

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 27, 2010

The Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
U.S. Department of the Navy  
2000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20350

The Honorable Lisa P. Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Mabus and Administrator Jackson:

I write to urge you to conduct a joint emergency field meeting with local water districts and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in order to put in place a plan for the Navy, working with the EPA and DEC, to develop a plan to clean up a decades-old groundwater contamination plume that is affecting the drinking water of over 160,000 residents of Nassau County, New York.

The United States Navy operated a Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant in Bethpage, New York for several decades beginning in the late 1930's. 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. In later years, the DEC required remedial activity at the site and in surrounding areas affected by the contamination.

As you are aware, an off-site plume of groundwater contamination is flowing south from the site of the original contamination. The plume of contamination is now approximately 2 miles long and 5 miles wide, according to estimates by local water districts and environmental consultants. The plume is now expected to potentially contaminate a total of 25 public wells that supply water to over 160,000 Nassau County residents.

It is my understanding that DEC at one time projected that certain wells would not be impacted for several years. However, local water districts have informed me that groundwater sampling in the vicinity of these supply wells has revealed that the plume is moving more quickly than anticipated and that the impact on these wells is imminent.

At a recent meeting that my office conducted with the Massapequa Water District, it was made clear to my staff that the current path of the plume threatens the viability of the district's entire water supply. I believe, as does the district, that this matter requires the Navy, EPA and DEC to come up with a plan to clean up the plume.

I am aware that the EPA determined many years ago that the groundwater remedy at the site was operating properly and successfully. However, given this new information, I request that you immediately meet with the Massapequa Water District – as well as other neighboring districts – to review the current situation on the ground and outline a comprehensive remediation plan.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Sch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer