



Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument Foundation Document

On March 12, 2019, Congress passed the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, creating Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument in Kentucky and directing the secretary of the interior to acquire the property and establish a new unit of the National Park Service. The legislation directed the National Park Service to preserve, protect, and interpret the battlefield and the role it played in the American Civil War.

The National Park Service is welcoming the new unit by beginning the process of preparing a foundation document to guide planning and management of Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument. The park welcomes all interested persons to participate in this effort.

A foundation document identifies a national park unit's core purpose and significance, its most important resources and values, and the interpretive themes that tell its unique and significant American story. This foundation document will provide guidance for future management and planning decisions at Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument.

The preparation of a foundation document is the first step in planning for the new park unit. The document's intention is not to provide specific management actions that will achieve desired future conditions. Instead, the foundation document will guide future operation decisions by documenting what is most important about the park and how to best protect and manage those resources.

As the foundation document process begins, we encourage public input about the park unit, including what is most important about Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument, potential issues that could threaten park resources and commemoration, and opportunities for protecting this national treasure. Please provide your thoughts, ideas, and comments on Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument planning at https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Mill_Springs_FD. We would appreciate hearing from you by December 18, 2020, so that we can consider your comments for developing the foundation document. You can also find more information and project updates on this website.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about and comment on this new park unit. We look forward to hearing from you!



Brief Description of the Battle of Mill Springs

The Battle of Mill Springs was one of Kentucky's largest Civil War battles and gave the Union Army its first major victory in the war following the disastrous defeat at the Battle of First Manassas the previous summer. From the early days of the American Civil War, it was evident that Kentucky held incredible strategic importance, with the Confederate States of America hoping to hold the Cumberland Gap and the Union seeing southern Kentucky as the gateway to Confederate strongholds in Tennessee. Both sides shifted regiments into Kentucky during late summer and fall of 1861.

After unsuccessfully crossing into Kentucky and being repulsed by Federal troops in October 1861, Brigadier General Felix K. Zollicoffer led his troops from Tennessee into southern Kentucky again in November to set up winter camp on the banks of the Cumberland River at Mill Springs. Deciding the north bank offered a superior strategic location, Zollicoffer moved his forces north to Beech Grove in December 1861 and set to work digging entrenchments to protect their defensive position.

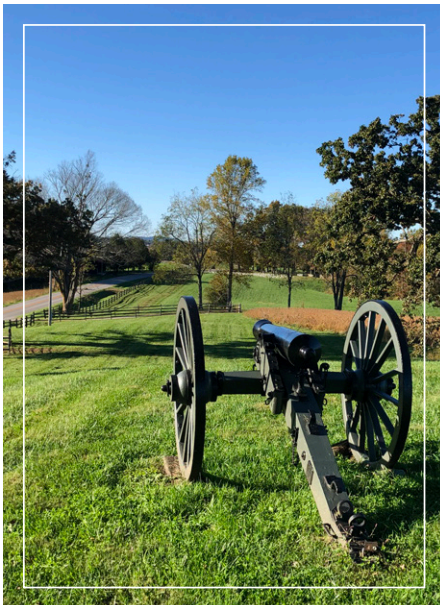


While Zollicoffer's men were settling in for the winter, Federal forces were working to drive Confederate troops from their stronghold. Zollicoffer's superior, Major General George Bibb Crittenden, arrived at the camp in early January to take control of the Confederate forces, which now numbered around 6,500 men, and to prepare for a Union attack. Union Brigadier Generals George Thomas and Albin Schoepf were ordered to drive the Confederate forces across the Cumberland River and spent early January marching from Lebanon and Somerset, Kentucky. On January 17, 1862, after battling poor weather and bad roads, Thomas' men arrived at Logan's Crossroads (now called Nancy, Kentucky) followed by three regiments of Schoepf's troops. Fearing that Thomas and Schoepf's combined forces would overpower the Confederates at Beech Grove, Crittenden decided to take the offensive and ordered the Confederate Army to march on Logan's Crossroads the night of January 18.



Confederate troops met the Federal pickets the morning of January 19, 1862. While the initial Confederate strike slowly forced the Union line back, the battle began to stabilize as more of Schoepf's Union forces arrived. Thick morning fog, increasing smoke created by the black powder rifles, and rain that rendered the Confederate forces' aging flintlock muskets ineffective combined to create an air of confusion that increased after Zollicoffer was killed that morning. The Confederates were able to mount another significant attack but were ultimately unable to break Union lines and began to retreat to their fortified camp nine miles south. While rear guard action slowed Union forces, Crittenden ordered a full withdrawal, leaving behind artillery, horses, wagons, and most camp equipment as troops fled across the Cumberland River. The Battle of Mill Springs forced Crittenden back to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and resulted in 155 Confederate and 55 Federal troops dead.

The Confederate force lost more than men at the Battle of Mill Springs. The defeat caused their defensive line to collapse in eastern Kentucky, leaving the region itself under Federal control and eastern Tennessee open to invasion. The subsequent Confederate losses of Forts Henry and Donelson, both just over the border in Tennessee, forced all Confederate troops to retreat out of Kentucky by February 1862.



We welcome your thoughts and ideas about the following:

1. Why are the resources and places associated with Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument (including the archeological remains and historic landscape of the core battlefield, the Beech Grove encampment, and the Mill Springs ferry landing site) important to American history? What ideas or ideals do these places represent?
2. What should people know about the history at Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument? What are the most important stories?
3. What are the biggest challenges facing Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument and its management?
4. What are the biggest opportunities for Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument in considering its new status as a unit of the National Park Service? What is your vision for the national monument?
5. Do you have any other ideas or comments you would like to share with us?

Please provide your thoughts and comments online at:

https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Mill_Springs_FD

Click "Open for Comment" to enter your thoughts and suggestions.

You may also submit your comments through the mail to:

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