

Civil War Preservation Trust Nat'l Press Event

Cedar Creek Battlefield Visitor Center – Wendy Hamilton - March 14, 2007

My name is Wendy Hamilton. I am a founding member of Preserve Frederick and spokesperson for the organization today.

Preserve Frederick is a county-wide grassroots organization. Our mission is to promote compatible development that strengthens our communities, protects our natural and historic resources and preserves our rural character.

One year ago, last March, O-N Minerals proposed a massive land use change. This request has yet to be resolved - and denied - by the county. Forever changing 639 acres of land that has been untouched for centuries – from rural agricultural uses to heavy industry - including up to 5 new rock quarries, asphalt and concrete plants and public utilities is in direct conflict with both Middletown and Frederick County Comprehensive Plans. This incompatible rezoning would create a 1260 acre, heavy industrial mining corridor, over two-thirds mile wide and 2.6 miles long on historically significant core battlefield.

Local landowners and local businesses have been misled by O-N Mineral's promises to address the current and future buffers to protect the historic town and adjacent homes and historical attractions from the noise, dust and view-shed pollution of their strip mining operation.

The National Historical Park, reenactments at Cedar Creek Battlefield, Belle Grove Plantation, the Wayside Inn and Wayside Theater are but a few of the many attractions that allow visitors to experience the historic character, charm and heritage of Middletown. Many of the town's historic landmarks and buildings have been preserved, making Middletown and the Shenandoah Valley an appealing destination for visitors.

The financial gains of an out-of-state corporation and the destruction of pristine rural lands can never justify turning the battlefield and Middletown into a mining community.

This land has felt deep sorrow – it has been soaked by the blood of thousands of soldiers – Confederate and Union. Last summer and fall, hundreds of Bull Run and Cedar Creek re-enactors shared with Preserve Frederick the same concerns of all of these partners. We are united in saying this land should be left unmarred. Here today - we all stand together - deeply committed to protecting and preserving this historic land.

Preserve Frederick continues to believe that nothing can mitigate the destruction of this sacred battlefield land and the potential harms to this county's three treasured jewels: Cedar Creek, the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park and historic Middletown. We will continue to work to protect and preserve all that is special about this battlefield area and town.

We encourage you to look at our website – www.preservefrederick.org to follow our efforts in the county and see how you can help. Thank you. I'd like to introduce the next speaker, Suzanne Chilson.