

Agency Official 106 Effect Report

Installation of Interpretative Trail at Thoburn's Redoubt, land owned by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation with financial assistance provided by Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park

U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park

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Purpose:

The park's General Management Plan (GMP) was published in 2010. It provides guidance in terms of trail development in the park as documented below:

“Trails would be developed on land owned by the NPS and the Key Partners, and on rights-of-way acquired from willing sellers. The goal is to provide a trail system that allows visitors to access and better understand park resources while providing protection of these resources. In the future, a trails plan would be prepared for the park that would address where trails would be located, how they would be designed, and the types of permitted uses. In general, trails would be designed for low impact use, maximum protection of resources, and no motorized vehicles. In accordance with NPS system wide policies, recreational use of ATVs on trails would not be permitted within the park on lands that are owned by the NPS and the Key Partners.”¹

“The park and the Key Partners would cooperate to develop trails on land owned by the NPS, the Key Partners, and possibly on rights-of-way acquired from willing sellers. These trails would (1) follow the course of the Battle of Cedar Creek and the historic mill road network; (2) connect properties owned by the NPS and the Key Partners, and (3) connect to the towns of Middletown and Strasburg and the George Washington National Forest.”²

Shortly after the completion of the GMP the park completed an Interim Interpretive Plan in 2011. This document outlines future interpretive endeavors at the park, and how best to achieve them. It states:

“If visitors are to experience the unique offerings of Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP fully, they need direct physical access to the landscape on a year-round basis. The NPS and Key Partners should work together to provide walking access on designated areas of the battlefield and agricultural grounds throughout the year. Ideally, this access would be through interpretive trails and designated interpretive pull-off /walking areas that complement and expand self-guided driving tours.”³

From fall 2013 to fall 2014, National Park Service staff and partner organizations worked to develop an overall strategy for trail development at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. The *Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, Trail Development Strategy and Management Plan* (trail plan) is the result of that endeavor, outlining a vision for a unified trail system that links park areas, expands interpretive opportunities, and helps visitors understand the significance of its stories and landscapes. The plan stressed connectivity, telling the stories of the park, sensitivity to park resources, and collaboration.

¹ Cedar Creek Belle Grove General Management Plan, National Park Service, 2010, p. 2-14

² Cedar Creek Belle Grove General Management Plan, p. 2-44

³ Cedar Creek Belle Grove Interim Interpretive Plan, National Park Service, 2011, p. 38

Need:

In the recently completed park trail plan it outlines the development and management of a comprehensive trail network between partners owned land. One of the easily connected “pilot projects” that was stated as a top priority was the Thoburn Loop Trail. The land that the Thoburn Loop Trail will be placed is part of a 134 acre tract of land owned by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF) and falls within the legislated boundaries of Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. The *Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Trail Development Strategy and Management Plan* states, “Trails will be designed to minimize impact to park natural and cultural resources, and will be developed in compliance with... NEPA, Section 106 of the Natural Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act of 1973, ABA, ADA.”⁴ The park is extremely conscious that any trail construction will have potential effect on nearby cultural resources such as Civil War era earthworks. With this in mind, this report outlines the parks efforts to: identify historic and archeological resources, provide alternatives for the proposed action, and suggest mitigation factors if necessary.

In order to facilitate this project, the National Park Service (NPS) entered into a cooperative agreement with Conservation Legacy (P15AC00024) on behalf of the SVBF to construct and develop the Thoburn Loop Trail. The task agreement (P16AC00781) was agreed upon in September of 2016 for the amount of \$18,600. The construction of the trail will be done by AmeriCorps conservation workers serving under Zach Foster with the Greater Appalachian Valley Conservation Corps (a local subsidiary based out of New Market, Virginia) of Conservation Legacy.

Description:

The park and its partners propose to develop an interpretative trail known as the Thoburn Loop Trail. This has the potential to effect cultural resources, as the proposed plan has the trail paralleling extant Union earthworks for approximately 600 feet. As this project will be funded through Federal means, Section 106 of the NHPA has come into effect. To ensure substantial federal involvement the NPS has taken the lead in identifying resources and carrying out the Section 106 planning and consultation process.

