

Abstract

The AAL has prepared a series of 15 wayside exhibits and an associated Story Map to tell and reframe the story of two significant Northwest Indian Wars battles that took place in present-day Fort Recovery, Ohio: the Battle of the Wabash (1791) and the Battle of Fort Recovery (1794). The project uses maps and images to emphasize the extent of the landscape involved in the battle and its role in shaping the outcome, emphasize the American Indian perspective and battle strategy, and stress the importance of future preservation and protection of the battlefield. One of our goals was to reintegrate American Indians as active agents in these events with real human motivations of protecting family and home. We balance the interests of the two descendent communities to recount a story that is more faithful to the history and archaeology of these two significant events in American history.

Historic Context

In order to settle the Northwest Territory after Brigadier General Josiah Harmar's failed attempt in 1790, Major General Arthur St. Clair was tasked with building forts every 20 miles from Fort Washington (Cincinnati) north to the Miami stronghold of Kiihkayonki (Fort Wayne). He built Fort Jefferson in October 1791, before continuing north.

The Battle of the Wabash 1791

On November 3, St. Clair's army of 1200 soldiers and 250 camp followers arrived on the banks of the Wabash River, unknowingly ~60 miles southeast of Kiihkayonki. Camp was set up with no fortifications. At 6:30 the next morning, an American Indian alliance of 1500 warriors under the command of Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket, Shawnee) and Mihšihkinaahkwa (Little Turtle, Miami) attacked from an initial crescent formation. St. Clair's main camp quickly became an area of confusion and disorder, with Indians attacking, camp followers scattering, and soldiers attempting to find battle positions. After being completely surrounded within 15 minutes, St. Clair ordered a retreat by 9:30 am. Approximately 900 soldiers and 150 civilians perished, with 35 to 70 Indians killed.



By Peter Dennis in Winkler 2011. Courtesy of FRHS, FRSM

The Battle of Fort Recovery 1794

In December 1793, Major General Anthony Wayne built Fort Recovery at the site of St. Clair's defeat. On June 30, 1794, an American Indian alliance of 2000 warriors attacked a convoy returning to Greenville. The Indian alliance was defeated after a fierce two day battle and attack on the fort. This battle marked the defeat of the largest American Indian force ever assembled and led to the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.

Acknowledgements

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- Research was conducted in collaboration with the Ohio History Connection, Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Fort Recovery Historical Society, Fort Recovery State Museum, and Fort Recovery landowners and community members.
- Wayside Exhibit Design by Kristin Barry, Department of Architecture, Ball State University
- Support was provided by Ball State University Department of Anthropology, College of Science and Humanities, and Sponsored Projects Administration.
- A special thank you to over 70 Ball State University graduate and undergraduate students and to Department of Anthropology faculty and staff Mark Groover, Mark Hill, Cailin Murray, and Kevin Nolan, all of who have worked on this research.

