



## Organizational Impact Statement

- 1. Name of Organization** Hamilton Station Road Coalition (part of Loudoun Transmission Line Alliance)
- 2. Contact Person** Dorna Taintor 571-334-5295, dornataintor@gmail.com
- 3. Mission** To protect the interest of the residents, farmers, and small businesses, along Hamilton Station Road in Waterford, VA. We will describe the impact of one of the proposed greenfield lines of the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Project by: describing the impact of building 500 kV transmission lines over, adjacent to or near their property; assessing and quantifying any negative consequences and engaging them in organized opposition to the project.
- 4. Constituency** All residents, farms and businesses located on Hamilton Station Rd, and the side roads from its origin at Clark Gap's road, across Route 9 to about halfway between Route 9 and Route 7. Special emphasis on the parcels that will have the transmission lines across or directly next to them.
- 5. Summarize the key issues related to the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Project as they affect your organization's mission and constituency:** The proposed greenfield line travels through the Phillips Farm of Waterford and then travels along the west side of Hamilton Station Rd from Clark Gap's Road until a little under a mile south of 9 where it heads off to the southeast. This part of the route is well populated. The route will run through many individual properties, disrupting homes, farms, and farmettes. The several businesses along Hamilton Station include a successful winery, a thriving large farm stand selling local meats, jams, dairy and honey; and several small to large horse farms. All are contributors to the thriving agritourism of Western Loudoun.
- 6. Describe specific results/outcomes to your mission and constituency that will arise if the transmission lines are built in Loudoun County Greenspace. Be as specific as possible, including any statistics that are available to you:** Like much of Western Loudoun County, the area represented by the Hamilton Station Road Coalition is an integrated tapestry of nearly 200 residential, agricultural, and commercial entities. In some cases, the properties encompass all three of these elements - providing income to the residents through agriculture. If any piece of the tapestry is adversely impacted, the

ripple effects are felt throughout the entire fabric of the area. The negative impact of the proposed MARL lines will be felt financially, psychologically, and physically across all elements of this area.

- a) Property Devaluation:** Numerous studies show that the presence of overhead power transmission lines results in a devaluation of property values between 5% and 30%, with a direct relationship of the property's proximity to the Right of Way (ROW) and viewshed being a major factor. Our research on the impact of the proposed line on property values in the Hamilton Station Coalition has thus far identified nearly 200 properties that are in or adjacent to the proposed ROW. According to the county tax assessments, the total value of these properties is over \$146M. Applying a conservative estimate of a 15% devaluation of properties results in \$22M devaluation in property value in this area.
- b) Financial Impact to Agritourism:** Loudoun County's tourism industry brings \$2 billion of revenue to the county each year. The lion's share of that revenue is from tourists who come to western Loudoun's wineries, breweries, distilleries, and cideries (\$118 million revenue per year) to escape urban intensity and enjoy "DC's Wine Country" in a relaxing pastoral environment. While those tourists are here, they stay in bed and breakfasts and Airbnbs; they dine in local restaurants; they shop in Loudoun farm markets; and they enjoy the pastoral atmosphere at local wineries/breweries. The portion of the impacted area of Loudoun County represented by the Hamilton Station Coalition represents a portion of the entrance to western Loudoun County that visitors from the dense urban areas of the east will encounter. As visitors crest the hill at westbound Rte. 7 and continue west on Rte. 9, they see a beautiful, welcoming vista all the way to Short Hill Mountain. The pastoral beauty of mountains and farms that enables these tourists to forget the hustle and bustle of the city will be permanently marred for both visitors and residents. The presence of the proposed huge towers supporting 500kV power transmission lines will severely impact the aesthetics of their experience and will certainly deter tourist visits.
- c) Environmental:** The water running through the rivers and streams that traverse this area are a constituent part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As a result of being a source for this critical natural resource, the policy makers and residents are obligated to ensure that the Chesapeake Bay watershed standards are upheld. Without careful consideration prior to and during construction of the proposed power lines, there is a potential to adversely impact this vital natural resource which encompasses 6 states, 18M people, and 3600 species of plants and animals. The unique conditions on the Catoctin Creek are needed for many native plant species, important for the environmental health of the area, as well as the wildlife. Damaging the Catoctin Creek would have far reaching effects.

**d) Impact to Historic Loudoun:** There are numerous properties of historical significance in the area of the Hamilton Station Coalition. These properties date back to pre-revolutionary days, some being built in the early-mid 1700's. The homes were built with local bricks and stone, as well as lumber that was locally sourced. They have survived the American Revolution and the Civil War and represent the best of American construction and agriculture. George Washington was known to conduct surveys in this area, and likely rested in some of the homes. In one specific area known as the Debutts subdivision, which was established from the original 340 acre farm known as Grassley Farm, a field journal was found which recorded that the Union army torched the barn associated with the original home. The current homeowners are working to restore this barn to its original condition. Grassley Farm can be found on replica maps of the area during the Civil War. In addition to the journal, numerous artifacts of potential historic significance have been found on the Grassley Farm property including a likely shackle that may have been used to restrict movements of enslaved people.

