



Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515-0605

December 13, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1847 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

As you continue work to review the historical and cultural significance of the Mill Springs Battlefield in Pulaski and Wayne counties in eastern Kentucky, we write today to again share our support for designating Mill Springs Battlefield as a National Monument within the National Park System pursuant to the authority granted to the President by the Antiquities Act of 1906 (P.L. 59-209).

Despite Kentucky's decision to remain neutral, the Civil War deeply divided the Commonwealth and its citizens. Further, because of its neutral status and location as a border state, both the Union and Confederate Armies knew that securing Kentucky would be crucial for defending other important territories and for accessing key transportation routes. As such, the Battle of Mill Springs—which was the first significant victory for the Union Army during the Civil War—served as a pivotal point in the war.

In late 1861, nearly 6,000 Confederate Army soldiers camped near Mill Springs, located in the southeastern corner of Kentucky, near the Cumberland Gap, and marked the eastern end of a defensive line that extended west across the state to Columbus, Kentucky on the Mississippi River. While this area afforded the Confederates the opportunity to launch an attack against Union troops who were ordered to take the region, the Union Army ultimately won the Battle of Mill Springs, driving the Confederates to retreat across the Cumberland River into Tennessee. Coupled with the Union victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson less than a month later, the victory at Mill Springs allowed the Union Army to infiltrate the Confederate defense in Kentucky and to build momentum for the Union offensive in Tennessee.

To commemorate the historical significance of the site to both the Commonwealth of Kentucky and to our nation as a whole, Mill Springs Battlefield was designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark District in 1993. Now, the site is maintained by the Mill Springs Battlefield Association, Inc. (MSBA). MSBA has steadily grown and continues its valuable efforts for

battlefield preservation in eastern Kentucky. To date, more than 400 acres in Pulaski and Wayne counties have been acquired and preserved as part of this ongoing effort.

Furthermore, in 2006, MSBA invested \$1.7 million in a 10,000-square-foot Visitor Center and Museum to commemorate Mill Springs Battlefield, which exhibits authentic artifacts from the battle, as well as additional authentic Civil War artifacts. The museum offers a broad range of cultural and historical learning opportunities for its visitors.

After years of ongoing dialogue with MSBA and other community stakeholders, we believe that designating Mill Springs Battlefield as a National Monument will help ensure its continued preservation for future generations. MSBA is fully supportive of this effort and has expressed a willingness to work with the Department on any steps necessary, including donating the land in question, in order to achieve this designation.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your interest in the historical significance of Mill Springs Battlefield. We would also like to commend your decision to recommend the designation of Camp Nelson in Jessamine County, Kentucky, as a National Monument within our National Park System. As you know, we were very supportive of this effort and appreciate your continued interest in the historical relevance of Civil War sites within Kentucky, like Camp Nelson and Mill Springs Battlefield. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Administration on these and many other efforts to highlight and preserve our nation's historical treasures, including those in Kentucky.

Sincerely,


Harold "Hal" Rogers
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


Mitch McConnell
UNITED STATES SENATOR


Brett Guthrie
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


Andy Barr
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


James Comer
MEMBER OF CONGRESS


John Yarmuth
MEMBER OF CONGRESS