

BETHPAGE PLUME



NEWSDAY / THOMAS A. FERRARA

A water tower looms above a children's playground on Silber Avenue in Bethpage on Thursday.

July 7, at which time the state will formally select its preferred alternative. There's no timeline for constructing the project, but a state official said portions of the project could be done in phases, focusing on containment first, and it would take several years to fully construct.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced the plan Thursday.

"New York will not stand idly by as polluters threaten the health and safety of Long Island's residents and communities," he said in a statement. "With the release of this groundbreaking plan to contain and treat the Navy/Grumman plume, we are taking action on a comprehensive system to safeguard communities and ensure that Long Island's drinking water and environment are protected for generations to come."

The 600-acre Northrop Grumman-Navy site was home to airplane and space-exploration research, testing and manufacturing from the 1930s until the 1990s, including production of the Hellcat and other fighter jets and work on the Apollo moon lander. It also left behind soil and groundwater contamination, according to the state. The state declared it a Superfund site in 1983.

Bethpage Water District, which provides water to 33,000 customers, has spent millions of dollars treating water to get it to meet state and federal drinking water standards. While the Navy has agreed to pay for portions of drinking water treatment, the water district and local officials have complained about delays from the Navy, Northrop Grumman and, until recent years, the DEC.

The plumes have been spreading at an estimated rate of a foot per year, including to the Massapequa, South Farmingdale and Levittown water districts.

"I think it's about time and it's great that finally someone put a stick in the ground and said 'we're going to do something,'" Bethpage Water District Commissioner John Coumatos said. "This is the first time in a long time that the DEC is helping us. This is huge for us."

Stan Carey, superintendent of the Massapequa Water District, said he was pleased the plan calls for Northrop Grumman and the Navy "to finally, properly clean up the plume and capture it at its leading edge. It's what we've been ad-

vocating for, for years, and people of Massapequa have been demanding for decades. I think it's aggressive. I think it needs to be aggressive."

District engineers estimate the leading edge of the plume will reach Massapequa water wells in two to five years. "It's approaching our doorsteps. Each day it marches closer and closer to Massapequa," Carey said.

Supervisor approves

Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino said, "This study is a critical step in achieving the long-overdue goal of containing and treating the Grumman-Navy plume."

While water authority officials have maintained the water is safe to drink and meets state and federal drinking water standards, health concerns have persisted in the community.

James Rigano, a Melville-based attorney for Long Island Pure Water, a nonprofit formed to represent residents in the district, has sued the DEC and Navy over negative health effects from the industrial legacy of the site. He said the DEC plan "is a step in the right direction" but does not

June 10 state meeting on pollution plan

- **Availability session** starts at 5 p.m.
- **Public meeting** starts at 7 p.m.
- **Bethpage High School auditorium**
Bethpage High School
10 Cherry Ave.
Bethpage

address all the health impacts of the people of Bethpage. Tests have shown radium in Bethpage groundwater supplies, but state and federal officials have said levels are within normal ranges.

The recommended alternative selected by the state surrounds the plume with extraction wells, which will pump and treat 17.5 million gallons of water per day. The water will be treated to drinking water standards, according to a senior DEC official, before it is put into recharge basins, used as irrigation, including at Bethpage State Park, or put into the creek.

Alternatives in a state report released in 2016 looked at pumping water and sending it out to the Atlantic Ocean or bays. But a senior DEC official said that could cause a dramatic reduction in the level of the aquifer, which could cause saltwater to spread into drinking water sources.

While the plume previously had been depicted as an oval or "eggplant-shaped," as a senior DEC official described it, the modeling showed it to be "much more complicated." There's a shallower grouping of pollution and a deeper one.

The study was launched in 2017. It cost \$6 million and involved drilling monitoring wells up to 1,000 feet deep, plus 3D modeling of the plume with the United States Geological Survey, consultants and state DEC staff.

Capital costs are expected to be more than \$240 million, and operation and maintenance over the next 30 years will cost in excess of \$320 million, officials said.

With Paul LaRocco

Hurricane year seen as near normal

BY PATRICIA KITCHEN

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The Atlantic hurricane season, which begins June 1, is expected to bring near-normal activity this year, federal forecasters said Thursday.

There is a 70 percent likelihood of nine to 15 named storms, of which four to eight could become hurricanes, predicted forecasters with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Prediction Center.

And two to four of those storms could become major hurricanes, meaning Category 3 or higher.

A dozen named storms — with six becoming hurricanes and three of them major — is considered an average season, NOAA said.

The outlook does not make predictions as to how many storms will make landfall.

Of the near-normal nine to 15 storms, Gerry Bell, lead hurricane forecaster with the prediction center, said, "that's still a lot of activity," but regardless of the numbers, the key message is to be prepared.

Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30. However, there can be outlier storms, such as Subtropical Storm Andrea, which formed this week in the Western Atlantic, dissipated quickly, and is figured into the outlook's numbers. Subtropical means the system has a mix of characteristics, tropical and nontropical.

While storms do form earlier, August through October is considered the peak of the season.

This year's near-normal forecast reflects two competing factors, Bell said.

First, the presence of a weak El Niño, which is a periodic climate pattern with features that suppress hurricanes. Among them would be upper-level westerly winds in the Atlantic, "tearing apart hurricanes as they try to form," according to a posting on Colorado State University's website.

However, favoring increased activity are warmer-than-average sea-surface temperatures in the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean, along with an enhanced West African Monsoon, which is a major wind system.