

Bristow is added to historic sites

By MALCOLM SPICER

JM Staff Writer

JM 4/20/91

The 1,162-acre Civil War battlefield in Bristow on Wednesday became Prince William County's fourth member of Virginia's list of historic sites in a decision made in Richmond by a state board.

During a meeting at the Brentsville Courthouse in December, Prince William County residents vehemently protested adding the Bristow tract to the Virginia Landmarks Register. But when the Historic Resources Board met at the General Assembly building in Richmond on Wednesday, there was little comment.

"It's the end of the process," said Margaret T. Peters of the Commission of Historic Resources.

The battlefield site, where about 1,900 Union and Confederate soldiers were killed or wounded in the Battle of Bristoe Station on Oct. 14, 1863, joins areas in Manassas, Occoquan and Brentsville on the state Landmarks Register.

The decision came despite a request by the chairman of Prince William's Board of County Supervisors, Terrence Spellane, that the county be allowed to maintain a portion of

the site as a memorial and use other portions for development.

Spellane and owners of the property in the battlefield site said that adding the tract the historic list will hinder efforts to develop it. Spellane, of the Coles district, said in an April 12 letter to the resources board that the county is considering a sector plan to guide land use in the region southwest of Manassas.

But the listing merely recognizes the site's historical value and doesn't influence whether the property can be developed, Peters said. "That is totally a local political decision," she said.

And it's clear that local pressure has previously influenced the seven-member resources board's action on the property.

Peters said the process of considering the Bristow tract for historic listing began in 1989 when the Prince William Planning Office received a state grant to study the county's historical resources and later recommended the site.

But after resistance to the change was apparent that year, the board dropped the site from its consideration. It was only after the Save the Battlefield Coalition con-

See BRISTOW on Page A8

DELIVERY, CALL 361-0191

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

Bristow

Continued from Page A1

tacted the board last year that the agency again considered the site, she said.

She said that no other Prince William sites are being considered for addition to the Landmarks Register. The coalition was formed in 1988 to protest plans to develop property near Manassas Battlefield National Park and has continued as a group to oppose development in areas that members regard as historical.

Peters said that following the December meeting in Brentsville, the board's vote on the Bristow tract was scheduled for a February meeting in Portsmouth, near Norfolk. But to provide a more convenient site for Prince William residents interested in the vote, the board delayed the decision until their meeting in Richmond on Wednesday, she said.