



Wilson's Creek National Battlefield • Missouri

## Summary of General Management Plan (2003) and General Management Plan Amendment (2007)

September 2009

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Alumni,

I am pleased to provide you with an executive summary for the *General Management Plan for Wilson's Creek National Battlefield* (2003) and the subsequent *General Management Plan Amendment* that was prepared in 2007. In each of the plans, we looked at a range of alternatives and their potential impacts. Before selecting the preferred alternative, we also considered each of your comments and suggestions. The 2003 plan recommended the incorporation of six areas into the boundary of the national battlefield and management of National Park Service owned properties; the amendment addressed the sustainable management of two of those areas that were acquired by the national battlefield after completion of the 2003 plan.

I wish to extend my appreciation to each of you who worked with us during this long-term vision planning process. These plans will help us chart a sustainable future for Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. All of us on the staff believe that striving for sustainable principles is not only good for our employees and visitors (alumni); it is an important part of the National Park Service's mission to conserve our nation's natural and cultural history for future generations. We hope you enjoy reading this summary of our park plans and of the remarkable history that this national battlefield commemorates. Thank you for your ongoing interest, support, and helpful participation in the future of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. John Hillmer, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ted Hillmer, Superintendent

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield



## INTRODUCTION

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Wilson's Creek National Battlefield is about 10 miles south of the city of Springfield, Missouri, on the boundary between Greene and Christian counties in the southwestern corner of the state. With the boundary adjustments completed in 2006, the national battlefield now encompasses 1,927 acres, which includes about 80% of the actual battlefield. The national battlefield was established in 1960 to preserve and commemorate the Battle of Wilson's Creek, the site of the second battle of the Civil War and the first major battle west of the Mississippi River. The national battlefield contains a number of important archeological sites (many associated with the battle), historic structures, cultural landscapes, and battle-related artifacts. At the time of the battle, the valley of Wilson's Creek was a thriving agricultural area with about nine farms and the homes of associated families. Remnants of this agricultural community remain and are preserved under these plans.

The *General Management Plan* (GMP) and *General Management Plan Amendment* for Wilson's Creek National Battlefield provide comprehensive guidance for managing the national battlefield over the next 15 to 20 years. This summary and the full planning documents are the culmination of a collaborative process that began in 1999.

The 2003 management plan was needed to address issues that had arisen since the last plan was completed (1977 *Master Plan*). For example, the visitor center and the tour-road loop were both constructed after the *Master Plan*. Increasing population growth in the region had raised issues regarding additional visitation and potential impacts on cultural and natural resources. Other issues and considerations that factored in the 2003 management plan included reconciling recreational use with the

national battlefield's core mission, managing the impacts of encroaching suburban development, rehabilitating the battlefield landscape, resource management, and opportunities to participate in regional cooperative planning efforts. A newsletter, with maps, informing the public about the development of planning alternatives, was printed and distributed. In 2002, two open houses were held, and 500 copies of the *General Management Plan* were distributed to the public for review and comment.

The 2007 management plan amendment was needed to address the management of additional areas recently included into the national battlefield and to address the management of areas likely to be added in future years. Two open houses were held on the amendment, and 350 copies of the *General Management Plan Amendment* were distributed to the public for review and comment.



Public involvement for both plans included press releases and meetings with organizations; landowners; subject-matter experts; and other stakeholders. Consultation for both documents included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of

Conservation, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office, local government agencies, and culturally affiliated American Indian tribes (the Osage, Delaware, and Southern Cherokee Nations).

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Battle of Wilson's Creek was fought 10 miles southwest of Springfield, Missouri, on August 10th, 1861. Named for the stream that crosses the area where the battle took place, it was a bitter struggle between Union and Southern forces for control of Missouri in the first year of the Civil War.

A pivotal event that preceded the battle was the seizure of the United States arsenal at Camp Jackson outside Saint Louis by state military units. The arsenal was seized under orders of Missouri governor, Claiborne Jackson, a strong supporter of the Confederacy. In efforts to quell the growing rebellion in Missouri, the arsenal's commanding officer, Captain Nathaniel Lyon led federal troops to regain the arsenal and forced the surrender of the occupying rebel forces on May 10th, 1861. Lyon then led an army up the Missouri River, captured the state capital at Jefferson City, and installed a pro-Union state government. Governor Jackson and pro-Southern state guard units retreated to southwest Missouri. Lyon pursued Jackson and his forces, and by July 13th Lyon was encamped with about 6,000 troops at Springfield.

