

The Waterford—Paeonian Springs Project Needs to be Flushed

BY CHARLES HOUSTON

This County-Loudoun Water idea faces near-unanimous opposition, based on survey results and even door-to-door canvassing. Almost every day some new and odious problem pops up. Most recently the groundwater crisis has sounded a countywide alarm. It's a special problem for this County scheme.

I'm finding it hard to write an update given the almost daily discovery of more problems. Instead, I'm going back to the beginning and sharing eloquent letters from two neighbors, which capture objections from a personal perspective.

Two problems? Don't create a third.

Clarkes Gap Road, which runs between Paeonian Springs and Waterford, is a beautifully scenic, winding drive. I have a

farm with cattle, horses, and one donkey to keep our disabled cow content. I have lived there for 32 years.

Many years ago, I planted trees to help contain the rushing, tumbling Catoctin Creek that ran through our farmland. The springs below the ground filled a cistern where the animals drank.

When the adjacent community of Beacon Hill was developed, I was told that it would NOT affect my springs or water table. This was NOT true. The Catoctin Creek that once rushed and tumbled through is now a dry bed. The cistern I enclosed to water our livestock is now empty and unusable.

Now the county tells us that they are going to tap our water supply by drilling additional wells on neighboring properties extracting 600,000 gallons per day from the aquifer, an aquifer that may or may not be able to sustain it for any length of time. The county plans on having Waterford residents cap their existing (though viable) wells and charge them to hook up to the new system. If the aquifer is drained, I wonder how I will water our livestock? What will happen to the property values of the homeowners along and behind the road?

We DO want our neighbors at both ends of Clarkes Gap to have a positive solution to their septic and water issues. Every home needs safe, good water and septic system. We DO support more cost effective and less impactful small-scale solutions to improve our water/wastewater system for the benefit of all present Loudoun County residents. And there is hope.

The solutions lie in addressing each Village's issues separately without creating a third problem with the digging up two miles of Clarke's Gap Road. There are less invasive, less expensive, and more sustainable solutions to the problems in both Villages. These and other methods must be explored.

We DO NOT support the agenda proposed by Dewberry and Loudoun Water for our area, as we have already personally witnessed the devastating impact that will cascade through our fragile environment from this proposed project. We do NOT want Loudoun County to spend additional funds on the Waterford, Paeonian Springs tie-in project.

KILJOY'S County



Loudoun's groundwater crisis can't wait for another drought

BY JOHN LOVEGROVE, CHAIRMAN, LOUDOUN'S FUTURE PAC

Clean, reliable water is something most of us take for granted. In western Loudoun, that assumption is no longer guaranteed.

A new groundwater study from the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition confirms what many residents and farmers have already experienced: our wells, springs, and ponds are drying up, and without action, the problem will grow worse.

The 57-page study, which analyzed decades of data, found that groundwater levels across western Loudoun have dropped between 10 and 40 feet since the 1980s. More than 3,200 wells have been abandoned, and hundreds more have gone dry. Farmers are already hauling water to livestock and feeding hay months earlier than usual because of drought conditions. Loudoun's groundwater system—the main source of drinking water for tens of thousands of residents—is no longer sustainable under current practices.

Climate change is accelerating this decline. Hotter summers, record humidity, and prolonged droughts have become the new normal, reducing the amount of rainfall that can soak into the ground and replenish the aquifer. Development and paving compound the problem by sealing the soil, preventing recharge, and increasing demand. Each new subdivision adds wells that compete for a limited supply.

Nearly half of Loudoun's wells are within 200 feet of another, and most are within

500 feet. When one homeowner pumps water, it affects the supply for neighbors. It is like drawing from the same bucket—too many straws, not enough water. Drilling deeper is not a solution. Below about 1,200 feet, the fractures in the bedrock are closed, and there is no additional water to reach.

The science is clear, but Loudoun's response has fallen behind. The County has required detailed groundwater studies for decades, yet much of that data has never been fully analyzed. A network of 35 to 40 monitoring wells was planned years ago, but only 14 are active today. Meanwhile, neighboring counties such as Fauquier and Prince William are using real-time data to guide water management decisions. Loudoun, despite having more information, has done less with it.