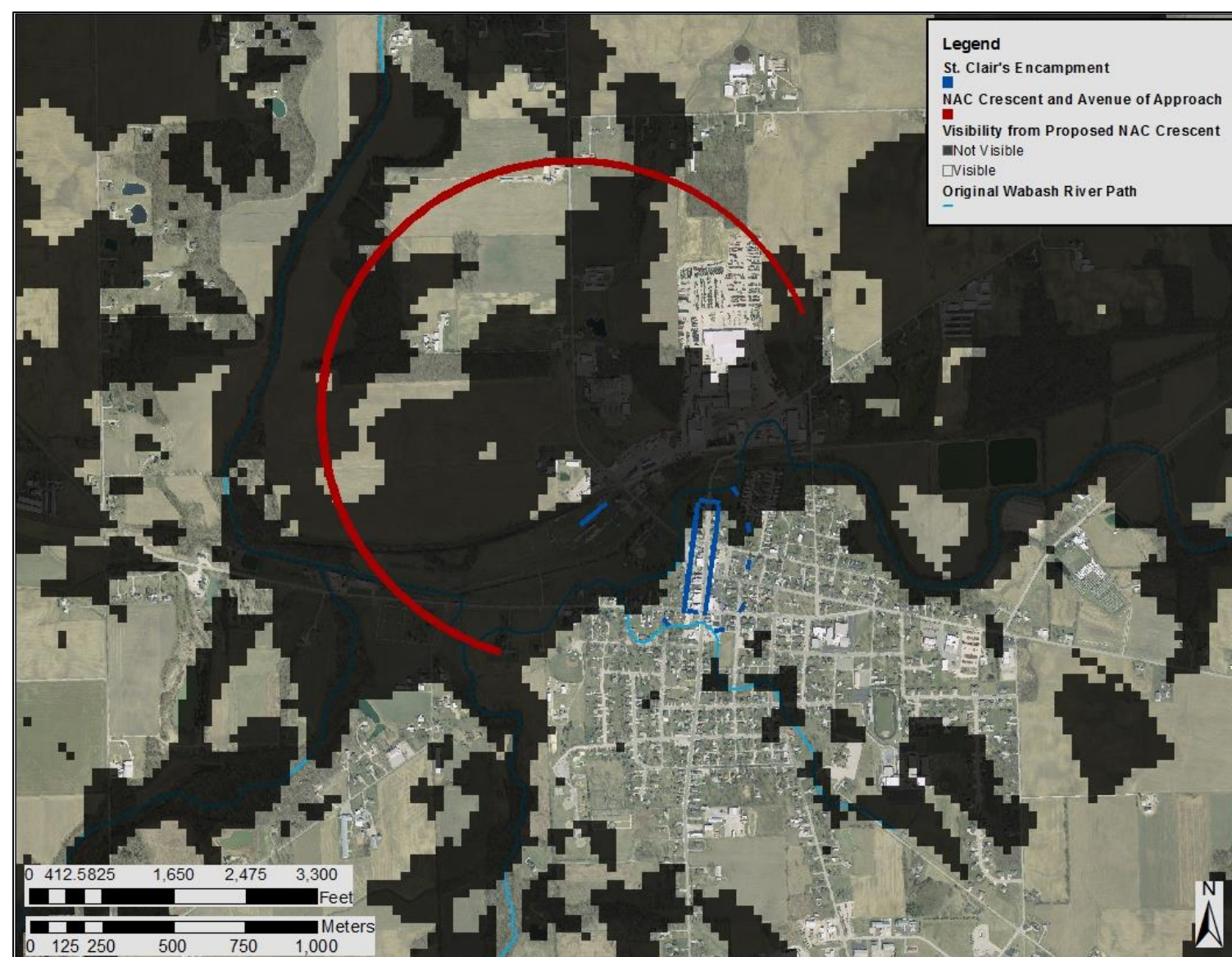
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GIS Data Modeling – Battle of the Wabash 1791