In preparation for the trail construction, the NPS funded a Phase I archaeological study in order to identify and potential cultural or historic resources within the project area. The scope of work was completed in consultation with the NPS Northeast Regional Archaeological Program and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The park also consulted with other legislated park partners. This field work was completed through another financial agreement between the NPS and SVBF in the amount of 52,500 through a task agreement (P16AC01735) underneath a cooperative agreement (P16AC01630) with SVBF. Dovetail Cultural Resource Group bid below the allotted

⁴ Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Trail Development Strategy and Management Plan, National Park Service, 2015, p. 9-10.

funds, with an additional \$23,297.20 available for additional fieldwork to be completed by Dovetail in the spring of 2018.

The archaeological field survey for the proposed trail was completed by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group in November of 2017, after a panel consisting of representatives of the NPS and SVBF selected their bid from the pool of bidders. Field work focused on three areas: the proposed trail path parallel to the earthworks, area where a potential parking lot could be built, and a possible historic cemetery only documented through oral histories. Methods including systematic use of metal detecting, ground penetrating radar, and shovel test pits. The fieldwork resulted in identifying no additional sites, and only three historic artifacts, and a single pre-historic artifact recovered. Updated state site forms of two adjacent sites were completed and submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The findings from the field work are informing the design and construction of the trail.⁵

Property Description:

Major Physical Components

The area of the proposed trail lies in two distinct areas. The first is an open field which provides vistas of Signal Knob on top Massanutten Mountain and the Town of Strasburg. This field is maintained and mowed and used for special events such as: anniversary programs, Night Sky programs, and battlefield tours. The second area is a wooded area. The wooded area consists of second growth forest and contains the remnants of Union earthworks built before the Battle of Cedar Creek in 1864. Much of the trail (1,800-2,000 feet) will be a mown path through open land, but up to 600 feet of the trail will be in a wooded area, leading to a line of entrenchments.

The existing earthworks range in size. One major component is the extant parapets and ditches that are exemplary of rapid infantry entrenchments. Parapets vary in dimensions and range from 8-12 feet with 2-5 feet of relief. The surviving line of entrenchments run for approximately a quarter of a mile on a high bluff overlooking Cedar Creek. The trail will only parallel roughly 600 feet of this line of earthworks.

Battlefields contain many architectural, archaeological, natural, and cultural aspects. When viewed together, as opposed to separate it creates a historic landscape rich with information. The surviving 8th Corps earthworks contribute significantly to this landscape and our understanding of the people who fought here, and the landscape as a whole.

⁵ The funding that the NPS has provided for this project is strictly attached to the development of the trail. No Federal funds have been committed for the construction of a parking lot. Therefore this effect report does not evaluate the construction of a parking lot. If the NPS secures funds and enters another task agreement for the construction of a parking lot, the construction of the lot will be subject to the Section 106 process.

Historical Significance

This area was the location of the Union 8th Corps before the Battle of Cedar Creek. Arriving to the area around October 12th 1864, Union soldiers from Colonel Joseph Thoburn's Division began constructing a line of earthworks to defend their position along the bluffs of Cedar Creek. Many of Thoburn's men were from West Virginia and Ohio. Thoburn's position marked the extreme left of the Union line which then stretched along the banks of Cedar Creek past Belle Grove. Thoburn had his 2,500 man command entrench their positions on prominent hill overlooking Cedar Creek to the west and the Shenandoah River to the south. One man from the 9th West Virginia described portions of the position as, "dense woods of second growth pines."⁶ Thoburn placed two batteries in these entrenchments overlooking Cedar Creek and the Shenandoah River. Captain Henry A. DuPont commanded the two batteries.

When Confederates under Jubal A. Early conceived their plan of attack, they took note of the union earthworks. This knowledge directly shaped Confederate plans when they decided to attack the Union left on the morning of October 19th 1864. The Confederate approach was multi-pronged, and the plan's success rested on the complete surprise attack on the Union 8th Corps. Following an all-night march on the night of October 18th, Confederate forces were ready to strike the Union line at Thoburn's camps.

Around 4:30am in a dense fog on October 19th, 1864 South Carolinians, Georgians, and Mississippians under General Joseph Kershaw launched a surprise attack on the Union position, and quickly began to overrun Thoburn's camps. Many of the northern soldiers were still asleep when the attack commenced. Following the war, a Georgian recalled coming into view of the Union position, "A slight ravine lay before us and the heights beyond were crowned with a formidable line of entrenchments defined sharply against the campfires behind and strengthened by a thicket hedge of abates, consisting of large branches and young trees with the smaller branches trimmed and sharpened to a point and laid with the points outward."⁷ The Confederate surprise attack was a rousing success as Union soldiers began fleeing. During this chaos Union soldiers were captured without their equipment, or began to flee north while escaping Confederate fire. Captain Henry DuPont desperately attempted to save the Union artillery pieces from falling into Confederate control.