**7. List any research sources that support your projections of the impact on your mission and constituency:**

The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War by Major George B. Davis, U.S. Army; Leslie J Perry, Civilian Expert; and Joseph W. Kirkley, Civilian Expert. Compiled by Capt. Calvin D. Cowles, 23rd US Infantry; 2003 reprint

Maps of Eugene Sheel - Civil War in Loudoun County

James A. Chalmers, PH.D. "Transmission Line Impacts on Rural Property Value" *Right of Way, May 2013*

Delaney C. J. and D. Timmons "High Voltage Power Lines: Do They Affect Residential Property Value?" *Journal of Real Estate Research, 1992*

Hamilton S. W and Schawn G. M. "Do High Voltage Power Lines Affect Property Values?" *Land Economics, 1995*

Des Rosiers, F. "Power Lines, Visual Encumbrance and House Values: A Microspatial Approach To Impact Measurement" *Journal of Real Estate Research, 2002*

**8. Share individual case studies of people, places, or things that will be affected by this project (no more than three):**

**Bel Mont Farm:** Bel Mont Farm is an 80- acre horse farm. The South Fork Catocin Creek Bel Mont is both home to the Taintor family that owns it and a training facility for show

jumpers. The farm was started by the Braden family in the late 1700s. As time went on the home was expanded, adding a brick section to the initial stone home, and building a bank barn. They owned and operated a mill along the South Fork of the Catoctin on the edge of the current property. The house is well preserved with many original floor boards, and beams complete with bark, and windows. Each generation has taken careful care of it. The original family's graveyard is nearby.

The million dollar training facility has 13 stalls in the main barn and uses the 5 stalls in the historical bank barn as well. It has an outdoor ring and an 80' x 160' indoor ring with synthetic footing. Bel Mont is one of the few facilities in Loudoun training upper level show jumpers. There are 6 turnout paddocks and a large paddock with two run-in sheds for retired horses. With 18 horses in training and 7 retired horses, the farm supports the two owners, two full-time employees and 3 part time employees. The bank barn has an apartment that is frequently rented out when not used by the family. Much of its value comes from its beautiful setting. The Taintors, after purchasing the 30 acres with the farm house and bank barn, purchased the adjoining 50 acres which was once part of the Braden's land. The Braden clan's land once stretched 10 square miles. The 50 acres was previously zoned for houses and was rezoned agriculture and put into land use. This took place, while they also constructed the new barn and arenas, returning the farm to a working farm and protecting the rural nature of Western Loudoun. Annual revenues exceed \$350,000, an increased of 27% over the previous year and projected to grow another 20% in 2024. Bel Mont participates in Loudoun County efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and other environmental initiatives. The farm is part of Loudoun's \$180 million equine industry. It is also a state- approved CEM quarantine facility for horses that are imported from other countries. The current facilities were built by a local contractor who has returned over the years for smaller projects and repairs. The farm relies on local vendors for grain, hay, equipment and repairs; and the horses need care from veterinarians and farriers. Almost all of the horses have owners other than the Taintors. These owners, 42% of which live outside Loudoun County, help keep western Loudoun thriving, by frequenting the many wineries, farmstands, shops and restaurants of the area.

The proposed line will run through this farm. With the slope of the land, the south fork of the Catoctin, with two estuaries, and the several buildings and rings constraining space, Bel Mont will be damaged greatly by the transmission lines and their towers. Losing the use of any portion of the property or buildings will make it difficult or impossible to continue training. After many years of investing in the facilities it would be impossible for the Taintors to resume work at a new location at the same level. Sport horses are reactive, fearful and sensitive, and would be difficult, or impossible to house and train near high-voltage wires. The historical nature of the farm would also be severely damaged and the beauty and calm that drew many of the horse owners to it, gone.

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## **The Barns at Hamilton Station Vineyards**

The Barns at Hamilton Station Vineyards, a cherished heritage of Loudoun County's agricultural legacy, stands as a testament to resilience and reinvention. Once a sprawling 100-acre dairy farm, tended by generations of the esteemed Warner family, it has transformed into a thriving winery and vineyard under the stewardship of the Fialdini family. Nestled in the heart of historic Hamilton, Virginia, this haven of rustic elegance beckons visitors from near and far.

With roots tracing back to 1910, the property exudes a timeless charm, boasting a farmhouse steeped in history and a meticulously restored stone and wood bank barn, now a captivating tasting room and premier event venue. Here, amidst rolling vineyards and pastoral tranquility, dreams are realized, and memories are made.

However, looming on the horizon is the ominous threat of the proposed NextEra Greenfield transmission line—a 500kV behemoth that threatens to mar the very essence of this idyllic sanctuary. The proposed route, cutting through the heart of our vineyards and looming at our property's edge, presents an existential crisis. Its presence would shatter the serene vistas, casting a shadow of uncertainty over our livelihoods.

