s public lands for the last 13 years, exploring the power of art in remembering, incentivizing, seeing, empathizing, and discerning value. “If people can visualize something, it opens them up to having a stake in it,” she said.

The leaders of the original geological surveys of the American West in the late 1800s brought artists and photographers on their expeditions for this very reason; they knew that imagery would help Congress and the public understand the value and wonder of these places far more effectively than reports of data and scientific descriptions alone.

They also knew that art has the power to make people want to see these places with their own eyes. “A picture is worth a thousand words, but it’s not the same as being there,”



This year, the Trust is funding six Artists-in-Residence to interpret Shenandoah’s landscape in their unique styles and teach visitors to do the same.

Baetz explained. “The visual is just one sense, and it creates a desire for the immersive experience—the sounds, the textures, the feelings.” Whether created by a professional Artist-in-Residence or captured on a cell phone, art invites and inspires others to visit and connect with Shenandoah in their own way. “Creativity is in these places for everyone,” Baetz said. “You can stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before—visionaries like Thomas Moran or William Henry Jackson or Ansel Adams—and create your own experience.”

This year, the Trust is funding six Artists-in-Residence to interpret Shenandoah’s landscape in their unique styles and teach visitors to do the same. Puppeteer, animator, and sculptor Nyssa Collins will be in the park from **July 25 through August 15** and hopes to use animated stories to help visitors understand themselves and the world in a deeper way. Art is more than just visual — and we’re proud to have experimental folk band, The Honey Dewdrops, as our September Artist-in-Residence to connect visitors to the park through sound. ▲



Scan the QR code or visit the link to learn how this work is continuing to shape Shenandoah through the Artist-In-Residence program and how you can support this project.



Artwork by Artists-in-Residence (above) Katherine Mann, and (below) Megan Evans.





“I Like Nature Now”: The Legacy of Education

In March, a student approached Shenandoah’s Education Program Manager, Margo Roseum, after spending a day in the park and announced, “I like nature now.”

That simple statement represents the growing success of the park’s educational programming. “Even if she doesn’t remember the facts about the Shenandoah Salamander,” Roseum explained, “she’s going to remember the feeling [being in the park] evoked, and that’s what’s going to make a change in her life.”

While Shenandoah’s educational programming prioritizes aligning with state standards and curriculum, Roseum’s education team knows that real learning requires personal connection and enjoyment. “The heart of our program is facilitating engagement and connection to their daily lives—what

they’re learning in school and their individual interests,” she said. “It’s helping them understand why this place is important not only inherently, but individually, because that’s how you’re going to make sure Shenandoah remains a special place in the future.”

In the five years Roseum has been teaching in the park, she’s seen students take on stewardship roles, from mentoring younger peers on field trips to joining the Youth Corps and even becoming rangers in the National Park Service.

The Education Team has been expanding their reach by finding new ways to meet students where they are, whether through partnerships with local libraries, traveling to larger cities, or simply making an effort to interact

with students when they see them out and about in their communities.

Last year, Roseum and her team reached more than 16,000 students, growing the potential for future

stewards exponentially.

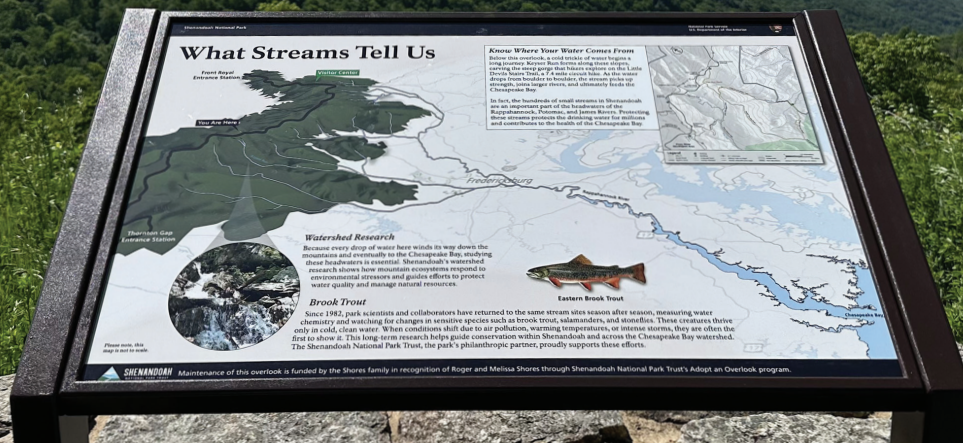
“Hearing that number sparks emotion in me,” shared Roseum. “It represents a need and want for education in these communities, and a love of learning. Education is a building block of society,

and Shenandoah is the perfect place to connect students to the environment and teach environmental literacy.”

