



Loudoun County, Virginia

HERITAGE COMMISSION

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Dear Landowner:

The Loudoun County Heritage Commission wants to honor the land near Balls Bluff where Federal and Confederate soldiers fought in October of 1861. Your property is potentially part of the area to be honored. This letter will give you information about the Civil War events that occurred on or near your property, and the recognition sought by the Heritage Commission.

In late October of 1861 a small scouting party of Federal troops crossed the Potomac River seeking information about Confederate camps near Leesburg. Through a series of errors and mistakes, this small scouting mission developed into a serious battle in which many hundreds of soldiers were wounded, captured or died. The losses were particularly dire for the Federal side, which was unable to retreat across the swollen Potomac. A US Senator, Edward Baker, was killed in the battle. The US Congress, reacting to the disastrous outcome so close to Washington DC, established the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War which significantly affected the entire course of the terrible war.

The 76-acre National Historic Landmark at Balls Bluff contains a small National Cemetery and is the site of the last and worst of the fighting. However significant events occurred over a much wider area that day in October ranging from Edwards Ferry, where thousands of Federal troops crossed over from Maryland but never managed to come to the aid of their beleaguered colleagues so close by, to Whites Ferry where thousands of Federal troops were camped on the Maryland side. It also includes land on the Maryland side of the Potomac along the C&O Canal and Harrison's Island from which the Federal troops crossed and to which they tried desperately to return. Amazingly, much of this land, on both sides of the river, looks much as it did 152 years ago.

The Heritage Commission proposes to increase the official boundaries of the Balls Bluff National Historic Landmark to include approximately 2900 acres over which both sides ranged during this struggle. The proposed boundaries, which will be adjusted by the research to be conducted, are shown on the enclosed preliminary map. This designation would in no way affect your property rights or allow anyone to enter onto your property, but it represents a significant honor. It would also provide generous tax benefits for those who own and want to restore structures that were standing at the time of the battle. National Historic Landmark status is the highest designation awarded by the Federal Government for historic areas and is given only for locations that have made a significant contribution to the Nation's history. There are only 2500 such designations in the United States today.

At this point the Heritage Commission is seeking a grant from the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program to help fund the historical research that will support the expansion of the designated battlefield area and will establish official boundaries for the enlarged historic landmark.

We have enclosed several items to help you better understand the history, to show you a very preliminary map of the proposed landmark area and to answer any questions you may have about the battle, the project or the effect on your property.

In addition, the Heritage Commission is holding two public meetings:

- **November 7 at 7 p.m. at REHAU Incorporated, 1503 Edwards Ferry Road, Leesburg - 4th Floor**
- **November 12 at 7 p.m. at Temple Hall, 15855 Limestone School Road, Leesburg**

At these public meetings noted historians will tell more about the important history on and around your property and other experts can answer your questions about the research process for determining the new boundaries and explain this honor and why it will not in any way affect your ability to do as you like on or with your property.

If you want more information quickly, you may visit the website www.loudoun.gov/historic and click on “Heritage Commission” to read the Preliminary Information Form (PIF) submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources which describes the events of the battle and the features of the land in more detail. To learn more about the National Historic Landmark Program visit www.nps.gov/nhl.

This area is rich with history from the Native Americans who traversed this land for thousands of years, to the very earliest European explorers sailing up the Potomac, to the wars fought on our Loudoun soil that created and shaped our nation. We want you to join us to understand our history, to learn the history of your own property and to encourage the proper recognition of this wonderful place.

Please contact the Heritage Commission at loudounhc@loudoun.gov if you have any further questions.

Regards,

Bill Wilkin, Chairman
Loudoun County Heritage Commission

Encl: Preliminary Map, Frequently Asked Questions