By the end of July, a Southern coalition of about 12,000 men had been assembled, consisting of combined Confederate troops and state forces under the commands of Major General Sterling Price (commander of the Missouri State Guard), and Confederate Generals Ben McCulloch and N. Bart Pearce. On July 31st, these combined forces marched northeast to attack Lyon's army and regain control of the state. On August 2nd Lyon marched his troops south from Springfield along Telegraph Road and inflicted heavy losses on Price's vanguard at Dug Springs. Despite the initial success, the Union forces were outnumbered and Lyon ordered a withdrawal back to Springfield. The Confederates pursued Lyon's army, and by August 6th were encamped near Wilson's Creek.

By late afternoon on August 9th, General McCulloch had readied his troops to resume their advance, but rain forced the postponement of the

operation. Meanwhile, General Lyon took the offensive although he knew he was outnumbered almost two to one. On the morning of the 10th, Lyon launched a surprise attack, leading his main column of about 4,200 soldiers. Lyon ordered a separate brigade of 1,200 men under the command of Colonel Franz Sigel to flank the Confederate right position and to converge with Lyon's main column in an attack on the Confederate camps shortly after daybreak. Lyon's troops swept down the west bank of Wilson's Creek and occupied the crest of a ridge that was later called "Bloody Hill." Confederate forces, under the protective fire of the Pulaski Arkansas Battery, were able to check Lyon's advance, allowing Price's infantry to form a battle line on the south slope of the hill. Lyon then dispatched a battalion of regulars under Captain Joseph B. Plummer to the east side of Wilson's Creek near Gibson's Mill. Plummer's mission was to protect the flank of the Union battle lines advancing southward across Bloody Hill and to subdue the artillery of the Pulaski Battery.



Despite the tactical advantage Lyon had gained with his surprise offensive, Confederate forces were able to regroup following the initial confusion. General Price with infantry units of the Missouri State Guard advanced and engaged General Lyon's battle lines on Bloody Hill. Colonel James McIntosh with two regiments marched north to intercept Plummer's regulars. Plummer's battalion was defeated and driven back across Wilson's Creek. Although initially successful, Sigel's flanking maneuver also collapsed under the counterattack of McCulloch's men at the Sharp Farm. The intense fighting on Bloody Hill raged for more than five hours. Overall losses incurred in the Battle of Wilson's Creek by both sides were heavy and

about equal — 1,317 for the Union, and 1,222 for the South. General Lyon was killed on Bloody Hill while positioning his troops, and command of the Union army was assumed by Major Samuel Sturgis. With ammunition nearly exhausted, Sturgis ordered a withdrawal back to Springfield. The victorious Southerners, having suffered heavy casualties and many officers killed or wounded, did not immediately pursue.

Confederate General McCulloch's forces entered Springfield on August 11th but found that the Federal troops had abandoned the city early that morning. The Southerners failed to press their advantage or harass the retreating Union column. The Union army was thereby able to organize additional units and consolidate control of most of Missouri.

General Price, without McCulloch's support, continued his campaign to recover Missouri. He reached the Missouri River and in the third

week of September forced the surrender of the Union garrison at Lexington. However, with the advantage of the time bought by Lyon and his men at the battle of Wilson's Creek, many additional Union forces had been deployed in Missouri. Unable to hold on to their gains, General Price and his Missouri State Guard retreated for a second time into the southwest corner of the state. The Southerners, although victors at Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861, ultimately lost the campaign and with it much of Missouri. For the duration of the Civil War, Missouri continued to witness savage fighting, mostly guerrilla warfare waged by mounted raiders. The defeat of General Price's forces at Westport on October 23rd, 1864, marked the end of organized Confederate military operations in Missouri.



## PURPOSE, SIGNIFICANCE, AND MISSION GOALS OF THE NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

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The intentions of Congress in establishing Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield as a unit of the national park system are expressed by the national battlefield’s purpose, significance, and fundamental resources and values.

### NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PURPOSE

Purpose statements convey the reasons for which a park unit was set aside as part of the national park system.

- The purpose of Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield is to commemorate the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, preserve the associated battlefield, and interpret the battle within the context of the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi West.

### SIGNIFICANCE

Significance statements describe the distinguishing resources and characteristics that set a park unit apart in a regional, national, and sometimes international context.

- Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield is significant as the site of the second battle of the Civil War and the first major battle west of the Mississippi River.
- Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield is the site of the death of General Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union general killed in the Civil War. Lyon’s death focused national attention on the potential loss of Missouri to the Confederacy.
- Wilson’s Creek’s rural character evokes the setting experienced by the combatants.
- The artifacts and archival records in Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield’s museum collections represent a nationally prominent and comprehensive documentation of the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi West.

### MISSION GOALS

Mission goals, based on the purpose and significance statements, include future conditions or visions for the national battlefield that exist when the legislative intent is being met — the ideals that the National Park Service is striving to accomplish.

- Wilson’s Creek’s natural and cultural resources and associated values are protected, restored, and maintained in good condition and managed within their broader ecosystems and cultural contexts.
- Visitors safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, diversity, and quality of facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities. Visitors and the general public understand and appreciate efforts to preserve the national battlefield and its resources.
- Natural and cultural resources are conserved through formal partnership programs.
- To better preserve park resources and to better provide for public enjoyment and visitor experience, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield uses sustainable management practices, systems, and technologies to accomplish its mission.

## SUMMARY OF THE 2003 PLAN

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### MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

The management prescriptions developed for Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield identify how different areas in the national battlefield will be managed to achieve a combination of desired resource conditions and visitor experience. The management zones include descriptions of how the various areas or zones will be managed to address visitor experience, resource conditions, and appropriate activities or facilities.

AREA	MANAGEMENT IN THIS PRESCRIPTION
<b>Visitor Services and Administration</b>	This area will provide support functions for carrying out the national battlefield’s mission and objectives, such as orientation, introductory education and interpretive programs, and administrative operations.
<b>Interpretive Focus</b>	This area will include specific sites for more focused interpretive programs such as demonstrations, guided tours, and special events. This area could include some significant resources.
<b>Battlefield Landscape Enhancement</b>	Management in this area will focus on retaining and enhancing the general historic character of the battlefield landscape. This will provide visitors with an insight into the general conditions that the combatants encountered on August 10, 1861 and will facilitate the visitor’s understanding of the dynamic course of this bitter battle. Vegetative changes since the time of the battle obscure the views that existed on that day and detract from the visitor’s ability to see and understand the landscape, appreciating the way that landforms, topography, and cultural features influenced the battle’s evolution and eventual outcome. Clearing of vegetative growth, maintenance of historic open fields, and the reestablishment of tall grass prairies, open timber communities, and other elements of the 19th century vegetation that characterized the national battlefield will help enhance the integrity of the historic setting.
<b>Resource Preservation</b>	This area will provide a high level of protection for highly sensitive and vulnerable cultural or natural areas and resources.
<b>Landscape Maintenance</b>	This area will include those parts of the national battlefield that do not contain highly sensitive resources and are not high priorities for battlefield landscape enhancement. NPS management will focus on the control of exotic plants, trail maintenance, maintaining vegetation to screen outside visual and auditory intrusions, and other general facility management activities. Potential exists for additional trails in this area.



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## WILSON'S CREEK BATTLEFIELD COMMEMORATION (THE PLAN)

NPS management under the plan will focus on efforts to honor the memory of the Battle of Wilson's Creek through an array of interpretive and educational experiences. Interpretive programs will emphasize a reflective and contemplative visitor experience that captures the site's unique qualities and its status as hallowed ground. NPS management will work with local schools, museums, and universities, as well as officials and agencies from Greene and Christian counties, the cities of Springfield and Republic, and the town of Battlefield, to best communicate the meaning and significance of the national battlefield's history and resources to the public.

Interpretation will be a major focus in the national battlefield. Interpretive displays will be designed to enhance the visitor experience. Ranger-led programs will occur along interpretive trails or at interpretive sites. Other experiences will be self-directed. Visitors using maps and brochures will follow the tour-road loop to important sites where interpretive signs will provide information about the events that occurred there. Marked trails will guide and inform visitors about the important resources at each site. The trail network will be realigned along historic trails and traces wherever possible. New trails will also be developed along the routes of historic trails and traces whenever possible to strengthen visitors' connections to the historical scene. Planning for the interpretive program will emphasize aesthetically compatible media that are discrete and unobtrusive.

Rehabilitation of the landscape will be extensive; 718 acres, or 41% of the national battlefield, will be managed under the Battlefield Landscape Enhancement prescription. Returning portions of the national battlefield to the 1861 condition and appearance as much as is practicable will enhance visitors' abilities to envision the events of August 10, 1861. Data compiled in the "Cultural Landscape Report" will enhance NPS management efforts to rehabilitate the landscape. Recreational use will be allowed, but managed so as not to detract from the mission, visitor experience, and efforts toward landscape rehabilitation. Horseback riding will be allowed only on designated trails as long as this use does not affect the experience for other visitors. Only passive recreational activities, such as hiking and biking, will be allowed in the Interpretive Focus prescription. The only exception will be equestrian use. Visitor access will be allowed in areas with sensitive resources, either with guided tours or on self-guided interpretive trails.