Roseum said that’s why the Trust is so vital: “The Trust is paying for our staff and their training. Without staff, we don’t have a program, and every program we teach can change lives.” ▲


Last year, they reached more than 16,000 students, growing the potential for future stewardship exponentially.

Adopt-an-Overlook



Did you know?

 NPS | N. Lewis

The Adopt-an-Overlook Program allows organizations, corporate partners, and individuals like you to support the cost of clearing one of the 75 breathtaking overlooks, ensuring that visitors can continue to experience the wonder and inspiration only found on Skyline Drive and in Shenandoah National Park.

This program makes it possible for professionally trained crews to contribute approximately **960 hours** of work clearing select overlooks each year. This gives Shenandoah National Park the much-needed capacity to meet their standards of maintaining each overlook every eight years.

Want to be a part of sustaining Shenandoah's legacy through protecting one of the park's most iconic resources?

For more information about the Adopt-an-Overlook program and to learn how you can get involved, contact Emily Chiles at echiles@snptrust.org. ▲

 NPS



Quick facts about Shenandoah National Park overlooks:

- 🌲 Shenandoah National Park is home to **75 overlooks** that border Skyline Drive—the highest number of scenic overlooks within a single national park site.
- 🌲 Over **70% of visitors** only experience Shenandoah from its overlooks directly bordering the drive.
- 🌲 There are almost **300 acres** of overlooks across the entirety of Shenandoah National Park.
- 🌲 It costs roughly **\$1 million** to effectively fund the maintenance of Shenandoah's overlooks over an **8-year period**.
- 🌲 The innovative design and success of Shenandoah's overlooks bordering Skyline Drive had a direct effect on the establishment of the Blue Ridge Parkway.



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A Gift for Future Generations: Legacy Giving Highlight

Every October, Ella R. Thomas packed up her car and drove her closest friends to Shenandoah to see the fall colors. A retired teacher from Pamplin, Virginia, Ella and her husband Brian spent decades traveling to National Parks across the country—hiking trails, savoring good food, and seeking out strong educational programs wherever they went. Shenandoah held a special place among them all.

That love endured long after Ella's passing. When the Shenandoah National Park Trust received a bequest from her estate, her best friend since childhood, Anne Robinson, helped us understand the depth of it. "You had a number of projects that they particularly enjoyed," Anne said. "The fact that you were selected is a compliment."

Ella and Brian had given their legacy careful thought. "It didn't happen overnight," Anne told us. "They gave their giving a lot of consideration." That thoughtfulness resulted in a \$108,200 gift from the Ella R. Thomas Charitable

Trust—**ensuring future generations can hike and learn in the park they loved.**

Ella's story is one we encounter again and again. A bequest arrives, and with it we learn about someone who carried a quiet, lasting love for this place—and wanted that love to live on. Planned gifts take many forms: bequests, appreciated stock, real estate, and more. But what they share is this: they are among the most personal gifts we receive, a final considered act that carries a donor's values forward long after they are gone.

If Shenandoah has shaped your life the way it shaped Ella's, we would love to hear from you. To learn how to include the park in your legacy plans—or to let us know you already have—reach out to Anna Patchias at apatchias@snptrust.org. Donors who make a planned gift are invited to join Shenandoah's Legacy Society, our community of members whose generosity will endure for generations. ▲



Legacy Giving

Did you know that Legacy Giving is central to the Trust's origin story? Thanks to two bequests in the early 2000s, the Trust was formed to support Shenandoah National Park in 2007. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary, legacy gifts continue to carry our mission forward. Consider making planned gift of your own to ensure that Shenandoah endures for future generations.

Learn more at
[snptrust.org/
legacy-giving](https://snptrust.org/legacy-giving) or
scan the QR code.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

July 24th–25th: July Weekend in the Park

August 25th: Fee-Free Day in the Park

September 11th –12th: Rapidan Society Weekend in the Park

September 17th: Fee-Free Day in the Park

September 17th: Wine on the Rooftop

September 25th–26th: Art in the Park

October 15th: Wine on the Rooftop

October 27th: Fee-Free Day in the Park

November 11th: Fee-Free Day in the Park

March 5–7, 2027: Banff Film Festival

Visit [snptrust.org/
events](https://snptrust.org/events) to learn more,
register, and see our
full calendar.

