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• FALL •

UNISON, VIRGINIA

Will Our Wells Go Dry?

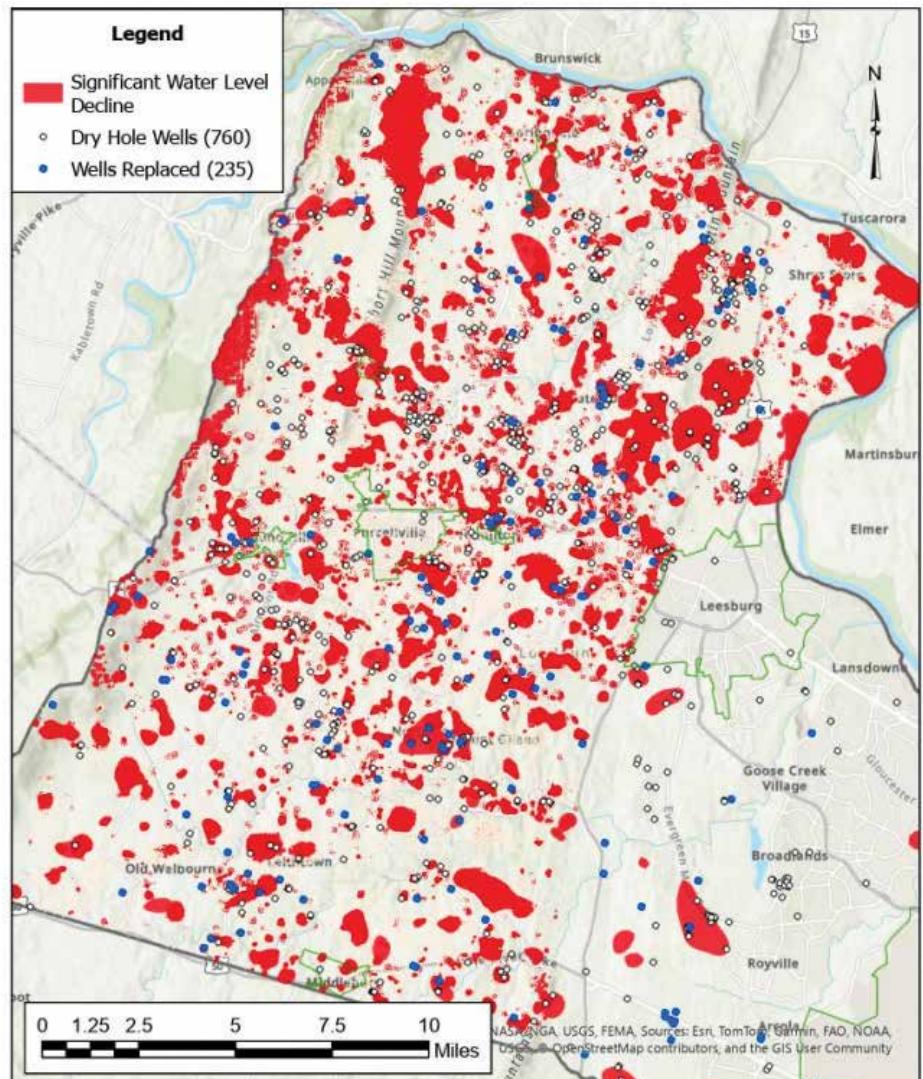
By Howard Lewis

That is the basic question that a major new study on groundwater availability in western Loudoun grappled with in a report released this past August. With ground water levels falling between 10 to 40 feet in western Loudoun over the last 30-years, the short answer to this question is that we had better start paying attention to this situation before a lot more of our wells do go dry.

The study was prepared by the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC). The experts behind this report included two hydrologists each with over 40-years of experience as well as a local farmer and LCPCC advocate. The study analyzed data from 12,000 wells in western Loudoun. It found that groundwater levels had declined significantly in the last three decades due to an increase in development in western Loudoun and the serious drought that our area has experienced in the last three years. In addition, western Loudoun doesn't have a deep aquifer because of the fractured granite bedrock underneath our area, which means we have minimal stored groundwater.

The increase in the number of wells in western Loudoun has been dramatic. In 1990, there were 1,000 active wells in western Loudoun. Today there are 18,000 wells, which supply around 75,000 people:

Continued on next page.



This map shows the areas of Significant Water Level Decline, Wells Drilled Dry, and Wells Replaced in western Loudoun County based on analysis of Pre-2000 and Post-2000 data.

Image courtesy of Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition.

- Half of these wells are within 200 feet of another well and 90% are within 550 feet of another well. As the report notes, “at this density, well conflicts are inevitable.”

- In 1975 the average well depth was around 200 feet. Today, it is about 500 feet. Each year, about 10% of the wells drilled are dry.

- The red areas on the map on the first page indicate locations where the water table has fallen between 10-40 feet. The white areas indicate areas where no data was available.

Among other things, the report calls for strengthened standards to prevent new wells from taking water from existing ones, increased monitoring of wells and data collection, improved building regulations to reduce runoff from farms to parking lots, and improved efficiency standards and practices.

The full report can be found under the “Our Work” drop-down box on the LCPCC’s website (loudouncoalition.org). Be sure to check out the Groundwater Assessment Summary link at the end of the report. ■



A ground water monitoring well.

Image courtesy of Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition.