NPS managers will monitor levels of recreational use for potential impacts on resources or the ability of visitors to contemplate the significance and meaning of the battle. When conflicts occur, managers will limit recreational use wherever and to whatever degree necessary to ensure visitors' abilities to contemplate and appreciate the national battlefield's history and significance.



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In developing long-range regional plans, NPS managers will cooperate with agencies and officials from Greene and Christian counties, the cities of Springfield and Republic, and the town of Battlefield. These planning efforts will focus on both regional and national battlefield issues, seeking solutions to the impacts of increased suburban growth, transportation development, and visual intrusions on the national battlefield's boundaries. Much of the national battlefield's perimeter within the boundary will be managed according to the Landscape Maintenance prescription. Vegetation management in this area will help mitigate impacts resulting from visual and auditory intrusions.

NPS staff will respond promptly to conflicts that arise over management activities, visitor access, and proposed activities and developments on adjacent lands that could affect Wilson's Creek. NPS managers will seek understanding and cooperation with landowners to encourage management of nonfederal lands in a manner that is compatible with the national battlefield's purposes. NPS staff will also seek ways to provide landowners with technical and management assistance to address issues of mutual interest. The National Park Service will work closely with local, state, and federal agencies whose programs affect or are affected by activities at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. The partnerships with the Wilson's Creek Foundation and other support groups are essential to fulfilling the national battlefield's mission.

## **BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS AND LAND PROTECTION**

In accordance with applicable laws and NPS policies, the 2003 management plan recommended that the national battlefield carry out boundary adjustments to incorporate six areas that were at the time outside the national battlefield boundaries. These areas contain lands that are critical to the outcome of the battle, and acquisition of these lands will extend NPS protection to battle-related resources. Access to and interpretation of these lands will greatly enhance visitor understanding of the full scope of the Battle of Wilson's Creek. Visitor access will be provided primarily through easements or the development of cooperative agreements with willing landowners. Lands will only be added to NPS ownership through fee-simple acquisition agreements with willing sellers.

When acquired, areas 1 through 5, as critical components of the Wilson's Creek Battlefield, will be included in the Battlefield Landscape Enhancement zone. Area 6 will be included in the Visitor Services and Administration zone. The following six areas were recommended for inclusion to protect these critical areas and resources and to enhance opportunities for public enjoyment.



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- **Area 1** — This is an approximately 160-acre area south and east of the national battlefield boundary that encompasses the hilltop where Union Colonel Franz Sigel began his bombardment of the Confederate encampment, a portion of the historic Dixon farm, and the approach route of Sigel’s forces to the Sharp stubble field. Archeological research in this area could pinpoint the location of Sigel’s first position. This research, combined with public access to the site, will greatly enhance visitor understanding of the early stages of the battle and the ways in which topography and other landscape features influenced the course of the battle.
  - **Area 2** — This approximately 150-acre area (along the western boundary of the national battlefield) encompasses critical portions of the battle-related landscape and the ridge that became know in the aftermath of the battle as Bloody Hill. Bloody Hill was the core combat area of the Battle of Wilson’s Creek. Casualty rates here, particularly among Union forces, proportionately were among the highest seen during the entire war. Interpretation of this area will enhance the ability of visitors to understand the evolution of the battle and the role that the landscape played in determining the outcome.
  - **Area 3** — This approximately 200-acre area adjacent to the southwest boundary of the national battlefield includes the Guinn farm, Moody’s Spring, and the intersection of Telegraph (or Wire) Road and Little York Road. The Guinn farm was the site of a skirmish between a portion of Sigel’s retreating forces and troops of the Missouri State Guard. The Telegraph and Little York roads were important transportation links in the regional road network. Tens of thousands of Union and Confederate troops marched along Telegraph Road during the war. Both roads were used by Colonel Sigel’s troops in their retreat from Wilson’s Creek. The Little York Road provided a return route to Springfield for Sigel’s men.

