

# Center for State of the Parks



## SHILOH NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

On April 6–7, 1862, Union and Confederate forces clashed on the banks of the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing. The Battle of Shiloh, as it came to be known, is considered by many to be the first major battle of the American Civil War.

Shiloh National Military Park was established in 1894. Located near the community of Shiloh and approximately 110 miles east of Memphis, the park includes Shiloh National Cemetery as well as the new Corinth unit, in Mississippi, which includes the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, 23 miles southwest of Pittsburg Landing.

Hundreds of monuments, markers, and cannons commemorate the soldiers who fell at Shiloh. Shiloh National Cemetery, as well as mass Confederate burial trenches, serve as final resting places for thousands killed in the Civil War battle. The cemetery also contains the bodies of soldiers of later wars and their spouses. The park also protects the Shiloh Indian Mounds National Historic Landmark, containing a burial mound and extant cultural resources of a Mississippian culture that thrived in the area 1,000 years ago.

In addition to a wealth of cultural treasures, the park protects six ecosystems that harbor hundreds of mammal, bird, fish, reptile, and amphibian species.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The bucolic setting of Shiloh National Military Park belies the violence that took place during the Battle of Shiloh on April 6–7, 1863. By the battle's end, 23,746 soldiers had been killed, wounded, or were listed as missing.

In 2008, more than 363,000 people visited the park to learn about Civil War history, the Indian mounds, and the park's wildlife. About 167,000 non-recreational visitors also passed through the park in 2008.

### CHALLENGES

- Encroaching development and certain adjacent land uses affect the park's ability to interpret the battle that took place at Shiloh and preserve the associated resources. The Park Service is working to acquire

key parcels within its authorized boundary, in order to create a natural topographic border along Shiloh Hill. These properties are currently privately held and could be sold (and perhaps developed) at any time.

- The orientation film shown to visitors at the Shiloh Battlefield Visitor Center was created in 1956 and is the oldest film of this type within the Park Service. A new orientation film and rehabilitation of the auditorium at the existing Shiloh Battlefield Visitor Center will cost an estimated \$750,000.
- The park uses commercial grass seed on historic fields instead of the natural varieties that would provide better forage and cover for native animal species. In addition, biologists suggest Shiloh's mowing regime on some of these fields may be damaging to bird, reptile, and amphibian species. The park is cognizant of the wildlife impacts associated with current management techniques, but is also attempting to provide visitor access and an expected visitor experience (i.e., manicured landscapes), which requires such maintenance. There is a desire to address the topic of preservation maintenance and wildlife when the park next updates its general management plan.
- Staffing shortfalls affect visitor services and resource protection at Shiloh. The park has only seven permanent frontline interpretation



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employees, insufficient to provide daily, on-site programs to the public at two park units in separate states from September through May. The park needs an additional four full-time equivalent staff (two at each unit) to address this need. Because park roads remain open to use by commuters beyond normal business hours, Shiloh remains at risk for vandalism, looting, wildlife poaching, and vehicular damage. The Corinth unit is also at risk for the same types of resource protection problems. At this time, only two of three law enforcement positions have been filled, and recent law enforcement needs assessments indicate that Shiloh requires three additional full-time equivalent law enforcement positions to effectively protect visitors and resources. The park has identified the need for an additional 2.4 full-time equivalent maintenance staff to care for and repair the park's thousands of headstones, markers, monuments, and cannon carriages.

#### WHAT'S BEING DONE

- When the Tennessee Valley Authority impounded the Tennessee River to create Kentucky and Pickwick Lakes in the 1930s and '40s, portions of the park's shoreline suffered severe erosion, blowouts, and landslides. After landslides in 1997, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed a new bank stabilization project. The final stabilization phase was completed in 2008. The entire 1.75 miles of the park's eastern boundary/shoreline is now protected from erosion by rock riprap. Completion of the project allowed

the park to reopen visitor access to the Shiloh Indian Mounds using the park auto tour route. Construction of a one-mile-long interpretive trail through the site is under way.

- In conjunction with the riverbank stabilization project, the park and the Southeast Archeological Center recently completed a \$1.6 million archaeological mitigation of a pre-historic Mississippian period (A.D. 800–1200) temple mound threatened by erosion along the bank of the Tennessee River. This five-year project constitutes the largest and most significant archaeological research at the park since the 1930s..
- The \$9.5 million Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center opened in Corinth, Mississippi, in 2004. Critically acclaimed for its exhibits on slavery, secession, and the nationally significant Civil War events that unfolded in the region, it is the suggested first stop for visitors to Shiloh National Military Park. The 15,000-square-foot center also features two audio-visual movie productions.
- Currently, more than 4,100 acres within the park's authorized boundary (which exceeds 7,000 acres) are federally owned. The Park Service, with the assistance of the Civil War Preservation Trust, is pursuing negotiations to acquire 1,000 or more acres of the remaining nonfederal acres held within its legislated, authorized boundary at Shiloh battlefield. Another 800 or more acres currently owned by the Friends of the Siege and Battle of Corinth are authorized to be donated to the Corinth unit (fee simple) sometime in 2009. In addition, another 130 acres of authorized lands at Corinth

are under negotiation for future addition to the park.

#### ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

#### CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Tennessee's Civil War National Parks, including Shiloh National Military Park, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at [jnations@npca.org](mailto:jnations@npca.org).

For more information on Shiloh National Military Park, contact NPCA's Southeast Regional Office at 865.329.2424, or visit the park online at [www.nps.gov/shil](http://www.nps.gov/shil). For media inquiries, please contact Shannon Andrea, NPCA senior media relations manager, at 202.454.3371 or [sandrea@npca.org](mailto:sandrea@npca.org).