

The legacy of the old Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corp., where Navy fighter jets like these 1944 F-6 Hellcats were built, is underground chemical pollution.

# Mapping the toxins

- **Worries spur new probe** of pollution from ex-Grumman plant
- **Lawmaker calls for aggressive cleanup** using a dedicated fund

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**G**ROWING concern over pollution from the former Grumman defense complex in Bethpage has prompted regulators to launch a new, independent investigation to map the extent of underground chemical contamination moving south through groundwater.

The news came yesterday at a meeting brokered by Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.). Among those in the discussion were water district officials who have complained about delays in fixing the problem, state and federal environmental regulators, and Grumman and its defense client, the U.S. Navy.

Schumer called for a more aggressive cleanup of contamination from the complex. He said the Navy and Northrop Grumman Corp. should set up a dedicated fund to pay for treatment of affected district wells, and that ratepayers shouldn't get stuck with the bill.

"Those who made the mess clean it up," Schumer said. "That's what my mother always told me."

Efforts to address contamination from the sprawling complex, where the former Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corp. built fighter jets for the Navy, have gone on for decades. Regulators have long focused on a large plume of industrial solvents from the main campus.

More recent tests have detected an additional, more concentrated plume originating from parkland that once belonged to the company.

Both plumes contain chemicals classified as potential carcinogens.

Chemicals from the first plume already have been detected in some Bethpage Water District wells, which have been fitted with equipment that strips out solvents before water reaches customers' taps.

Also in its path are the South Farmingdale Water District and private supplier Aqua New York, which are installing similar equipment in anticipation of the plume's impact.

But officials in Bethpage, with two wells south of the second plume, warn that higher contaminant levels coming from the park could shut some wells

or require costly upgrades of existing treatment systems.

"The plume is not well understood," said Rich Humann, a vice president at H2M, an engineering firm that works for Bethpage and other affected water districts. "This new source of contamination is of great significance . . . I have dealt with many plumes on Long Island and have never seen this level of contamination this deep."

In 2005 the state ordered Northrop Grumman to investigate contaminated groundwater emanating from Bethpage Community Park, an 18-acre parcel the company had donated to the town of Oyster Bay in 1962.

The investigation, which uncovered the second plume's higher chemical concentrations, has faced repeated delays. A report the company was originally scheduled to file by late 2007 was submitted to the Department of Environmental Conservation last October; the agency has not yet finished its review.

Last week both the DEC and Northrop Grumman said delays were due, in part, to the complicated nature of the larger Grumman pollution, which involves three separate hazardous waste sites and a number of overlapping investigations and cleanup plans. "It's not a matter of foot-dragging, it's a matter of being a very complex situation," said John Swartwout, section chief for the DEC's division of environmental remediation.

Northrop Grumman officials said

the firm had been "very proactive" and has spent \$94.4 million so far to address contamination from the complex.