Confederate success in the morning attack during the Battle of Cedar Creek was short lived. Union General Philip Sheridan arrived to the field from Winchester in the early afternoon. Sheridan re-organized his troops and launched a counterattack in the afternoon. The afternoon fighting broke the Confederate lines and Union soldiers pursued Confederate soldiers south to Cedar Creek. When night fell, more than 8,700 men were killed wounded or missing. Soldiers from Thoburn's command

⁶ Theodore Mahr, *Early's Campaign The Battle of Cedar Creek Showdown in the Shenandoah October 1-30th, 1864*. (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, 1992), 98.

⁷ Mahr, 112.

returned to their same camps they fled that same morning. Colonel Thoburn did not rejoin his men as he was mortally wounded during the battle.

Trail Construction Details:

The trail will be located on a high plateau overlooking the Cedar Creek Battlefield, Massanutten Mountain, and the Town of Strasburg. The majority of this trail will consist of a mowed path through this field. The mowed path will be approximately 10 feet wide and maintained by the staff of the SVBF. The beginning of the trail will consist of a trailhead and interpretative wayside (forthcoming spring 2018) to interpret and orient visitors to the landscape.

The trail entering the woodlot will be constructed and avoid extant earthworks. Park staff will be on site to monitor the crews as they clear the area of underbrush. Per the NPS guidance on the treatment of military earthworks, no trees that are growing out of the earthworks will be cut down for erosion control. The trail will parallel the earthworks for approximately 600 feet.

The GAVCC plans on creating a trail with a tread of 2-3 feet wide and clearing limbs and branches that would be within the trail area. The proposed path will be above the earthworks on a slight slope. Therefore, it will be necessary to back cut into the slope to prevent erosion and allow for safe visitor access. The depth of this back cut will depend on the degree of slope. GAVCC foresees anywhere from 2-3 inches to some places upwards to a foot in the steeper portions of the trail.

Description of Alternatives:

Alternative A- No Action

This alternative would leave the land inaccessible for visitor use, and not meet the recommendations made by the partners in the GMP and trail plan. This alternative would also continue an unsustainable model of allowing visitor access during special events.

Alternative B- Create trail with mowed path and no access to earthworks

Under this alternative a trail would be created and loop on a mowed path and not enter the wooded area to view the extant earthworks. This alternative would allow visitor access to the site but not provide access to the historical resource and, in turn not provide an adequate interpretative opportunity to learn about the role of earthworks during the Battle of Cedar Creek and one of the main reasons why this parcel is preserved.

Alternative C- Construction of loop trail that parallels earthworks (preferred)

Under this alternative the park will construct a loop trail, with roughly 600 feet paralleling earthworks and the rest of the trail being a mowed path through open fields. The creation of this trail will be made to reflect the recommendations laid out by the Phase I survey of the project area, recommendations by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park's cultural resource interdisciplinary team.

Description of Mitigation Measures:

A. Regular monitoring of the trail can help identify and mitigate potential adverse effects on the earthworks.

B. Signage encouraging visitors to stay off earthworks can be added to educate the public on resource management and preservation threats.

C. Additional archaeology funds will be used to survey the rest of the earthworks in the parcel owned by SVBF. This work will map the earthworks and provide future data for a potential future trail extension.

Park Consultation:

The park is currently in consultation to seek input on this project.

The park will notify interested parties on January 31st, 2018 via email, and then begin the 30 day public commenting period on PEPC on February 1st, 2018.

Effect Analysis

Pending review and consultation.

Attached Supporting Documents

- I. Map from trail planning that shows approximate route of proposed new trail
- II. Updated Trail Plan
- III. Maps and Diagrams
- IV. Photographs of Proposed Trail Path

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Supporting Documents

I. Original Trail from Park Trail Plan

3. Thoburn Property Trail



Manager: Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation

Total Trail Distance: .5 miles (loop)

New Trail (to be constructed): approximately .25 in open field; .25 in woods

Surface type: mowed footpath in grass field; natural soil surface in wooded areas

Features: Project would create a loop from the existing entrance to showcase the open fields and commanding views of Signal Knob, and the trench lines that defined the Union's left flank on the morning of October 19, 1864. The trail would pass by the site of Dupont's Artillery and overlook of Cedar Creek. In the future, there is the potential to extend the trail to the Bowman/Hite Farm and/or north under I-81 to the NY Monument, if issues can be resolved with private property owners.

