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Hundreds attend Bethpage meeting on contamination

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Photo credit: Daniel Goodrich | John Caruso, commissioner [Massapequa](#) Water District makes a statement at the NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation's meeting to discuss plan to clean groundwater at the [Bethpage](#) Community Park, which was contaminated by Northrup Grumman. (June 12, 2012)

They crowded into Bethpage Senior High School auditorium by the hundreds -- parents with young kids, neighbors, activists, cancer survivors, water district officials and politicians.

More than 20 spoke Tuesday night about a state [Department of Environmental Conservation](#) plan to clean up contamination and treat an underground plume threatening water supplies in Bethpage and beyond. No speaker supported the \$61.5 million proposal to treat the Superfund site at Bethpage Community Park.

At issue is a 3.75-acre parcel in the 18-acre park that was donated to [Oyster Bay](#) Town in 1962 by what is now [Northrup Grumman](#). Paint, oily waste, chromium-tainted sludge, arsenic, solvents and other compounds were dumped there. A multiphased cleanup has been ongoing for at least 25 years.

The DEC has extended to July 30 the comment period on the plan, which calls for excavating 45,000 cubic yards of shallow soil, 25,000 cubic yards of deeper soils and nearby residential yards that have varying levels of the carcinogen polychlorinated biphenyl, or PCBs.

Also included is the installation of at least one well to extract and treat groundwater after the plume contaminates it. That plume is mingled with a second, larger plume being cleaned up in a separate Superfund cleanup plan.

The smaller plume contains trichloroethene, which can cause cancer and liver, kidney, immunological damage.

"There's a lot of material down there," said Steven Karpinski, a state public health specialist. "It's obviously not what anybody wants to see."

Water district officials and politicians said the plan didn't do enough to halt the plume, which has invaded the Magothy Aquifer, a major water source for [Long Island](#).

William M. Varley, president of [New York American Water](#), objected to DEC's plume containment goal of 90 percent, saying, "One hundred percent containment has to be attainable."

The contaminants "must be stopped from entering our water supply and it's your responsibility to do so," [Massapequa Water District](#) Commissioner John Caruso told the panel of DEC representatives.

Sen. [Charles Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.) sent an aide with a statement that "Remediation -- not post-contamination wellhead treatment -- should be the priority." "It doesn't make sense to simply allow these toxins to continue seeping toward groundwater supplies and then react, after the fact." Residents, some who had cancer or had witnessed neighbors suffer serious illnesses, pleaded for complete cleanup.

"I'm terrified of what I'm getting on my body when I shower," [Levittown](#) resident Ivy Green said.

"If you're going to clean up, you're going to need to clean up everything." DEC project manager Steven Scharf said full containment of the plume was not feasible because it would pull in contaminants from the larger plume.

"It's the best alternative that we can come up with," Karpinski said. Northrop Grumman representatives attended the meeting but did not speak.

[Massapequa](#), [Bethpage](#) and [South Farmingdale](#) water districts jointly wrote Gov. Andrew M. [Cuomo](#) saying the plume threatened 33 public water supply wells and the DEC's plan was not comprehensive enough to explain how water supplies would be protected. Cuomo has not responded and did not return calls.