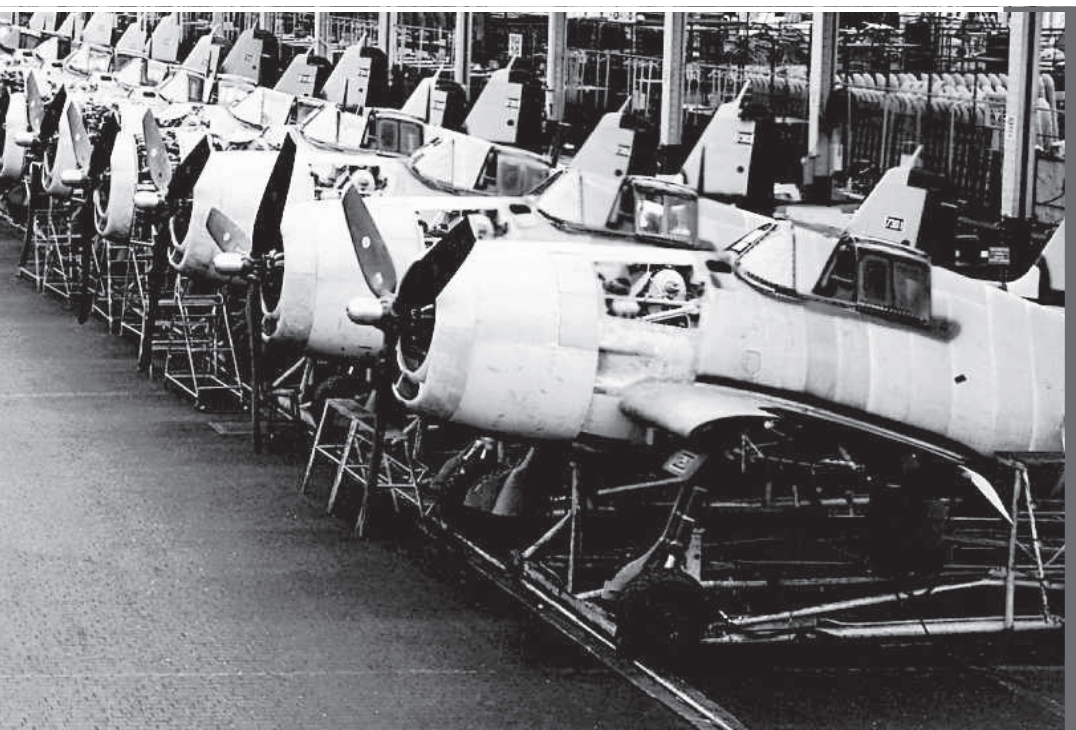
Schumer's meeting was intended to get the polluters and regulators to move more quickly. One result: Over the next six months U.S. Geological Survey scientists will remap the plumes to better define their full extent, something district officials say has not been done. Next month a technical committee of all the involved parties will also review existing cleanup plans and recommend to regulators any further steps.

"I think we got more done on this issue in one hour than we have in the last couple of years," said Judith Enck, the federal Environmental Protection Agency's regional administrator.

Still unresolved is whether Northrop Grumman, now based in Los Angeles, and the Navy will go along with the proposed remediation fund.

They have already paid to install treatment systems at several impacted or threatened wells.

But Bethpage Water District said upgrades are needed to deal with the higher chemical concentrations from the second plume; the district has already bonded out \$6 million for the improvements, which were not covered by a previous settlement with Northrop Grumman. Schumer said he would urge the company to reimburse the district.



COURTESY OF NORTHROP GRUMMAN

# Teachers prepare to strike

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The union representing the adjunct faculty at Nassau Community College is warning its members to brace for a long strike, which would be illegal under the state Taylor Law prohibiting job actions by public employees.

The Adjunct Faculty Association, representing about 3,000 nontenured, part-time teachers at the college, has scheduled a strike vote for Thursday, when its current five-year contract expires, union officials said. But officials gave no indication of when an actual walkout might occur. The union and school officials have disagreed over wages.

Union president Charles Loiacono said in a letter to members earlier this month that a strike could cost the East Garden City school up to \$70 million. He said students would demand their money back if they could not get credit for courses, and the state would cut its reimbursement because students would miss too many classes.

"The only necessity is for the AFA [union] to have the resolve to stay out once we are out," Loiacono wrote. "Our members will continue working their full-time jobs, so continuing the walkout until the magic number of attendance days come into play will be easy."

The college said in a letter to union members on Sept. 24 it would not lose money because reimbursement is based on enrollment at the beginning of the semester, not on days attended.

Loiacono and his labor attorney did not return telephone calls and e-mail requests for comment yesterday.

The part-time teachers are paid a sliding scale based on their education level and the number of credit hours they teach. Someone with a master's degree and 30 additional credits, for example, would be paid \$5,250 for teaching a three-credit course for one semester, attorney John Gross, the school's labor consultant, said. Loiacono, in his letter, put that salary at \$3,336.

The school has proposed a five-year contract with a wage freeze in each of the first two years and possible raises in the other years, Gross said, while the union has proposed equality with full-time workers that equates to a 76.3 percent increase immediately.