This is no longer a distant concern. Thousands of Loudoun households could see their wells run dry within the next decade if the County does not act. Replacing wells is expensive, and as the problem grows, the economic impact will spread. Even residents who rely on public water will feel the effects through higher costs and potential limits on future growth. Doing nothing will cost far more than taking action now.

The stakes extend beyond private households. Groundwater depletion threatens Loudoun's \$50 million rural economy, built on farming, livestock, and agritourism. It also affects our streams and

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JUST LIKE NOTHING (ELSE), CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

neared, the trail widened and eventually I could make out the children's playground apparatus and the park pavilion, and yes, my beloved vehicle with a half-cup of iced coffee. But, the world of green had done its work. Close my eyes, remember the few visual signals of trail, leaves, tree limbs and uneven ground— and I'm back in the swirl of every imaginable tint of that wonderful color. May it ever be so.

I fervently hope even after I'm too old to get out and ramble on those (and of course, many other) local trails, I can at least walk the nearby neighborhoods, and enjoy the familiar, annual riot of growth and green, almost within reach. And, if I live long enough to only be able to enjoy it on an overhead map, so be it.

Local, State and National Parks, to me, and

hopefully anyone possessing a soul—should remain inviolable, and beyond price. If I should witness the loss of the world of green, with its confusing network of trails, its swirl of colors—and yes, its 'walking trees'—I'm certain I'd feel as if I'd lived too long. The very nature of Nature to me, is its very 'ungovernability.' It's wild, so Let It Be.

And, while I find myself in a bit of an unusual situation—perched atop a soapbox—I'd like to commend the foresight of the local committees, Town Councils, County Supervisors, State Legislators and National Representatives who possessed not only the foresight and intelligence to plan for these natural amenities, but the courage, determination and hard work to carry these projects through to completion. Ladies and gentlemen, let's keep going.

LOUDOUN'S GROUNDWATER CRISIS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

rivers, which rely on groundwater for steady flow. Lower water levels mean more "non-flowing" days, harming aquatic life and reducing water supplies for eastern Loudoun and beyond.

Loudoun's Future PAC believes that water security is the most urgent issue facing our county. We are calling on the Board of Supervisors and County staff to act decisively. The County must complete its groundwater monitoring network, analyze existing data to identify high-risk areas, and update land-use and development policies to reflect the limits of our water resources.

Smart growth starts with smart water management. Before approving the next subdivision, we must ensure there is enough groundwater to support it. That is not anti-growth. It is responsible planning.

Every Loudoun resident has a stake in this issue, whether you drink from a private well, run a farm, or pay taxes. Protecting

groundwater is not just about the environment. It is about protecting our families, our economy, and our future.

Loudoun cannot afford to wait for the next drought to remind us that water is the foundation of everything we value.

A 20-year Loudoun resident, John is an engineer and a member of the County's Facility Standards Manual Committee. He has worked for the Navy and the Intelligence Community as a systems engineer, as well as with a number of railroads around the world, including the Washington Metro, on signal engineering. His first involvement in Loudoun politics and land-use issues was the conceptual Hillsboro Bypass, followed by the proposed Short Hill Data Center, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Zoning re-write. John brings detailed knowledge of the technical issues surrounding data centers as well as county-wide land use, planning and zoning. He lives in Hillsboro with his wife, four horses and various pets.

MILLER'S KITCHEN, CON'T. FROM PAGE 17

Highlights include:

- *Panna and Zest*—An Italian lemon sugar cookie with panna cotta filling and milk chocolate
- *Almond Galette Crème Brûlée*—A rich French-inspired delicacy
- *Matcha Vanilla*—A nod to Asia, filled with white chocolate cream
- *Ube Dream*—A purple-hued cookie with ube cream cheese filling

- *Island Silk*—A Coconut sugar cookie with creamy coconut filling

Miller is mindful about her ingredients. She uses a custom whole wheat blend that includes grain from a local farmer, non-GMO eggs, and even makes her own brown sugar using cane sugar and organic molasses. Gluten-free and protein-rich options are currently in development, a nod to her ever-expanding customer base.