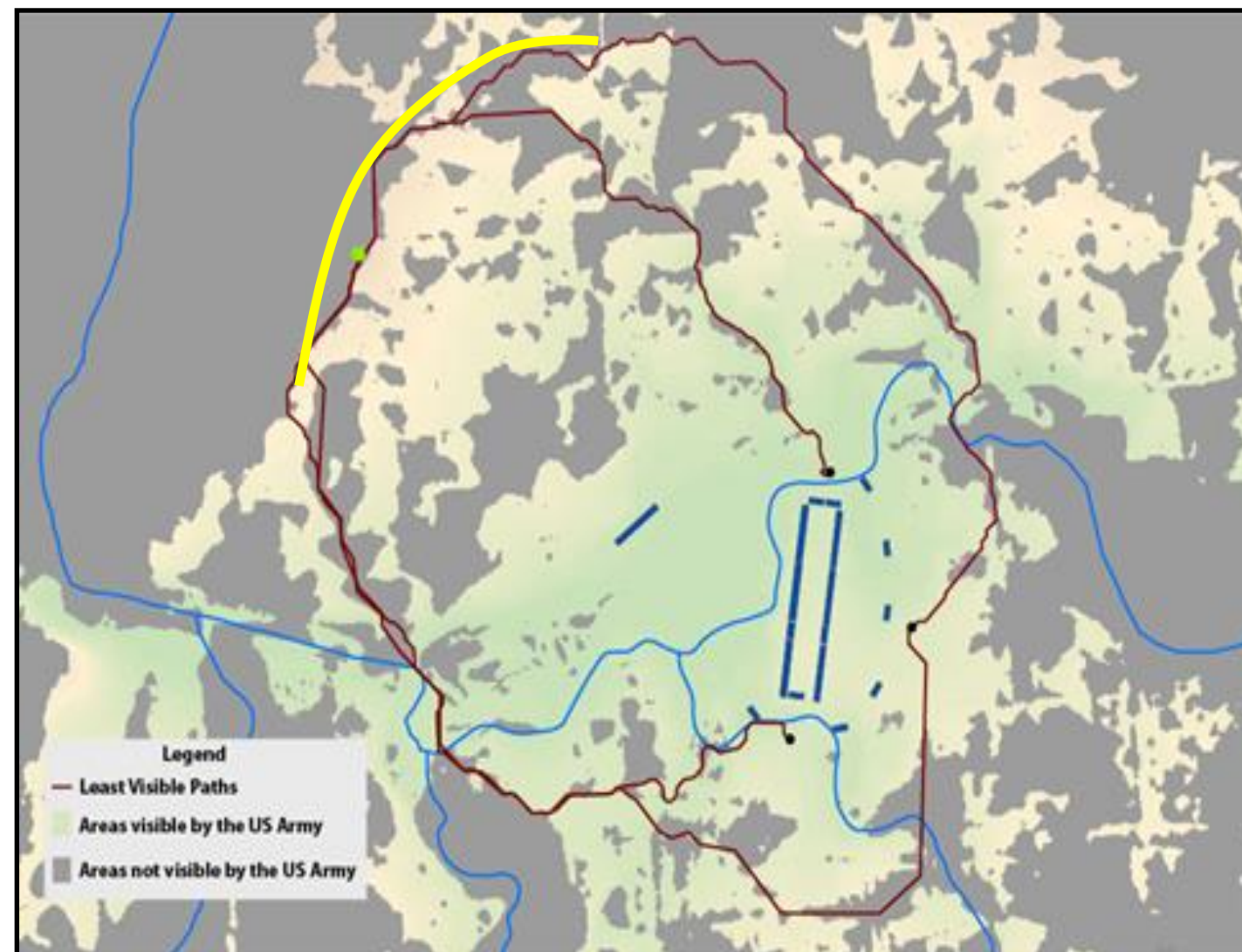
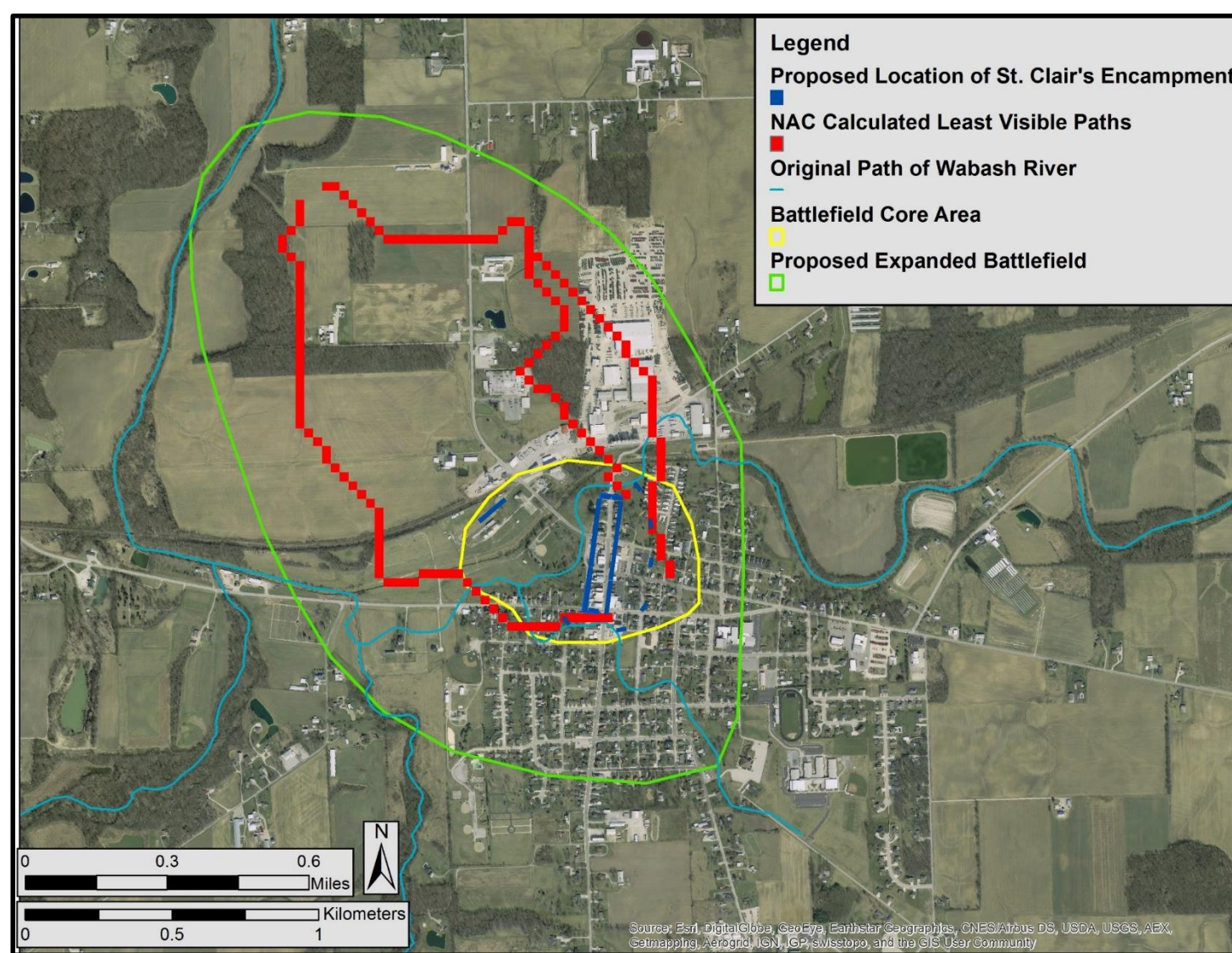
GIS data modeling used 2011 and 2014 ABPP archaeological results in conjunction with the ABPP's KOCO Analysis methodology to examine the battle tactics and strategies. Using the topography, least cost path analysis, field of fire, least visible paths, and the location of artifacts, models and maps were generated that reconstructed some of the key battle elements, particularly of the American Indians. The figure on the left shows the view of St. Clair's encampment, outposts, and the Kentucky Militia (in blue) from the American Indian staging area (red crescent). The lack of black shading indicates that St. Clair's army was in full view of the American Indian forces. The figure on the right shows the starting crescent formation (in yellow) of the American Indian fighters. The gray shading in this case shows that the American Indian forces were not visible to St. Clair and his army. The red encirclement shows the probable path of the American Indian alliance in order to surround St. Clair's army in 15 minutes (per historic sources) without being detected. The clever use of the landscape allowed 1500 warriors to launch a "surprise" attack on St. Clair's army.



