

Conservation Easement Placed on 24 Acres of Shepherdstown Battlefield Land

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Protection of the land constituting Confederate General A.P. Hill's right flank in the 1862 Battle of Shepherdstown advanced July 31 with the placement of a conservation easement on 24 acres of Potomac River Bluff where Hill's forces dislodged Union troops who had pursued General Lee's army after the Battle of Antietam.

While Hill's right flank did not see the dramatic action of his left flank, where miscommunication and other problems resulted in decimation of the 118th Pennsylvania Regiment, it played an important supporting role.

The Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission (JCHLC) acquired the 24 acres on Hill's right flank with the assistance of the American Battlefield Trust and the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program, which required placement of a conservation easement to permanently protect the property. That document was signed July 31 with the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle as the easement holder, responsible for its monitoring and enforcement. The easement area includes a neck running down to River Road, with the majority of the property on the crest of the bluff. It consists of four parcels, two most recently owned by Wayne Eyler and two by Noah Merkhham.

A house on one of the Eyler parcels has been demolished, leaving the entire, partially wooded 24 acres without structures, which is how it must remain under the terms of the conservation easement. This easement is a great example of opportunities that exist to protect land for the purposes of protecting rivers and water quality. "We commend the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission and the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle for their work in using land conservation to protect our drinking water sources, such as the Potomac River," said Tanner Haid with WV Rivers Coalition.

Conservation easements already protect 26 acres of Historic Landmarks Commission land upstream, at the intersection of Trough and River Roads, where both armies had crossed the Potomac at Packhorse Ford and where the heaviest fighting occurred. In addition, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle and the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board hold easements on 57 acres of privately owned land further up Trough Road, protecting it from development.

The Historic Landmarks Commission, Farmland Protection Board and Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle continue to look for opportunities to protect additional land in the Shepherdstown Battlefield area.

Shepherdstown Battlefield Special Resource Study

West Virginia/Maryland

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Battle Map #3 September 20, 1862

