

Dear Commissioner Martens, Secretary Mabus and Administrator Jackson:

I write to urge that the U.S. Department of Navy be required to implement more aggressive and comprehensive remediation with respect to underground toxic plume of contamination emanating from the former Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant in Bethpage, New York. Rather than post-contamination well-head treatment, which is costly and allows pollution to spread, I urge that the Navy be required to agree to a comprehensive clean-up and monitoring plan similar to that proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Specifically, EPA's proposal calls for 2 additional remediation/extraction recovery wells and full delineation consisting of 2 dozens monitoring wells along the western portion of the plume and moving the wells on the east side south.

As you know, I recently asked the EPA to take a lead role in enforcing the clean-up of the toxic Bethpage chemical plume on Long Island, NY. While they are not the lead agency, the EPA has stipulated that a more comprehensive effort to remediate, delineate and monitor this plume is needed to protect a massive sole-source aquifer water supply that serves hundreds of thousands of people in Nassau County, as opposed to reactive and costly "wellhead treatment" that allows drinking water to be contaminated before acting.

The policy of wellhead treatment is inefficient and costly and allows carcinogens to contaminate vulnerable and precious underground drinking water supplies. To better preserve public health it is far preferable to require the Navy to follow a more vigorous remediation plan. While I understand that it may be too late to prevent some wells from being contaminated in the short-term, a long-term commitment to a policy of wellhead treatment, as opposed to aggressive remediation, is shortsighted and dangerous.

There is a long and tortured history associated with this site. 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.

The Navy-funded report that was created at my urging detailed the need for more remediation and monitoring. An EPA-led stakeholder group has concluded the same. Unfortunately, despite some positive steps elements in the draft PRAP, the plan places too much emphasis on post-contamination well-head treatment. The current Navy policy at the Bethpage site is wellhead treatment, a process of building expensive pollution treatment systems after wells have been contaminated. This is a policy that the local water districts oppose. I believe that these local water districts should not be forced to wait for the pollution to enter into new wells, only to be delayed reimbursement from the Navy after they locally finance expensive treatment systems.

Moreover, the Navy has also been too slow to enter into legal understandings with the State on their liabilities. Thus far, no cost agreement between the Navy and Grumman exists and only a “handshake agreement” polices this site. And more must be done to make the Navy responsible for the contamination of water wells outside of the old Navy-Grumman site boundaries. 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 in this massive plume problem and has not compensated local water districts for costs they incurred in addressing the contamination.

As I have pointed out in previous letters to both the Navy and EPA, the slowness of the response on the part of the Navy to contain and remediate the toxic plume is forcing Nassau County water districts to consider financing plans for their own, locally-led, clean-up, which could result in significant rate hikes for rate payers. As it stands today, two districts – South Farmingdale and Bethpage – have claims in against the Navy for millions of dollars that have gone unpaid, putting local ratepayers on the hook to clean up the Navy’s contamination.

The bottom line is that more needs to be done to protect both Nassau’s precious drinking water and Nassau’s ratepayers. I concur with the EPA analysis that the Navy be required to follow a more comprehensive plan to remediate contaminated soil as well as to construct an enhanced program of monitoring stations. As you move forward refining this plan, I hope that these proposals are formally integrated into the final approach that guides the clean-up plan for this toxic plume.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I look forward to working with you to quickly and proactively address the Bethpage plume.

Senator Schumer