(Above) The Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and other tribes knew the area around the Wabash River well as this was their home. As St. Clair made camp, the Indian leadership acted quickly to refine an attack strategy. This visibility map for the American Indians shows their generalized location (red crescent). St. Clair's encampment is clearly visible on high ground

NPS ABPP KOCO Analysis

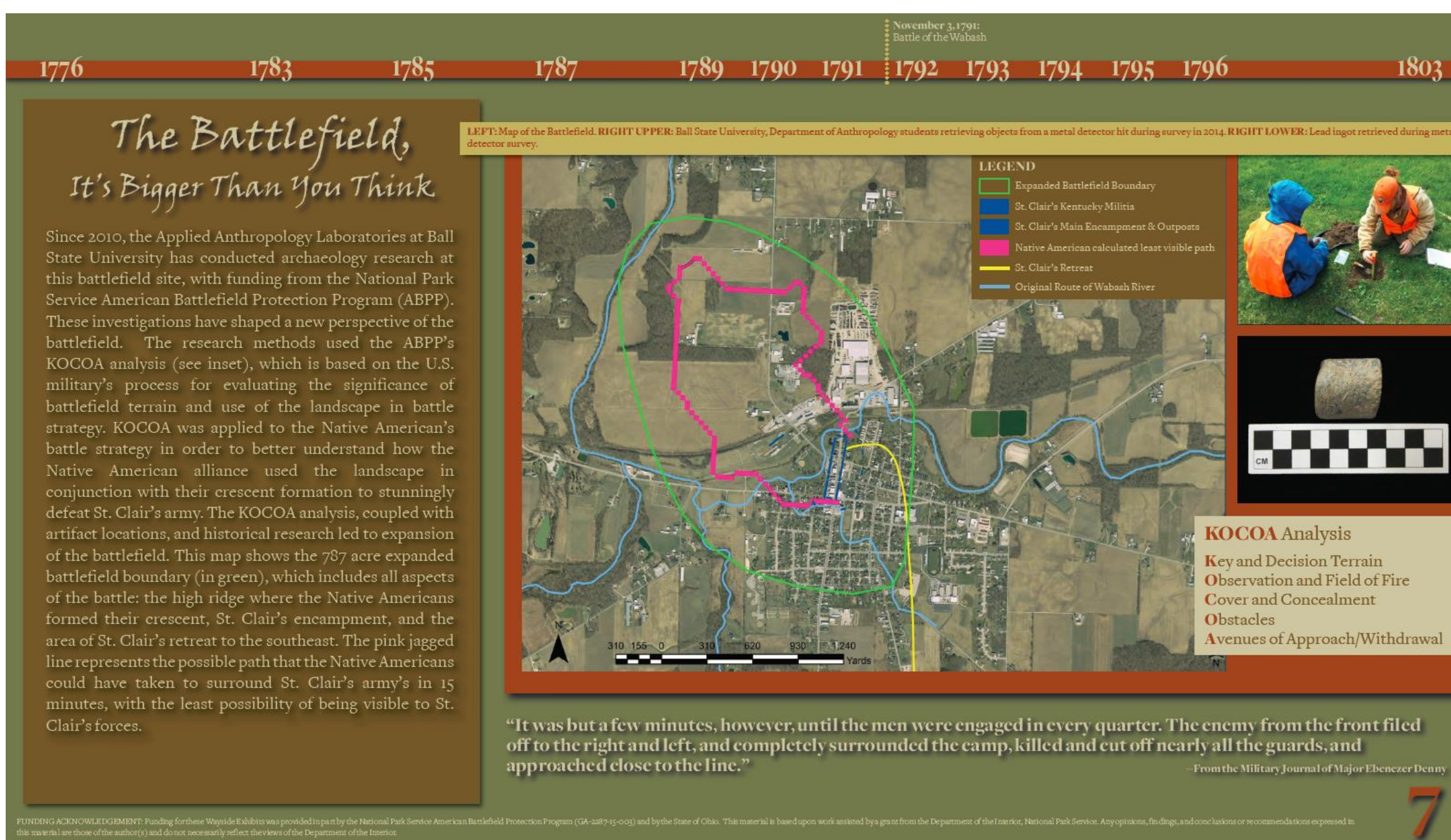
- Key Terrain
- Observation & Field of Fire
- Cover & Concealment
- Obstacle
- Avenues of Approach & Retreat



(Left) The expanded battlefield boundary (green) encompasses the calculated least visible path of the American Indians (red), St. Clair's encampment (blue) and the battlefield core area (yellow). The northwest portion of the battlefield remains relatively undisturbed; the southeast portion of the battlefield is disturbed by the village of Fort Recovery.

