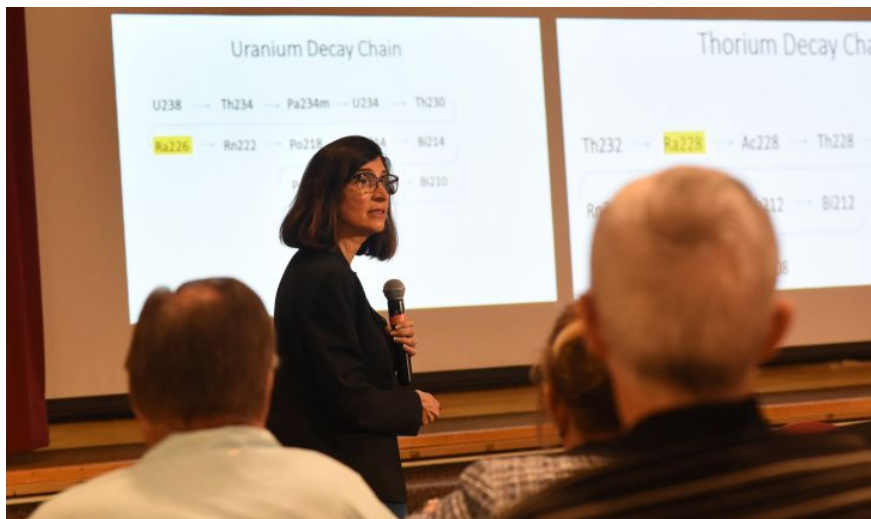


LONG ISLAND / NASSAU

Environmental group explains risk from Bethpage plume

The group, which has filed a lawsuit claiming the Navy and state have failed to properly investigate radioactive contamination in Bethpage, addressed about 150 Long Islanders in the Bethpage Public Library on Tuesday night.



Marjaneh Issapour was one of several experts speaking about radioactive material in the groundwater in the Bethpage area during a public gathering at the Bethpage Public Library on Tuesday. Photo Credit: Danielle Silverman

By Zachary R. Dowdy

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A citizens' environmental action group that has filed a lawsuit to force the state and federal government to clean up hazardous materials they say stem from the old Northrop Grumman site in Bethpage laid out its case Tuesday to ordinary Long Islanders concerned about the quality of their environment.

“We need citizen and political intervention,” said James P. Rigano, an attorney with Long Island Pure Water, Ltd., speaking to as many as 150 people at Bethpage Public Library.

Rigano was one of four speakers who explained the complex case filed by the group that demands the Navy and the state Department of Environmental Conservation do something about elevated levels of radium that have been detected in the ground near the location of

The group filed a lawsuit claiming the Navy and state have failed to properly investigate radioactive contamination in Bethpage.

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State officials have said they would “vigorously defend” their position and expected the lawsuit to be quickly dismissed, adding that they also believe the public was not exposed to or drinking radium-contaminated water and that the available data indicated the radium detected locally was naturally-occurring.

Long Island Pure Water Ltd.’s lawsuit, which was filed in February in U.S. District Court in Central Islip, asks U.S. District Court Judge Denis Hurley to order an investigation of radiological materials detected in the area.

Nicholas Valkenburg, a geologist, said Tuesday it was not yet clear whether the levels of radium in the environment were the result of human activity, such as the industrial and military production that went on for decades at the site, or whether the elevated levels were natural.

“If they are man-made then they have to be investigated

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the 700-foot deep, four-mile long and two-mile wide groundwater plume around the Grumman site, and identified wells where elevated radium had been detected. Those wells that had elevated levels were down-gradient and all located within the plume, which is growing larger as it travels toward the Great South Bay.

Concerned residents gathered at the Bethpage Public Library Tuesday for informational presentations regarding radioactive material in the groundwater in the area. Photo Credit: Danielle Silverman

Valkenburg and Rigano joined engineers Michael Hauptmann and Marjaneh Issapour at the event, which ran from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

In his presentation titled “What’s the Evidence,” Hauptmann displayed a map of

“This suggests a potential source of radium at the Northrop Grumman site,” he said.

Last year, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced the state would spend \$150 million to build a system of wells and treatment facilities to clean up the plume and stop its advance down to the South Shore.

Construction of the wells will begin next year, he said, and the state will seek to recoup the costs from the U.S. Navy and what now is Northrop Grumman.

The company operated on more than 600 acres in Bethpage from the 1930s to the mid-

The announcement capped a state study launched in February to determine if the groundwater contamination emanating from the former manufacturing sites can be fully contained; identify the chemicals in the plume; and find out whether those chemicals could be treated.

The study yielded a fuller picture of the plume's size, composition and path.

Cuomo said the groundwater plume — 1.8 miles wide, 3.7 miles long and up to 800 feet deep — was larger than previously estimated and was traveling with the groundwater. Tests showed the plume contain 24 contaminants, including the solvent trichloroethylene, or TCE, which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists as carcinogenic, and 1,4-dioxane, an emerging, unregulated contaminant.

If no action is taken to control the plume, Cuomo said the modeling showed it would expand and spread the pollutant over a wider area as it migrated south of the Southern State and eventually reached the Atlantic Ocean.

The groundwater plume now puts the drinking water supplies of about 33,000 customers in the Bethpage Water District at risk, according to the governor's office. If no action is taken, by 2037 drinking water supplies of more than 100,000 customers in Massapequa, South Farmingdale and Levittown water districts may also be endangered.

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