Loudoun County Conservation and Preservation

Coalition Mission: *To provide a strong voice for participating organizations in public forums, and a convenient and effective way to share information, issues, and ideas.*

info@LoudounCoalition.org



Unison Historic District Application

By Jennifer Don

Coming into the village from the north on Unison Road, the first three houses you pass date back to around 1790, 1740 and 1850 respectively.

Continuing on pass the Stop signs in the middle of the village, there's the Osborne Saddlery on the right, which is now a home. According to old timers, the Osborne Saddlery 100 years ago was what made Unison famous.

If you didn't own an Osborne saddle you weren't accepted in the horse world around here. Go a little further down the road and there's the Methodist Church where soldiers wounded in the 1862 Battle of Unison scratched their initials on the wooden beams in the loft. Keep going and you'll find Bonnycastle, which served as a Confederate field hospital in the same battle.

There is, in short, a lot of history in Unison and the Unison Preservation Society's basic mission is to do our best to make sure that this history is recognized and taken into account in the future development of the village and the countryside immediately surrounding it. This is the basic rationale behind our application to Loudoun County requesting a zoning ordinance amendment to establish a Unison Historic District. The proposed district would include not only the village itself but also a large portion of the countryside surrounding the village—approximately 1,200 acres—consisting of 41 parcels of land whose owners have signed on to the application. UPS



organized this effort and submitted the application on behalf of the neighborhood to Supervisor Laura TeKrony, who represents our district on the Loudoun Board of Supervisors.

The village, of course, is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Virginia State Landmark. This past February the County officially recognized it as one

of Loudoun's Rural Historic Villages. These designations, however, are primarily honorary and don't provide meaningful protection of the village and its immediate surrounding countryside. Being declared a Historic District would provide greater protection by providing a clear framework for managing growth and preserving the village's character while allowing for compatible development consistent with Unison's historic identity. It would enable county staff, the Historic District Committee and community stakeholders to formally consider appropriate boundaries, design guidelines and regulator tools to help preserve our historic village and rural landscape.

Submitting the application to be declared a Historic District is an important step forward, but we aren't home yet. We need the Board of Supervisors to approve the application. Once that happens, we need to work with County officials and the Unison community to come up with appropriate guidelines for our Historic District.

•UNISON• HERITAGE DAY 2025

Around 300 people gathered at the Unison Store for the annual UPS Heritage Day on the first Saturday of November with clear skies and cool temperatures. The Unison Preservation Society's 2025 Award was given to long-time residents, Nina Bonnie, and her son, Robert, for ensuring that land all around our neighborhood has been put into conservation easement, most recently the 138-acre Beaver Dam Farm just south of the village. The Unison Methodist Church, as always, provided 25-30 fantastic homemade desserts (see last picture in top row below). Willow Branch played bluegrass music. The Oak Spring Garden staff helped the younger members of the crowd conduct simple scientific experiments. The Philmont Fire Department was there and much appreciated. The Piedmont Hounds made their usual appearance. The live and silent auctions as well as a raffle generated much needed revenue for UPS's work over the coming year. And the support for Heritage Day from business and individual sponsors as well as local artists (see lists below) was absolutely crucial to our success. All of this was great to see.

But perhaps the best thing about Heritage Day is that it still is a neighborhood event and that's exactly what we want it to be—something for neighbors to enjoy with each other on a nice Fall day.



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• ARTISTS •

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Unison Preservation Society Newsletter

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How to Support the Unison Preservation Society (UPS):

UPS depends upon contributions from people living in our community who want to preserve our historic village and the countryside surrounding it. Since the UPS is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in Virginia, all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions should be made to the Unison Preservation Society and sent to the post office box listed above.



Ideas for Newsletter Articles:

We are particularly interested in gathering material about Unison for future UPS newsletters. If you have ideas for newsletter stories, please e-mail us at unisonnewsletter22@gmail.com



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Unison 160 Years Ago

Long-time Unison resident, Mitch Diamond, recently called this 1862 sketch of several houses in Unison to our attention. With Unison's recent application to be declared a Historic District by Loudoun County, it seemed appropriate to take a glimpse back into the village's history and reflect on this picture, its place in our village's history and its artist.

A brand-new Lieutenant, Louis Henry Carpenter (1839-1916), serving in the Union Cavalry during the 1862 Battle of Unison gives us a glimpse of what Unison looked like back then with his sketch of several houses in the village. At the start of the Civil War, Carpenter had dropped out of Dickinson College during his junior year and signed up as a private. By the fall of 1862, he had quickly risen to the rank of Lieutenant in the US 6th Cavalry when he passed through our village as part of General McClellan's pursuit of Robert E. Lee's army after the terrible battle of Antietam.

For a good part of his career, he volunteered for and held command positions with regiments of Black soldiers both during the Civil War and afterwards with the famed Buffalo Soldiers in the Frontier Wars of late 1800s since the Army then required that white officers command Black soldiers. Reports from the time, indicate that Carpenter's



men respected him, and his company had the lowest documented desertion rate of the Regular Army during his charge. It is reported that he was fair, firm, and consistent and that he learned, saw and understood the hardships and racial bigotry his men faced. After his service, he campaigned and defended what his Buffalo Soldiers had done and could do. His ability to train and lead was described as notable and set a standard for all cavalry units.

He was awarded the Medal of Honor during the Frontier Wars and retired from the Army in 1899 as a Brigadier General. ■



Would You Like to Stay Informed?

If you would like to learn more about what the Unison Preservation Society is doing for you, please make sure you are on our mail and email lists so you don't miss any important announcements and special events in and around Unison. Contact us at events@unisonpreservation.org. We would love to hear from you!