Wayside Exhibit Planning and Design

In July 2015, Ball State University was awarded an ABPP grant for the planning and design of 15 wayside exhibits throughout the battlefield. The goals and objectives of the ABPP Wayside Exhibit Plan included: 1) using maps and images to emphasize the extent of the landscape involved in the battle and its role in shaping the outcome; 2) emphasizing the American Indian perspective and battle strategy; 3) providing battlefield interpretation to visitors when the Fort Recovery State Museum (FRSM) is not open in the non-summer months; and 4) stressing the importance of future preservation and protection of the battlefield. Numerous Fort Recovery community groups, including the Fort Recovery Historical Society (FRHS), were consulted on the best location and topics for wayside exhibits. Group members had strong opinions on where certain signs should be placed and wanted new wayside exhibits to work well with existing interpretive signage and historical points of interests within the village. The wayside exhibit content borrowed heavily from over eight years of Fort Recovery research done by the AAL at BSU. A BSU architecture professor designed draft wayside exhibits from content provided by AAL archaeologists. Wayside exhibits were designed to match the colors, font and general design of the exhibits in the FRSM and will be accompanied by a tour map. Completed draft designs were reviewed by the FRHS, Ohio History Connection (OHC), village officials, and members of tribes who were present at the battle, specifically Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and Potawatomie, incorporating all input. In collaboration with multiple descendant tribes and the OHC, the content of the Wayside Exhibits and all previous research is the basis of a recently awarded NEH Public Humanities Project "A New View of the Battle of the Wabash" which, upon completion, will travel to tribal museums.



Sample Wayside Exhibit at Fort Recovery photo-shopped into battlefield landscape. Will be manufactured of fused polycarbonate and painted aluminum. Size of wayside exhibit designs are 48" x 24", tilted at ~60 degree angle, so visitors can easily view landscape and wayside exhibit simultaneously.