For The Barns at Hamilton Station Vineyards, this is not merely a matter of aesthetics; it is a matter of survival. Our business thrives on the delicate balance of agricultural innovation and hospitality. We produce exquisite award-winning wines, nurtured from our own estate-grown grapes, while providing a picturesque backdrop for destination wine tastings, weddings, corporate gatherings, and agritourism experiences.

The economic repercussions of this intrusion would be catastrophic. It threatens to unravel the very fabric of our existence, undermining years of hard work and dedication. It would disrupt the livelihoods of our employees, the local businesses that rely on our patronage, and the broader community that benefits from our contributions to economic development and rural culture. The prospect of towering transmission towers marring our landscape strikes at the core of our identity, jeopardizing not only our business but the rich tapestry of rural culture that defines western Loudoun.

As we stand at the precipice of uncertainty, we implore those entrusted with our community's future to consider the irreplaceable value of places like The Barns at Hamilton Station Vineyards. Our patrons, prospective brides and grooms, and the countless visitors who find solace in our vineyards, deserve better. Let us preserve not only a business but a way of life—a legacy that generations past have entrusted to our care.

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## **The Debutts Subdivision**

The Debutts Subdivision comprises 25 residential properties zoned AR-1. The homes exemplify the properties in the Hamilton Station coalition area in that they range from a

historically significant home built in the 1730's to a custom built 21st century manor house which property includes outbuildings of historic significance.

The original property known as Grassley Farm is considered to be one of the 10 oldest homes in the Waterford area. This 24 acre private equestrian property encompasses the original field-stone constructed farm house with an 1800's brick "wing"; an original field stone spring house; and brick smokehouse, all located on magnificent rolling Western Loudoun County countryside with a pastoral view to Short Hill Mountain. The brick portion of the home and the smoke house are constructed in a classic Flemish Bond style demonstrating the high level of both skill and artistry of the original early American settlers. This Early American architectural masterpiece has been lovingly restored and preserved by its current owners of more than 20 years. The farm has been augmented by an Amish built gambrel style barn and indoor riding arena for dressage. The pastures are home to 5 equine athletes specializing in dressage and trail riding.

The newest home in the Debutts Subdivision was built in 2017 and was modeled after the current owners' family home in Fairfax County. This property was purchased over 20 years ago due to the owners' recognition of the unique beauty of this area. This home was intentionally built to enable the residents to enjoy the pastoral views from all 169 of the windows. While the home is new, this property also contains a variety of outbuildings of historic significance. One of these is the original stone barn that was a critical part of the livelihood of the original land owner from the 1700s, and which was subsequently burnt down by the Union Army during the Civil War. The current home owner is working to restore this barn using stone from the area. A second outbuilding of historic significance is a 1950's vintage dairy barn which now has a genteel appearance through the addition of a fine stone masonry facade and matching bridge over a stream. This property owner worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to design a 2-acre stocked pond and has planted over 200 trees eighteen years in advance to continue to amplify the natural beauty with mature trees. The water flowing north through both of these properties is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed with the resultant legal obligation to ensure that C.B. standards are upheld.

While the proposed power lines will adversely impact the viewshed and therefore the property values for these properties, these residents will also be impacted in other ways. First, the quality of life and mental tranquility of the residents will be adversely impacted due to the destruction of the view from the properties. Second, based on first-hand experience of the equestrians who operate the historic Grassley Farm, they will no longer feel safe trail riding in the region of the power lines due to the increased reactivity of the horses resulting from the electromagnetic fields and audible popping and hissing from the lines. Third, the destruction of the environment due to the construction of the proposed lines will likely result in the loss of historically relevant artifacts in this area. And fourth, this construction could potentially compromise the integrity of the waters flowing into the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Also worth mentioning is the dozens of small farmers living on the former DeButts land and adjacent to it. These farmers raise chickens (for eggs and meat), goats, sheep, and cattle;

many own a horse or two (which they ride in the surrounding horse-friendly areas), maybe even a donkey. There are numerous beekeepers. The farmers grow hay for the livestock; raise vegetables and fruit; sell high-quality farm-fresh dairy products; sell small-batch lamb sausage; spin wool from the sheep and create woolen goods to sell; harvest fruit from heritage trees and bushes to make/preserve jams and fruit butters, etc. These small farmers have no champion. They are a valuable asset to our community, a link to our history. They deserve recognition that their way of life (and livelihood) will wither and die if these high-voltage power lines destroy the only environment they've ever known.

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**Visuals that illustrate impact statement:**



Native Bluebells and Sycamore along the South Fork Catoclin in floodplain



The training facility at Bel Mont Farm



The farmhouse





The Barns



The Barns, facing the proposed route



Scenes from Hamilton Station Rd. Landscape looking over proposed route.