Preservation and interpretation of this area will enhance visitor understanding of the role that transportation played in the events that led to the Battle of Wilson’s Creek and made southwestern Missouri and northwest Arkansas a battleground in the opening months of the Civil War. Interpretation of the Guinn farm site will enhance visitor understanding of the battle’s impact on civilians. Restored portions of Telegraph Road in area 3 may enhance visitor experience and understanding of the region’s historic transportation network and its influence on the outcome of the battle. About 154 acres of the approximately 200-acre area have been acquired and incorporated into the national battlefield (southwest additional lands). Continued acquisition in the area could include up to another 46 acres.



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- **Area 4** — This approximately 25-acre site adjacent to the national battlefield’s northern and eastern boundaries encompasses the approach of the Union forces under General Nathaniel Lyon. The first shots of the battle were fired here when Lyon’s advance troops clashed with Southern foragers. Lyon’s subsequent movements were cautious. The delays largely negated the earlier advantage Lyons had attained by gambling to split his forces and march them cross-country to attack from an unexpected direction.

Visitor access to this area will enhance NPS efforts to interpret the initial phases of the battle. Trails following the traces of Lyon’s route would enable visitors to encounter the battlefield as the main Union force did on the morning of August 10, 1861. This will provide visitors with a deeper appreciation of the general’s strategy and how the landscape shaped the course of the battle. Research in area 4 may identify the exact line followed by Lyon’s wing of the Army of the Southwest.

- **Area 5** — This 60-acre area (east and southeast of the Ray House on the eastern boundary of the national battlefield) marks the rallying point for Louisiana and Arkansas forces that had retreated from the Ray cornfield after nearly overwhelming the advancing Union infantry in the opening stages of the battle. Under heavy Union artillery fire, a portion of the Third Louisiana Volunteer Infantry under Major William F. Tunnard took refuge in the open field behind the Ray House, an area that Confederate medical personnel had requisitioned as a field hospital. Continued heavy



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fire forced Tunnard to move his troops behind the slope of a nearby hill. The area also includes a portion of the historic Wire Road, a transportation artery that was critical to the Battle of Wilson's Creek.

Visitor access to this area will enhance visitor understanding of the dynamics of the battle as it evolved in the early morning hours of August 10. Adjustment of the national battlefield boundary in this area will correspond to topographical and natural features, such as the hillside behind which Tunnard's troops took shelter and the Wire Road. Research in area 5 may determine the lands near the Ray House where Union artillery fire disrupted Confederate infantry movements and the exact location of the Confederate rally.

- **Area 6** — This 20-acre parcel is adjacent to the northwest boundary of the national battlefield and includes the former General Sweeney's Museum of Civil War History, a garage, and a house was acquired in 2003. This parcel does not include lands where the Battle of Wilson's Creek occurred. The Sweeney museum was a private museum that housed one of the best privately owned Civil War collections in the United States. The collection includes approximately 8,200 museum objects and numerous archives related to the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi West and plays a critical role in fulfilling the national battlefield's purpose to commemorate and interpret the Battle of Wilson's Creek. The national battlefield boundaries will be adjusted as areas are acquired.