Planning Considerations: Need to design trail so as not to impact trench lines. Remote site that is currently gated; need to develop management strategy for public use.

Estimated Cost: tbd

Funding Strategy: tbd (could utilize volunteers for trail clearing)

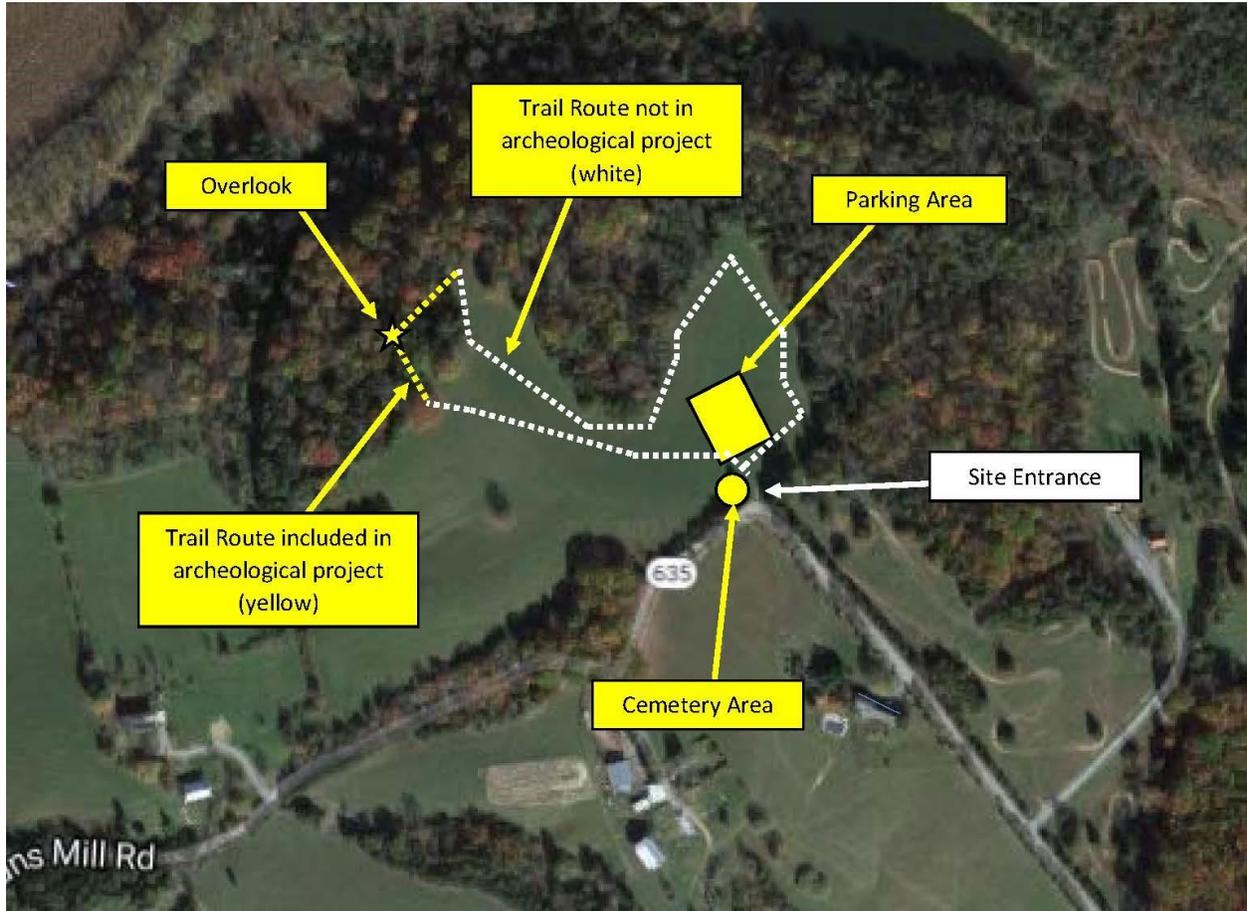
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The proposed trail is noted by "pilot project" with the dotted red lines. From Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Trail Development Strategy and Management Plan, National Park Service, 2015, p. 20.

