

East End legislators at odds over bill to study Millstone power plant impacts

by [Denise Civiletti](#) Feb 27, 2015, 6:28 am

The East End's two county legislators rarely find themselves at odds over issues affecting the East End — especially environmental issues. But a proposal by South Fork Legislator Jay Schneiderman to study the impacts of the Millstone nuclear power plant on L.I. Sound water temperatures is opposed by North Fork Legislator Al Krupski, whose entire district is bordered by the Sound.

Schneiderman wants the county to spend \$79,435 to fund a Stony Brook University study of the effects of the power plant on the water body's temperatures.

The Millstone power station, located in Waterford, Connecticut — less than 12 miles from Orient Point and 20 miles from Montauk — draws two billion gallons of water from the Sound every day for use in cooling the plant's reactors. It discharges those two billion gallons back into to the sound, 20 degrees warmer than it was when it was drawn out.

"The water temperatures of the sound are rising at an alarming rate," Schneiderman said. "Data collected show the sound's temperature is rising one degree per decade for the last 40 years. The ocean temperature is rising one degree per century. That's significantly faster," he said.

"Millstone is the smoking gun," the legislator said.

"They cycle every day two billion gallons coming out 20 degrees warmer than when it went in. They put 15 million BTUs per hour into the L.I. Sound," Schneiderman said Monday after the legislature's Environment, Planning and Agriculture Committee voted 3-1 to send his Millstone study bill — without a recommendation — to the full legislature for a vote.

Krupski, a member of the EPA committee, cast the lone dissenting vote, which puzzles his East End colleague.

Krupski believes the Millstone bill should have gone to the Water Quality Review Committee before being considered by the EPA committee. It is one of two dozen proposals slated to be taken up by the legislature's Water Quality Review Committee today. That committee will decide which projects get funded.

And Krupski doesn't believe the bill deserves funding.

"Why fund a study to tell us something we already know?" Krupski asked. "I don't think a study has value here."

Studies so far have looked at near-shore impacts, but Schneiderman believes impacts on the L.I. Sound estuary should be studied. His aim was to have the study, which he says will take four months, completed before regulators consider Millstone's permit renewal in June.



The Millstone Power Station in Waterford, Connecticut (*Photo: Dominion Resources*)

Krupski says that if a study is needed, the regulatory agency should do it, not Suffolk County, which has no oversight role or authority over the power plant.

“If in fact thermal pollution from the power plant is having a negative effect on the marine environment, the federal agency should be doing [the study] and the power plant should pay for it,” Krupski said.

The North Fork legislator points to a number of other projects that will be reviewed by the water quality committee today as more worthy of local funding. Among them, Krupski said: a request by Southold for a camera to investigate its old drainage systems, to determine what’s connected where and to see where there are leaks; a request by Riverhead to do groundwater discharge of sewage effluent at EPCAL, “environmentally a great idea.”; and a Peconic Estuary Program proposal to test the outfall pipes for contaminants, which allows you to target the dirty water locations for remediation, he said.

The county’s Clean Water Fund money available for distribution for project like these is very limited, Krupski said, “because of past practices.”

“The county is using so much of the money to fund salaries deemed related to water quality — over 70 salaries come out of that clean water fund — that there’s very little money left for actual projects,” Krupski said. When he took office, he said, he tried to have some positions taken out of that fund, “so the money can be used for water quality projects.” He said his efforts were largely unsuccessful as there was very little support for it among his colleagues in the

“I believe we need to allocate what little money we do have very judiciously, for projects where the money will really mean something,” Krupski said.

Schneiderman’s bill has the support of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

“Millstone is a giant, silent plague on our L.I. Sound,” CCE executive director Adrienne Esposito said this week. “Thermal pollution harms our environment and economy, and better understanding how these discharges are affecting the estuary is a critical step in fixing this problem.”

Esposito pointed to the decimation of the L.I. Sound lobster fishery and the decline in winter fluke population as evidence of the impacts of thermal pollution of the water body.

Commercial lobstering was once a thriving industry across the East End’s north shore. Lobstermen fishing the waters of L.I. Sound once landed millions of pounds of lobster each year. A massive die-off in the fall of 1999 decimated the lobster fishery; it has not recovered. Hoping to help restore the fishery, regulators have implemented three-month closings of the sound lobster fishery in the fall of each of the past two years. That forced the few remaining lobstermen plying the waters of the sound to pull up their traps.

When the scientific community studied the role of pesticides in the lobster die-off in the sound, it concluded that the real culprit in the die-off was water temperature, Schneiderman said.

“I think we have a responsibility to try to really understand what’s happening to this precious natural resource,” he said.