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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "HOW GOOD INTENTIONS COULD HAVE BAD RESULTS" NWIRP
BETHPAGE NY
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RIVERHEAD NEWS REVIEW

OPINION

OUR VIEWS

How good intentions could have bad results

The U.S. Navy appears to be moving full speed ahead toward finally treating a plume of polluted groundwater at the southern end of its former fighter jet assembly plant in Calverton, where harmful volatile organic chemicals, or VOCs, are flowing toward the Peconic River from the Enterprise Park at Calverton.

This is the same Navy that just over two years ago seemed perfectly comfortable with the natural attenuation “option” when it came to handling this plume, despite VOC levels some 500 times above drinking water standards. In Navy parlance, natural attenuation — basically doing nothing and assuming nature will take care of business — is considered action. But the citizens and county officials who have been working with the Navy for over a decade on overseeing the cleanup in Calverton insisted something needed to be done to attack this plume, which runs deep and stretches about a third of a mile along River Road. With some publicity and pressure from our U.S. senators and congressman, the Navy understands that now.

But some of the more outspoken environmentalists and others concerned with the Navy’s recently revealed plan to install pumps along River Road — while doing more testing farther south, closer to the river — should take care to not run interference on progress.

And this is progress. The pumps are expected to be operating by December 2012. The Navy won’t treat the groundwater under the woods and wetlands closer to the river for at least a few more years. While it’s understandable that some may be uncomfortable with the plan, insisting on action closer to the river *now* might be a very bad move. As the old saying goes, be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it.

Given the financial challenges facing the federal government, especially the armed forces, the Navy might be actively looking for an excuse to call off its pricey plans to install a pump-and-treat system along River Road to head off some of these pollutants. Having to do more extensive testing and planning, in order to do something sooner and closer to the river, could be that excuse.

Those ordinary citizens and local officials on the U.S. Navy’s Restoration Advisory Board are quite pleased the Navy is making a move to spend some dough on finally attacking this plume. Please trust that their long-term goal is to get this entire plume cleaned up. They know better when to push, when to pull and when to make nice with the Navy.

Those who have recently come to the table should follow their lead.



YOUR LETTERS

WADING RIVER

Innocent, are you?

I am responding last week's cover story ("It's an Election Day sweep for Riverhead Republicans," Nov. 10), in which Sean Walter states that the Democrats and civics were "throwing mud, stealing signs."

Please note that the signs of Democratic candidates were ripped up and stolen, too. I spoke with Republican chairman John Galla about it, to no avail. I put up 150 signs and many of them were taken down, but the Republican signs stayed up. This was not fair on their part. The worst blitz was just two days before Election Day, when many signs disappeared. I have signs of mine that were covered up with Mason Haas bumper stickers and Walter bumper stickers that covered Phil Cardinale's signs. It is