With every batch, Miller continues to stir memories and make new ones—one cookie at a time.

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COURT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

On June 28, the Grievance Panel found Nett innocent of all five allegations, citing the “greater weight of the evidence” as the basis for its decision.

The Panel noted that the Town “went so far as to suggest that Mr. Nett should be terminated for emailing, rather than calling, his supervisor,” referring to a November 26, 2024 memorandum circulated by Lt. Michael Holman. The Panel said that memo “does not appear in the Department General Orders, the Handbook, or elsewhere as a formal requirement.”

The Town failed to provide any report

from the Prince William Police Department regarding its investigation into the allegations, nor did it present any witnesses from the department to testify before the Grievance Panel about the inquiry into whether Nett was ill—a central charge that allegedly prevented him from performing his duties.

Investigators from Prince William County didn’t interview anyone who spent considerable time with Nett at the Jan. 29–30 conference, except for his political opponent, Council Member Erin Rayner, who said she was with him for about five minutes. “The Panel finds that

the greater weight of the evidence shows that Mr. Nett was, in fact, sick and unable to perform his duties as a police officer on Jan. 29–30,” according to the Panel.

Acting Chief Sara Lombrana also improperly opened an internal affairs investigation with Prince William County without authorization from her supervisor. Lombrana dismissed the requirement under Police General Orders that she obey her supervisor’s instructions, saying, “I didn’t feel that I should.” According to the Panel, “Chief Lombrana’s cavalier refusal to follow the orders of the Town Manager constitutes, at least, continued

and ongoing insubordination and should be of grave concern to Town residents.”

The Commonwealth’s Attorney placed Nett on the Brady List; however, the Employee Grievance Panel concluded that “it is clear to this Panel that Mr. Nett was not guilty of any malfeasance in connection with the events listed in Mr. Anderson’s Brady List letter.”

The Panel further found that Acting Chief Lombrana and Lt. Holman “demonstrated that they failed to follow the progressive and proportionate disciplinary requirements in violation of both the Handbook and the General Orders.”

THE WATERFORD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

This costly project threatens the beauty of our scenic byway, the aquifer along the byway, farms, and even the future of our water supplies in both villages of Paeonian Springs, Waterford, and the homes and farms in-between.

Don’t create a third problem or we’ll be up a dry creek without a paddle. Interested in knowing more? <https://www.savethebyway.org/> —Thomas Walker

We Don’t Want Your Solution: It’s a terrible idea.

We want safe, clean water and septic: everyone does. Our house in the village of Paeonian Springs has serious septic issues that necessitate an immediate and expensive solution. But we don’t want the county’s project. Why not?

We are not opposed to improvements that are beneficial to our community. Everyone deserves access to water and waste removal. We do,

however, disagree with the present Paeonian Springs/Waterford Interconnector plan. We own a house in the village of Paeonian Springs that has a septic issue. The proposed solution will not solve our present problem. In fact, it will force us to undo our present renovation if this project is approved.

Our initial concern started with the lack of transparency of the Dewberry’s and Loudoun Water’s agenda. They were well into the feasibility study before most residents learned of the plan through word of mouth within the community, without official notification to the residents. In fact, the proposed Interconnector Water-Sewer System failed to comply with its own proper protocol. This alone should be a red flag. What other surprises are in store if we continue on this course?

We are also disturbed by the high probability that the County will force residents to hook up at the cost of \$15 K per homeowner, both septic and water.

Worse, there have been several incidents where new, higher water flows from a public system have caused old pipes to burst, requiring re-plumbing of the entire house, over and above the \$15,000 hookup fee. [*Houston: The water and sewer hookup costs for Paeonian Springs could be up to \$30,000, while hooking up to a water system could cost Waterford residents up to \$15,000.*]

This proposed Interconnector water-sewer system between the Village of Waterford and Paeonian Springs has also failed to consider the environmental impact on the community.

