

PRESS RELEASE JUNE 15,2012

United States Senator Charles E. Schumer, in a letter to the United States Navy, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) called for the proposed DEC plan to be revised to include additional remediation wells in order to remove toxins before they reach more drinking wells on Long Island. Schumer pointed out that the Navy Optimization Report, which he pressed the agency to conduct, recommended additional remediation wells to clean-up the plume, yet the draft plan presented on Tuesday night contains only one well with the explicit purposes of clean-up before the plume further contaminates the groundwater supply. Additionally, Schumer urged the DEC and EPA to require the Navy to develop a contingency plan to construct new drinking water wells to the south of wells near the path of the plume to ensure that an ample supply of clean drinking water is available for water districts that could see more wells in the north impacted by the approaching plume.

“The Navy made this mess and they should be required to clean it up before it contaminates more drinking water wells and not after, and they should do so without burdening Long Island ratepayers with the clean-up costs,” said Schumer, who has successfully secured funds previously from the Navy to repay localities for clean-up costs associated with groundwater contamination. “From both a clean-up and health perspective, we should be doing everything humanly possible to remove the toxins from the ground so that existing drinking wells, and ratepayers, are protected.”

In his letter to the agencies, Schumer called for a more comprehensive clean-up plan to be imposed on the Navy. Frustrated with the pace at which the Navy was moving forward with a clean-up plan, Schumer called on the EPA in September 2011 to take the lead role in coordinating a comprehensive clean-up plan for the plume emanating from the former Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant in Bethpage. The agency agreed that a more comprehensive effort to remediate, delineate and monitor the plume needed to be in place to protect the massive sole-source aquifer water supply that serves hundreds of thousands of residents in Nassau County, as opposed to a wellhead treatment plan preferred by the Navy that simply waits for contamination to occur. In his letter to the agencies, Schumer noted that wellhead treatment is less than optimal and invited carcinogens into the water supply only to clean them, after the fact. Schumer noted that while the DEC draft plan take a positive step in including one remediation well, it doesn't go far enough.

Schumer also raised concerns with the pace in which a cost agreement has been established between the Navy and Northrop Grumman. He pointed out that while Northrop-Grumman has spent over \$100 million on site clean-up and containment over the years, the Navy has largely been a slow and weak investor and has not adequately compensated local water districts for costs they have already incurred in addressing the contamination. In the past three years, Schumer has successfully secured millions of dollars in reimbursements for treatment facilities for South Farmingdale Water District and a new groundwater monitoring assessment by the USGS.

The United States Navy operated a Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant in Bethpage, New York for several decades beginning in the late 1930's, leaving behind one of the largest areas of contamination in New York State. The old Navy facility was located on 635 acres in Bethpage where former defense manufacturing activities resulted in the contamination of soil and groundwater with industrial solvents including trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene, dichloroethylene and vinyl chloride. In 1976, contamination concerns were first identified when on-site wells were detected to contain volatile organic compounds. Since that time, the plume has spread and is threatening over 20 additional public drinking wells that serve over 250,000 Nassau County residents in the Massapequa, Bethpage, and South Farmingdale Water Districts. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) originally projected that certain wells in the Massapequa Water District would not be impacted for several years, however local districts water districts have said that groundwater sampling in the vicinity of these supply wells has revealed that the plume could hit within four years.

See [Senator Schumer's letter](#)