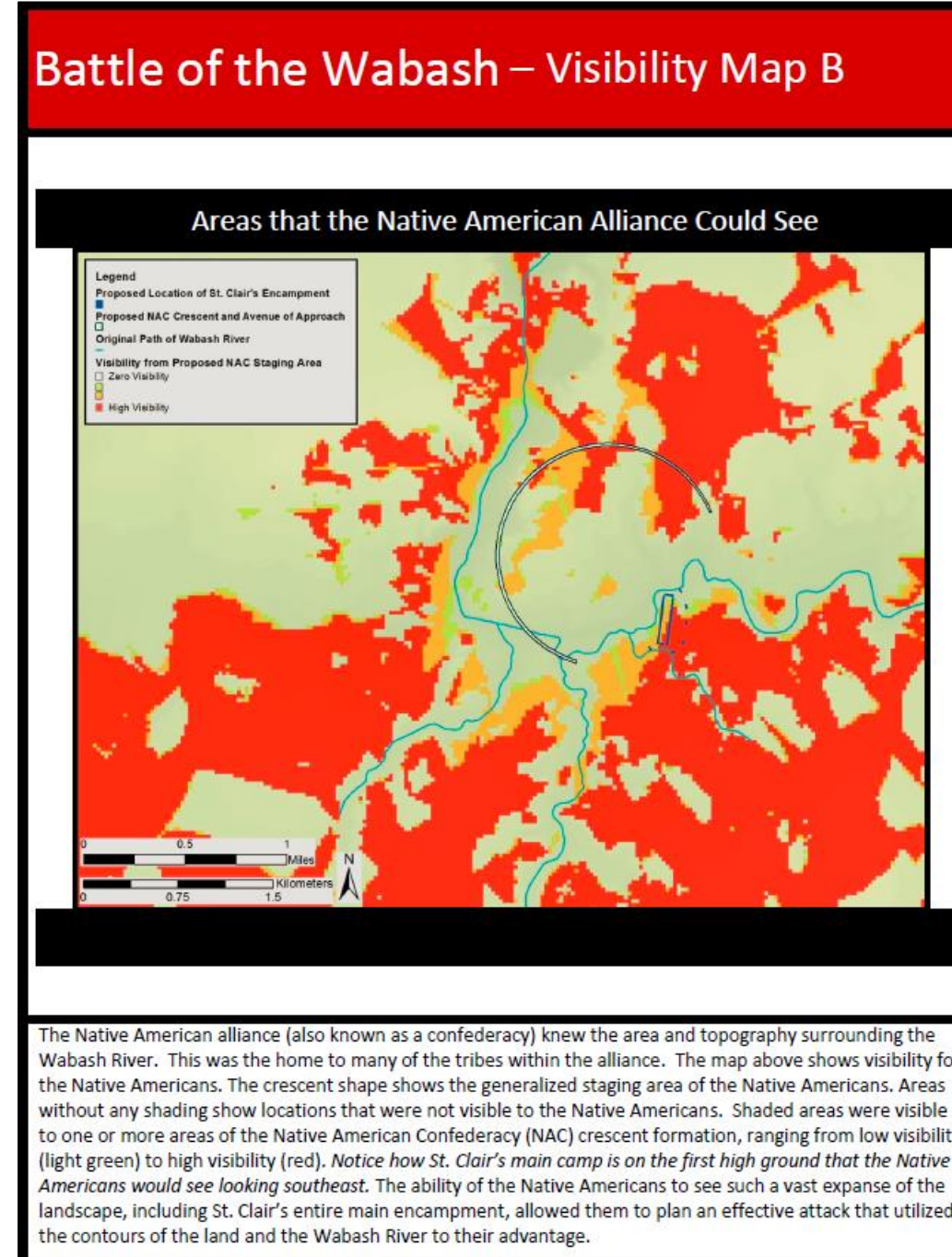
(Right) Sample Wayside Exhibit layout.



(Below) The location of the 15 wayside exhibit and battlefield tour Story Map route on the core battlefield.