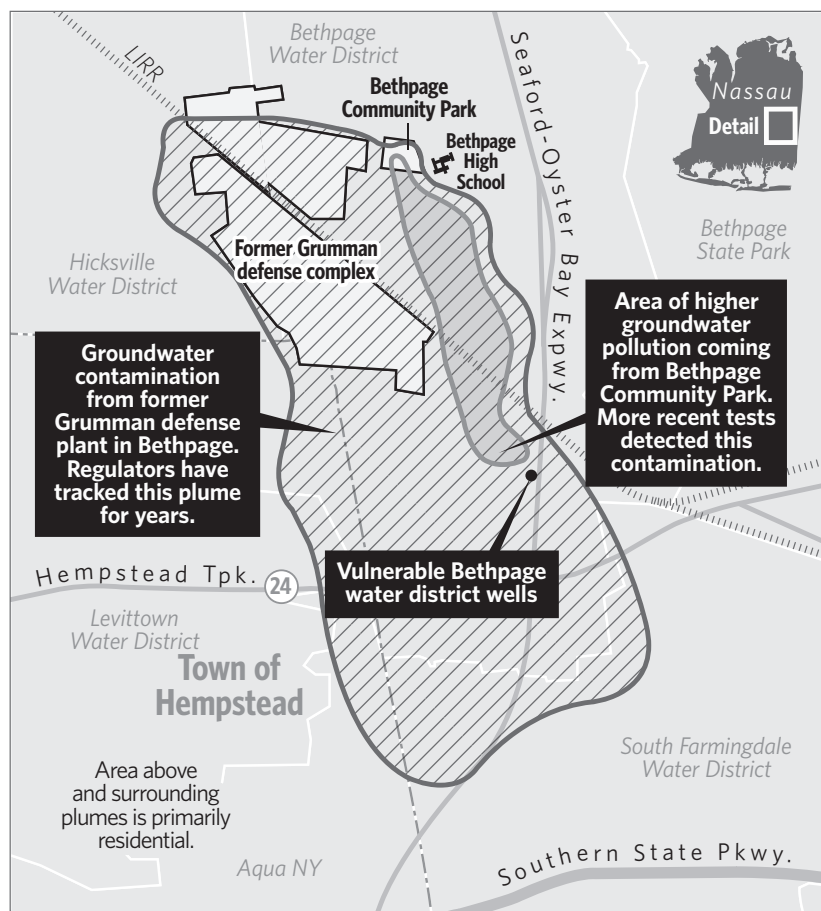
The school said in a memo to all adjuncts last week that while it did not want a strike, if one occurred, it would impose the state-mandated fine of two days' pay per worker for each day of a strike, and it would stop deducting union dues from paychecks.

## THE LATEST ON THE PLUME

**CLOSER LOOK.** Scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey will try to better define the dimensions of the plumes within six months.

**PANEL CONVENED.** A new technical committee of public health officials, environmental regulators, water district representatives, Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Navy will meet next month to review cleanup efforts, recommend steps.

**COVERING COST.** Schumer asked Northrop Grumman and the Navy to create a dedicated fund to pay for any cleanup costs that water districts absorb so that ratepayers aren't stuck with the bill. Neither immediately committed.



SOURCES: ARCADIS, H2M ENGINEERING, NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION. NEWSDAY / ROD EYER

### CLARIFICATION

A political profile Sunday improperly included the religion of Congressional candidate Randy Altschuler. In addition, due to an editing error, a profile of Rep. Tim Bishop (D-Southampton) omitted information from two interest groups Newsday had surveyed. The American Conservative Union gave Bishop a 2.86 percent lifetime rating, and Family Research Council/Focus on the Family gave him a 0 percent rating for 2009-10.

### CORRECTIONS

The EPA's highway fuel economy estimate for the 2011 Hyundai Sonata is 35 mpg. The number was incorrect in an auto review Thursday.

The Lockness charter boat makes wreck diving trips out of Freeport. Because of an editing error, the name of the vessel was incorrect in a Sept. 15 Explore LI story.

### THIS DATE IN HISTORY

**1920** Eight members of the Chicago White Sox were indicted on charges of throwing the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds in the "Black Sox" scandal. (All were acquitted but banned from baseball.)  
**1924** Two U.S. Army planes landed in Seattle, having completed the first round-the-world flight in 175 days.  
**1939** Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed a treaty calling for the partitioning of Poland.