

TOP STORIES

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Call for new Bethpage toxic plume cleanup

The Associated Press

A decades-long toxic cleanup in Bethpage around the former aerospace plant that helped land a man on the moon is getting renewed scrutiny after groundwater tests showed a potential carcinogen spreading deeper and toward nearby communities.

Environmentalists and elected officials have complained for years that the state Department of Environmental Conservation, which oversees the

cleanup, has allowed so-called wellhead treatment, where the tainted water is decontaminated in water treatment plants before it is sent to customers.

Others prefer what they say is a more aggressive hydraulic alternative, in which wells are drilled at the edges of the plume to not only decontaminate the water, but also prevent it from migrating further.

Elected officials and water company experts held a news conference yesterday to call for Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to

sign legislation that would require the DEC to consider the more expensive alternative.

Assemb. Joseph Saladino (R-Massapequa), who sponsored the bill, estimates that alternative could end up costing as much as \$500 million.

A spokesman for the governor said Monday he has yet to receive the legislation for consideration. The governor has until the end of the year to act on it.

Adrienne Esposito, executive director of the Citizens Cam-

paign for the Environment, said at the news conference that passage of the legislation would “guarantee active interception of these toxic plumes before they get to a number of public water supply wells.”

Officials revealed earlier this month that the 4.5-mile by 3.5-mile plume of underground contamination is moving deeper than ever. High concentrations of the industrial solvent trichloroethylene, or TCE, were found more than 60 stories below ground.

The contamination is emanating from a 600-acre property that was once home to Grumman Aerospace Corp., the U.S. Navy and other associated defense industries. Grumman built an armada of aircraft used during the Cold War, as well as the lunar module that landed astronauts on the moon.

Northrop Grumman Corp. ceased manufacturing operations at the site in 1996 but maintains facilities on the property.