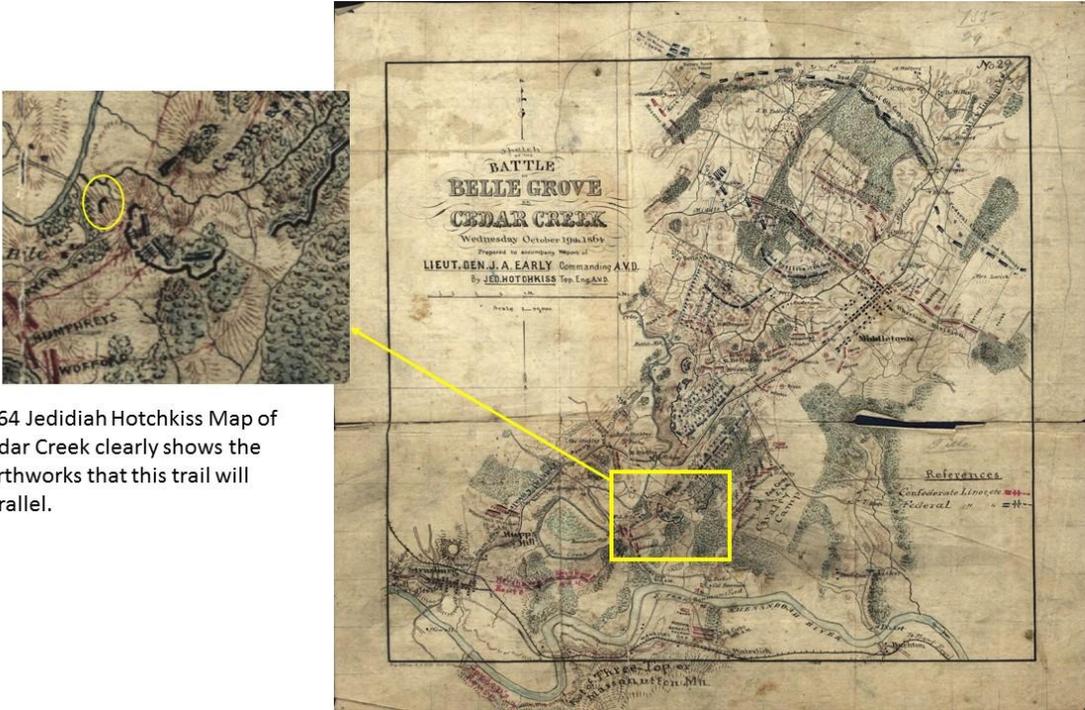
Note: This trail path does not follow the path that is being proposed in this project.