## SUMMARY OF THE 2007 PLAN AMENDMENT

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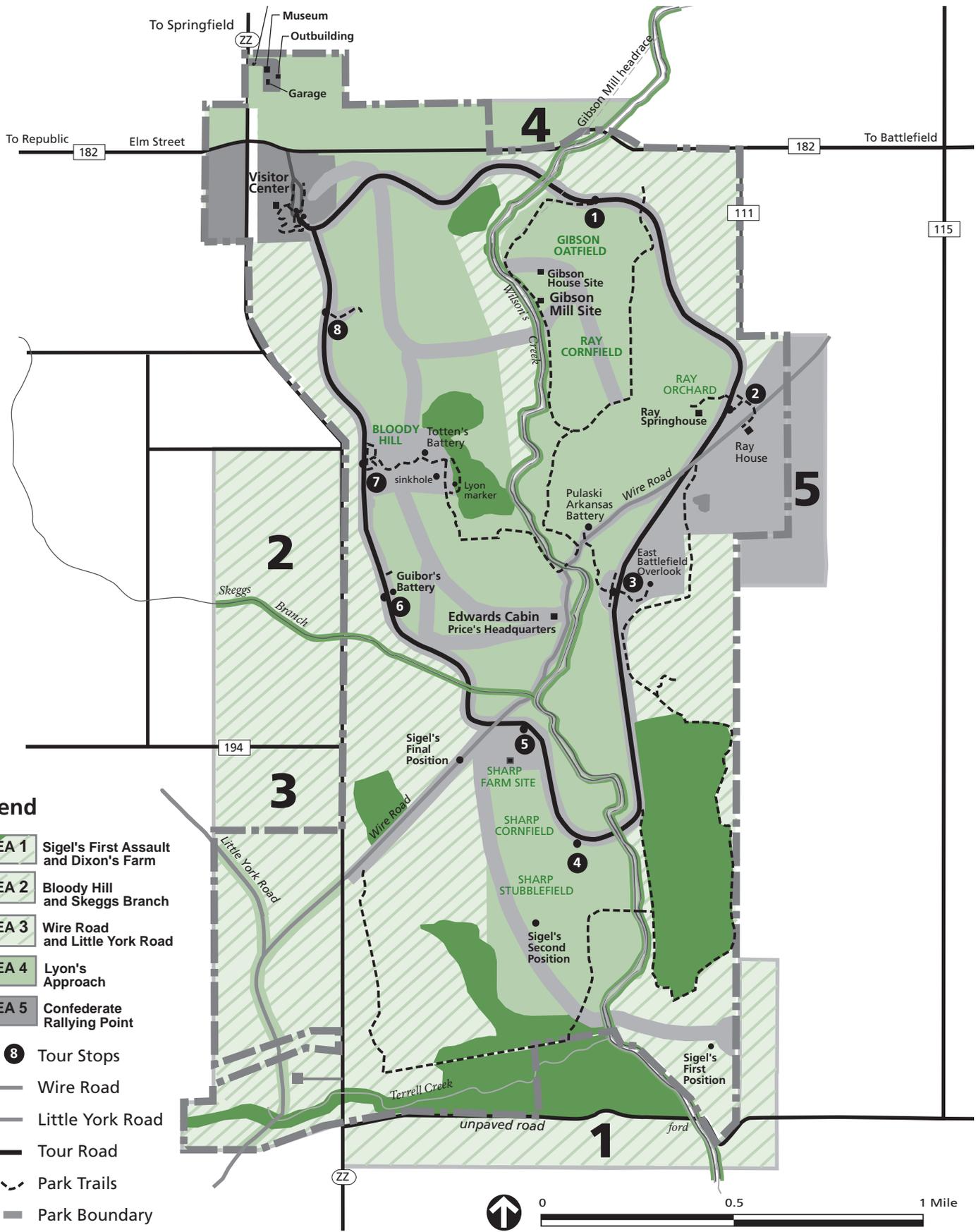
Following the completion of the 2003 *General Management Plan*, in 2004 Wilson's Creek National Battlefield acquired portions of two of the boundary adjustment areas described in the 2003 plan as recommended for a boundary adjustment (portions of areas 1 and 3 and all of area 6 above). A *General Management Plan Amendment* was prepared in 2007 that described management alternatives for these two areas — a 154-acre area that adjoins the national battlefield's southwestern boundary and the Civil War Museum and its surrounding 20-acre site.

The plan selected by the 2007 amendment called for the existing Civil War Museum to be closed and the museum collections to be moved to an addition to the visitor center that will be built for curatorial storage and exhibit space. Most NPS administrative functions will remain in the visitor center. The 154 acres adjacent to the southwestern boundary, which were acquired from the Battlefield Foundation, will be managed consistent with the management zoning on adjacent lands. Limited visitor parking and pedestrian trails may be developed, including a potential trail link to the national battlefield. Sensitive cultural and natural resources in this area will receive a high level of protection.

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*The following map is a combination of the approved boundary adjustments from the 2003 plan and the boundary changes addressed in the 2007 plan amendment. The 2007 plan amendment determined management of the lands that were added to the national battlefield (portions of areas 1 and 3 and all of area 6). The remaining lands identified for future acquisition in the 2003 final general management plan are shown in areas 1-5.*





**Legend**

- AREA 1** Sigel's First Assault and Dixon's Farm
- AREA 2** Bloody Hill and Skeggs Branch
- AREA 3** Wire Road and Little York Road
- AREA 4** Lyon's Approach
- AREA 5** Confederate Rallying Point
- 1 - 8** Tour Stops
- Wire Road
- Little York Road
- Tour Road
- Park Trails
- Park Boundary
- Visitor Services & Administration
- Interpretive Focus
- Battlefield Landscape Enhancement
- Resource Preservation
- Landscape Maintenance

**The Plan (as amended)**

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield  
 United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service  
 DSC • 410 • 20,024 • June 2007





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

NPS 410-100101 September 2009



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