



Director of Communications & External Affairs

Full-Time, Exempt | Reports to: Executive Director | Supervises: Communications Manager

About Shenandoah National Park Trust

Shenandoah National Park Trust (SNPT) is the official philanthropic partner of Shenandoah National Park, celebrating its 20th anniversary as an organization. As we enter an exciting period of growth—including the launch of a major campaign and an expanded strategic vision—we are investing in the leadership infrastructure to match our ambitions. This is a rare opportunity to join a mission-driven team at a pivotal moment in our history.

POSITION SUMMARY

The Director of Communications & External Affairs is a new, senior-level position created to elevate SNPT's voice, deepen our community presence, and strengthen strategic alignment across all communications functions. This leader will serve as the primary architect of SNPT's communications and external affairs strategy—encompassing public relations, government relations, media relations, and community outreach—while ensuring our communications program reflects and advances our fundraising and programmatic priorities.

Working closely with the Executive Director, the Director of Development (DOD), and key program staff, this role requires a sophisticated communicator who can translate complex conservation, policy, and philanthropic work into compelling narratives for diverse audiences—from Capitol Hill to gateway communities to major donors.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

External Affairs & Public Relations

- Serve as SNPT's primary communications ambassador, managing media relationships and earned media strategy across print, digital, and broadcast platforms
- Lead proactive and reactive public relations, including crisis communications, press releases, media pitching, and spokesperson preparation for the Executive Director and senior staff
- Develop and maintain relationships with journalists, editors, and media outlets covering conservation, federal lands, outdoor recreation, and philanthropy

Government & Policy Affairs

- Partner with the Executive Director to design and execute a government affairs outreach strategy, including relationships with federal, state, and local elected officials and their staff
- With the Executive Director monitor and analyze relevant legislation, appropriations, and policy developments (including GAOA, NPS funding, conservation tax policy) and translate implications for internal leadership and external stakeholders
- Prepare executive-level policy communications, testimony summaries, advocacy briefings, and stakeholder-ready policy explainers
- Represent SNPT in coalition settings with peer park nonprofits, the National Park Foundation, FA Alliance, and advocacy networks

Community & Stakeholder Outreach

- Lead community relations strategy, building sustained engagement with gateway communities

- Partner with tourism, civic, and community organizations to advance SNPT's mission and visibility

Communications Program Management

- Develop and create annual communications strategy and plan -providing editorial direction across print, digital, email, website and social media channels
- Collaborate with the Director of Development (DOD) to align communications strategy with fundraising priorities, major gift messaging, and other campaign milestones
- Co-lead with DOD the planning and execution of SNPT's 20th Anniversary communications strategy, serving as a cornerstone of organizational storytelling during this milestone year
- Responsible for the maintenance and growth of annual SNPT license plate revenue through multi-channel communications strategy
- Oversee content calendar and work with Development team to align donor communications into overall communications
- Oversee brand consistency and narrative cohesion across all communications
- Manage external vendors and contractors including designers, photographers, videographers, and consultants
- Supervise and mentor the Communications Manager.
- Liaison to the External Affairs officer at NPS

Executive & Board Communications

- Ghost-write and prepare speeches, op-eds, congressional testimony, and stakeholder remarks as needed for the Executive Director
- Advise senior leadership on communications strategy and messaging for sensitive or high-visibility initiatives
- Assist with special projects as assigned and perform other duties deemed necessary to achieve overall organizational goals and operate a successful department, as we turn our new strategic plan into day-to-day practice

QUALIFICATIONS

Required

- 7+ years of progressive experience in communications, public affairs, or external relations, with demonstrated leadership responsibility
- Proven track record in media relations, including earned media strategy
- Proven experience with successful campaigns across digital, print, and social channels, with an emphasis on digital strategy and fluency in AI-assisted content tools.
- Exceptional writing and editing skills across formats—from social media copy to executive speeches to policy briefs
- Demonstrated ability to translate complex policy or technical content for non-specialist audiences
- Strong track record of crafting compelling narratives that translate mission-driven work into stories that resonate with donors, members, and the public
- Experience tracking and interpreting metrics to inform strategy and report results to leadership and the board
- Experience working with and presenting to executive leadership, board members, elected officials, and high-level donors in sensitive or high-visibility settings

- Collaborative, mission-aligned approach with comfort working in a small, agile nonprofit environment
- Experience supervising staff, interns and managing external vendors or agencies
- Ability for travel to Washington, D.C., Richmond and Park adjacent communities.

Preferred

- Background in conservation, public lands, or federal agency communications
- Experience developing or contributing to government/legislative affairs programs, ideally at the federal or state level
- Experience with fundraising communications and donor-facing storytelling
- Familiarity with the National Park Service, National Park Foundation, or park nonprofit ecosystem
- Existing relationships with regional or national media covering conservation, outdoor recreation, or environmental policy
- Experience supporting major gift campaigns or organizational milestones (anniversaries, capital campaigns)
- Strong working knowledge of Microsoft Office, Teams, Planner, and Loop

COMPENSATION & CULTURE

If you don't check every box but bring transferable skills and a willingness to learn, we want to hear from you. We're looking for someone ready to step into a high-performing team, lead and grow with us.

The salary range for this position is \$75,000–\$90,000 based on years of experience and qualifications, along with a comprehensive benefits package including 100% employee paid health care & Dental, 4-week PTO, 12 paid holidays, up to 4% retirement match, paid professional development, a flexible work environment, staff hikes, and a park pass. We are a small, dedicated team that believes deeply in the power of public lands and the communities that care for them. This position is based in our Charlottesville office, after 6 months option to work 2 days remote.

Shenandoah National Park Trust is an equal opportunity employer committed to building a team that reflects the diversity of the communities and landscapes we serve.

to apply, please submit a cover letter, résumé, and two writing samples to Jcoccione@snptrust.org please put in your Subject Line: Comms Director. Open until filled, with priority review starting August 24, 2026.