II. Updated Path of Trail that will be pursued under Alternative 3 (Preferred)

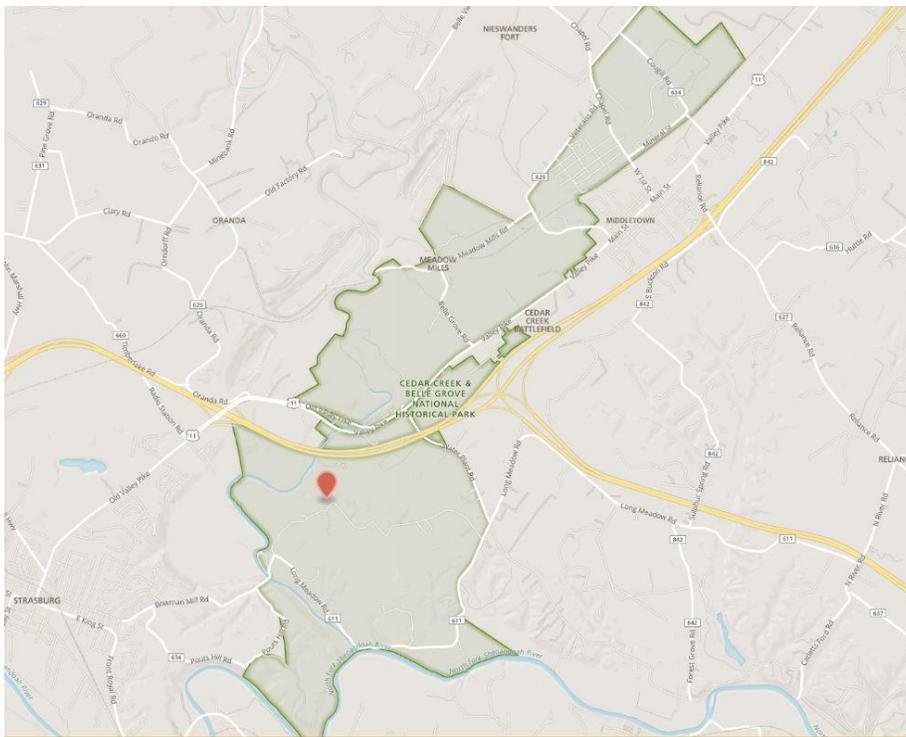


III. Maps

Jedidiah Hotchkiss Map, 1864.

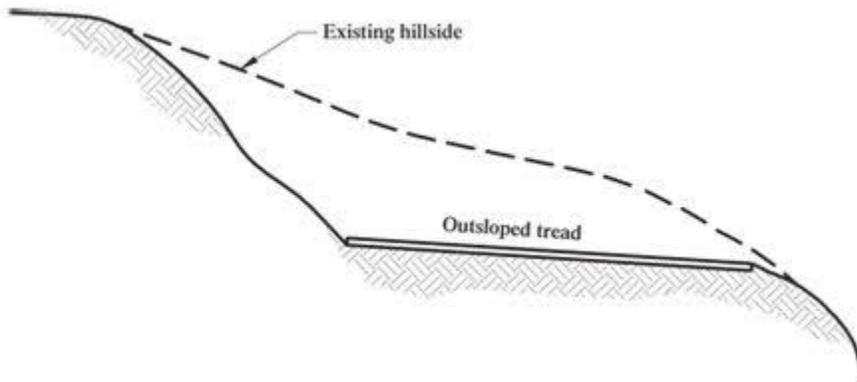
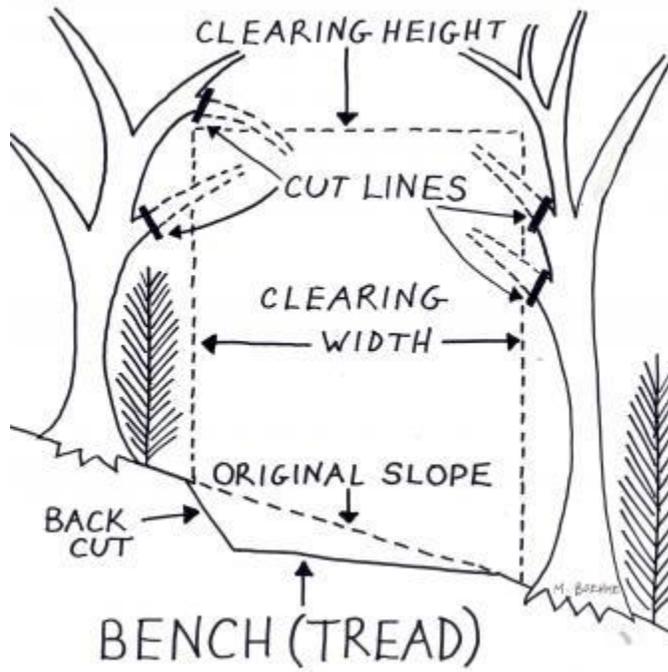


1864 Jedidiah Hotchkiss Map of Cedar Creek clearly shows the earthworks that this trail will parallel.



Approximate location of the trail within the boundaries of Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP.

Diagram Showing Trail Construction Methodology from the GAVCC



IV. Photographs of Proposed Trail Path



View at the trailhead where the trail will begin through a mowed field. *January 2018, NPS.*



Location of where the trail will enter the woodlot. *January 2018, NPS.*



Trail as it enters the woodlot, but before paralleling earthworks. Note the underbrush that will be cleared during construction of the trail. *January 2018, NPS.*



Trail as it begins to parallel above earthworks. Note orange flagging where trail path is. Earthworks are on the left. Note the slope. *January 2018, NPS.*



Continued path of trail on right and earthworks on left. Note the ditch between the trail and earthworks. *January 2018, NPS.*



Trail as it begins to turn and exit the woodlot. Line of earthworks on the left. *January 2018, NPS.*



Trail as it exits the woodlot and returns visitors to mowed path. *January 2018, NPS.*



Mowed path returning visitors to the trailhead. *January 2018, NPS.*