This proposed Interconnector threatens to deplete the aquifer and future water supplies in the farmland between the villages and thus, both villages of Paeonian Springs and Waterford. In the process it will permanently damage the Clarkes Gap Road scenic byway and cause a three-year commuter nightmare during construction.

We do support more cost effective, timely, and less impactful small-scale solutions to improve our water/wastewater system. The solutions should solve each Village’s specific problem without involving Clarkes Gap Road. The Waterford Preservation Group has researched less expensive, quicker, and sustainable solutions to the problems in each Village. These and other methods must be explored.

As a homeowner in the village of Paeonian Springs I am asking Loudoun County to take back this solution. We don’t want it.—Jayne Walker

A former office building developer, Charles Houston has been involved in countless efforts to preserve western Loudoun. Unfortunately, residents almost always lose, a testament to the power of greedy promoters and the unwillingness of our government to stand up for us.

EYETOPIA’S 23-YEARS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

practice, introducing a refreshed children’s brand identity, highlighted by the whimsical and artistic new “Kid Seen” logo, designed by the young local artist Brady Wiley. The colorful logo reflects the individuality and imagination that Eyetopia’s children’s eyewear line is known for—frames that capture the personality and imagination of every youngster.

Guests gathered at 11 a.m. for the celebration, which also highlighted the evolution of MEYEHAUSE—Eyetopia’s boutique house brand that has been taking shape since 2002. Born from years of curating beautiful glasses for beautiful people, MEYEHAUSE reflects the company’s pride in truly knowing its clients. The brand goes beyond frames, celebrating eyewear as both art and function, with designs sourced from around

the world and crafted to help every client see—and be seen—at their best.

Owner and CEO Paige Buscema launched Eyetopia 23 years ago with a simple vision—to do optical the way it should be done. That philosophy—centered on integrity, service, and helping every client discover their own exceptional style—has shaped the business into a Loudoun mainstay.

Beyond its award-winning optical services, Eyetopia has become a destination for style—curating distinctive jackets, handcrafted leather purses, and jewelry reminiscent of haute couture for its fine quality and individuality. In this newest chapter, Buscema and her team continue to fuse artistry and expertise to help clients show up better than ever.

Eyetopia is located at 223 Loudoun Street SE in Leesburg. To find out more go to ShopEyetopiaInc.com.

SHILOH MANOR FARM, CON’T. FROM PAGE 19

neighbors would gather to give thanks for the harvest, celebrate the coming year, and enjoy a festive meal and merriment. Shiloh Manor aims to revive that spirit with attention to historical detail—and a bit of humor.

Chef Erik’s menu for the evening draws inspiration from *Housekeeping in Old Virginia*, an 1879 cookbook written by Marion Cabell Tyree, granddaughter of Patrick Henry. The evening begins with baked Virginia oysters and apple brandy-glazed quail, followed by a salad of fall greens and vegetables with a walnut sherry vinaigrette. The first two courses will be paired with an unoaked French Chardonnay.

The main course features Virginia ham and Loudoun County roast beef with mashed potatoes and succotash, served alongside a robust imported Italian Chianti. For dessert, guests will enjoy Mackintosh apple pie with Shiloh Farm’s homemade vanilla ice cream. A vegetarian menu is available upon request.

While elaborate European dances like the minuet were sometimes performed among the gentry, most Virginians preferred more approachable social dancing during holiday gatherings. English line dances such as the Virginia Reel—fun, inclusive, and rooted in 17th-century folk traditions—were common across the countryside.

To preserve the intimate and festive atmosphere, seating is limited to 40 guests. The smaller group allows for attentive service and plenty of room for dancing. For tickets go to Shiloh-Manor.com.

And for those who are a bit shy on the dance floor, the hosts joke that a glass of homemade apple toddy or traditional eggnog may help loosen stiff joints and raise confidence.

The evening promises a memorable blend of fine food, historic charm, and community spirit—celebrating the close of 2025 and the promise of a new year, just as Virginians once did two centuries ago.