

# Battle Brewing In Bristow Dump

## Site Was Locale of Civil War Action

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JM Staff Writer

The 350-acre Bristow site under consideration as a debris landfill was the arena of a local Civil War battle in which about 2,000 soldiers were killed, wounded or lost in action, Prince-William-County's archeologist said Monday.

The announcement added a new twist to the county's search for a western landfill and could result in forcing the Board of County Supervisors to reverse its decision to consider the Bristow and Haymarket sites in the same study.

The board, in a unanimous vote on Jan. 12, agreed to include the Bristow site at the urging of

Gainesville Supervisor Robert Cole. He pushed for that change after he accidentally voted on Jan. 5 to study the Haymarket site alone.

County Archeologist Jan Townsend is hoping the board drops its plan to pay a consultant up to \$4,000 to study both sites as potential landfills. She said the Bristow site should remain pristine.

"I think it would be a tragedy," she said. "It's important to the history of the county. It's the last battlefield we have besides Manassas Battlefield."

The Battle of Bristow was fought in Oct. 1863, ending in defeat for Gen. Robert E. Lee after a brave assault by his troops was repulsed by Union forces. About 1,300 Confederate and 600 Union troops were lost, killed or wounded in the one-day battle, Townsend said.

Townsend is investigating claims by the Bristow site's part-owner, Milton Rollins, that military graves are present on his land, located southwest of the junction of Nokesville and Bristow roads.

"I can show you a couple of markers," said Rollins, 71, a longtime county resident, in response to questions about Civil War cemeteries. "It's a grave from the Alabama Regiment of Volunteers. I think it's Company D."

Locating military graves on the Bristow site shouldn't be difficult, Manassas Museum Curator Doug Harvey said, adding that Virginia law contains sanctions against the disruption of those graves.

Harvey, who said the Battle of Bristow could come out of its local obscurity with the recent publication of the book "The Road to Bristow Station" by William Henderson, believes the county should select another landfill site.

"I think that to put a landfill on a Civil War site of that significance would be out of the question," he said. "I would hope the county would look for another site."

Townsend, who learned last week of the tract's connection to the Civil War and its possible military graves, has alerted Planning Director John Schofield about her discovery and her concern about finding a substitute site.

She said she told Schofield the county has a \$10,000 state grant to identify Civil War sites within the county and that she planned to include the Bristow battlefield in an application to the National Register of Historic Places.

"We are definitely going to do something," she said. "We don't know if we could the whole battlefield in because of time and See Battle Brewing on A-3.

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# Battle Brewing

Continued from A-1  
money."

Brentsville Supervisor William Becker said he has assembled a team of advisers to examine the site and report on the extent of military graves on the land.

Becker launched the investigation because he had no evidence to support Collins' claims. Until his team of local residents returns with some answers, Becker said he's keeping an open mind.

"I not ready to take any position on it," said Becker, the board's only Republican. "It's really too early to tell until we get our facts."

Yet Becker agreed that if Townsend, Harvey and Collins prove correct, he won't impede efforts to reverse the county's decision. "It

would have an impact I would say," he said. "How big an impact I don't know."

The Bristow site was one of four debris landfill sites in western Prince William recommended to the supervisors by a citizens' committee Oct. 20. Becker said the panel's review of Bristow's historic significance wasn't thorough.

Tom Smith, the county director of public works, said his staff worked with the citizens and was aware the Bristow tract had links to the Civil War, but was unaware of any military graves.

"We had a general knowledge that it was a Civil War battlefield," Smith said. "We did not know of a burial ground."