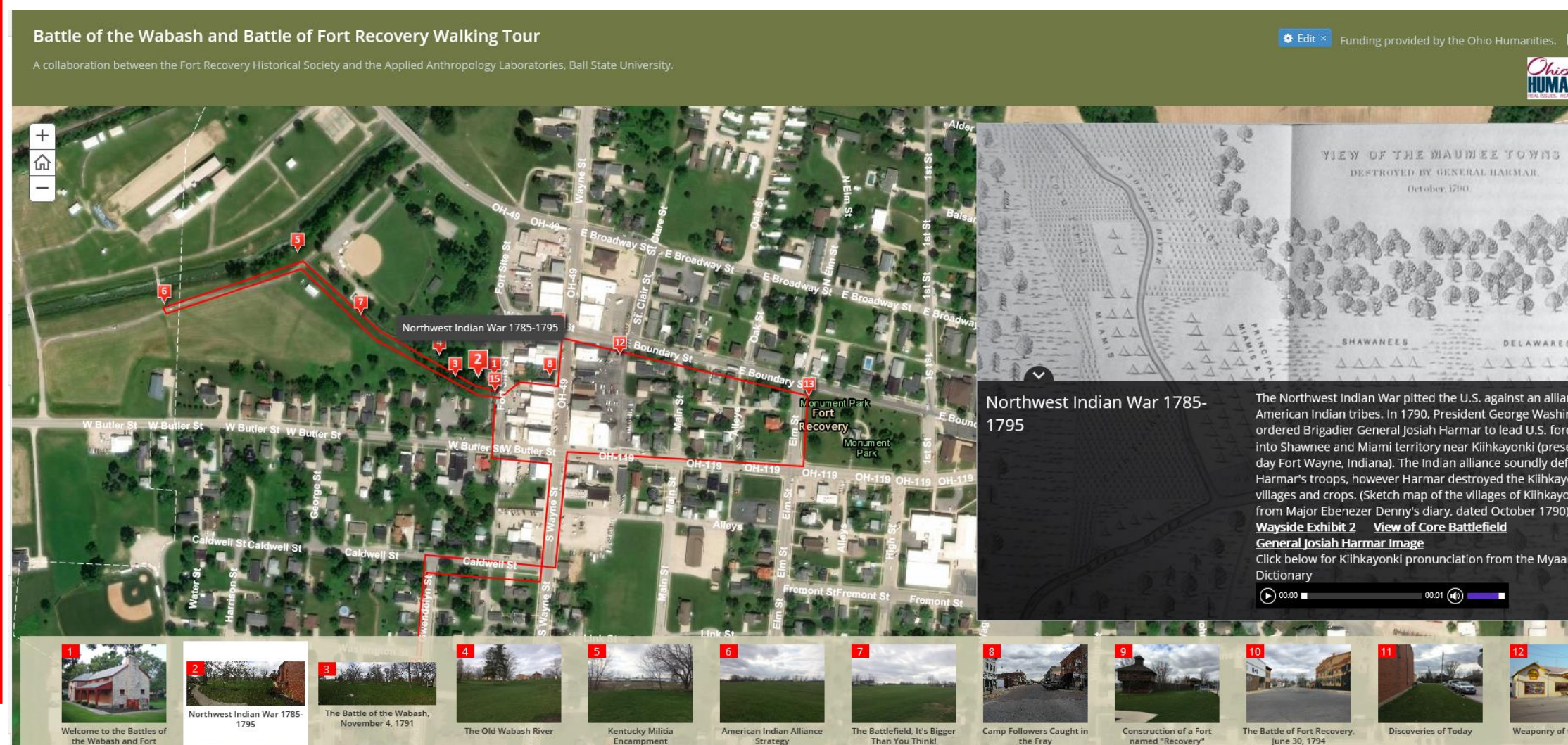
Mapping the Landscape for the Public

A 64-page document "The Battle of the Wabash and The Battle of Fort Recovery: Mapping the Battlefield Landscape and Present Day Fort Recovery, OH" was created to present GIS data modeling results to the public. It tells the stories of the battles and landscape through a series of maps and has been used successfully with museum visitors, presentation attendees, and is being made available in hard copy and on-line.



Battlefield Tour Story Map

A 2018 Ohio Humanities Council grant was awarded to the Fort Recovery Historical Society to create an on-line map-based representation of these two battles using ESRI Story Map. The Story Map will function as a battlefield tour coinciding with the 15 wayside exhibits. This will provide a humanities-based interpretation of the two battles when the Fort Recovery State Museum is not open or for those who cannot visit the battlefield. ESRI Story Maps combine maps, narrative text, images, and other multimedia content to create user friendly web applications across multiple platforms (desktop, tablet, smartphone), effectively using the power of maps and the landscape to tell the story of the Battle of the Wabash and the Battle of Fort Recovery. Our previous research results are being used as a basis for our Battlefield Tour Story Map. The wayside exhibits and Story Map will give a comprehensive tour of the core battlefield and complement the current museum exhibits.



Conclusions

The Wayside Exhibit Plan and Design has been completed and approved by the ABPP. Wayside Exhibits are currently being manufactured and will be installed in November 2018, with Ohio Facilities Construction Commission funding procured by the Fort Recovery Historical Society. The Battlefield Tour Story Map is currently being produced by BSU's Applied Anthropology Laboratories and will be available in November 2018 to coincide with the wayside exhibits.

