



The Long Island Groundwater Newsletter

Volume 1; Number 2 October 2018

Update on the LI Groundwater Sustainability Study

The \$6 million study announced by Governor Mario Cuomo in February 2016 was stalled for 30 months awaiting needed funds to hire well drillers to begin the first phase of the DEC-USGS *Long Island Groundwater Sustainability Study*. Nearly \$2 million was needed to drill at least 12 new monitoring wells deep into the aquifers on the north and south shores in western Long Island. On September 21st, 2018, the DEC announced that the paperwork review and bureaucratic processes were completed at long last. Well drilling will begin in 2019 and could take approximately one year to complete Phase One. During the time waiting for the drilling funds, the USGS worked on updating the groundwater model to be used in the study and expanding its data base on water use. The USGS has reported that its hydrologic data on deep ground-water conditions have not been updated in nearly 30-years. The updated information is essential in order to understand current conditions of the deep groundwater system that could affect the long-term sustainability of the Magothy and Lloyd Aquifers. The Study will examine salt water intrusion risk and predict the adequacy of groundwater supplies across Long Island over the next 30+ years.

Protect Our Aquifer Day Programs a Success

Water for Long Island and the *L.I. Sierra Club* sponsored two days of programs on groundwater protection and oversight. A separate program was presented in each of the two counties, Suffolk and Nassau (May 3rd and 4th, 2018). The keynote speaker was environmental attorney Rachel Treichler (Hammondsport, NY) who won a major victory in January (2018) challenging the New York State DEC water permit program for failing to

follow environmental impacts review (EIS) regulations. USGS scientists (Dr. Frederick Stumm, Amy Simonson, and Irene Fisher) reported on multiple initiatives they are conducting addressing salt water intrusion, Pine Barrens water quality, and pesticide/pharmaceutical detections in groundwater. Another groundwater expert (Christina Touhy, Arcadis) discussed 1,4 dioxane and other consumer products in groundwater. The *Protect Your Aquifer Day* program has become an annual event presented by *Water for Long Island* and the *L.I. Sierra Club* to expand public understanding of groundwater science and oversight on Long Island.

We wish to thank the many public officials who participated in the panel discussions following the scientists' presentations. Panel members included: Steve Englebright, Assemblyman; Sarah Anker, Suffolk Legislator; Ed Romaine, Brookhaven Supervisor; Charles Lavine, Assemblyman; Delia DeRiggi-Whitton, Nassau Legislator; Brian Schneider, Nassau County Deputy County Executive for Parks and Public Works; and Mindy Germain, President of Residents Forward.

Navy-Grumman Groundwater Plume in Bethpage Update

The clock continues to tick as the massive groundwater plume emanating from the Navy-Grumman site continues to migrate to the south and to Nassau County's south shore. A variety of meetings on the plume cleanup efforts were held over the past 5 months, including those sponsored by the NYS DEC/EPA/Navy-Grumman; Congressman Thomas Suozzi; and *Long Island Pure Water*. Following the failure to devise a workable cleanup strategy to stop the plume migration southward by the HDR Consulting firm (Albany, NY) in 2016, the NYS DEC again hired HDR to develop a more focused plan to remediate

the worst pollution “hot spots” and contain further migration. The plan is scheduled to be released to the public in October 2018. In the late spring Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that New York State would spend \$150 million to lead the cleanup of the Bethpage plume, the largest groundwater plume in New York State. *Long Island Pure Water* also brought a law suit against New York State and Navy-Grumman to fund a study on the presence of radiological contamination and to create a remediation plan specifically for these radioactive materials being detected in wells near the Navy-Grumman facilities. In a separate lawsuit, 80 residents or their estates living in the Bethpage area have sued Northrup Grumman alleging medical injuries including death from contamination originating at the military contractor’s facility.

EPA Moves to Weaken Protections to Radiation Exposure

In a related matter, the US EPA is moving ahead to weaken protections and policies intended to prevent human exposure to radioactive materials. The long-standing policy on radiation exposure has been that any exposure is harmful and a cancer risk. The new EPA policy proposes that a little radiation damage is a good thing that spurs the immune system and the body’s repair functions. Critics argue that a weaker exposure standard will put people at risk from work place exposures and those living near superfund sites, to name a few.

New York American Water in Hot Water over Water Rates

The largest private, for-profit water company in New York serving over 150,000 customers in Nassau County is now under investigation by the Public Service Commission, the New York State Attorney General, the Nassau County District Attorney, the New York State Comptroller, the Nassau County Comptroller, Senator Charles Schumer, and possibly, the U.S. Attorney Eastern District office, to name a few, because of extreme water rate hikes and billing errors that have enraged customers and those who represent them. *Long*

Island Clean Air, Water and Soil, a watch-dog organization, has led the efforts to bring attention and changes to the billing practices of New York American Water. At the same time that so much attention has been given to the billing practices of NY American Water, the company is seeking from the PSC, a new rate on the water bills to address revenue issues connected to lower taxes paid under the Trump tax bill of 2017.

Customers from communities in the Rockaways, Lynbrook, Merrick, and Sea Cliff have complained about sudden charges and extreme water bills. New York American Water is one of the few water companies that bills on a monthly basis. Most water suppliers bill on a quarterly or half-year schedule. In addition, NY American Water does not publicize its water rates publically on the annual Water Quality Reports as other water suppliers in Nassau and Suffolk do.



PFOA and PFOS Still a Problem in Suffolk County

Firefighting practices using flame retardant foam appear to be implicated in several groundwater areas of Suffolk County contaminated with PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate). The community of Wainscott, near the East Hampton Airport, residents of West Hampton Beach near the Gabreski Airport, and residents in Yaphank near the Firematics Training Center in Brookhaven, are all involved in remediation actions and/or water main extensions to those not served by a public water supply. In August 2018, a new installation program for water mains and hookups to public water for Wainscott residents began. The cost of the project is estimated at \$24.3 million.

State Funding to Assist Emerging Contaminant Problems on Long Island

In a new development on groundwater contamination problems, NY State announced on October 2, 2018 that it will provide \$14.25 million to mitigate water quality problems caused by “emerging contaminants,” – chemicals being detected in wells and groundwater, but are not yet regulated by state or federal drinking water standards. Three communities will receive funds. Wainscott will receive \$9.7 million to extend public water supply mains to residents not yet connected to a public water system. South Huntington Water District will receive \$3 million to remove 1,4-dioxane from a water supply well. Bethpage Water District will receive \$1.65 million to treat 1,4-dioxane.



LICAP Renewed for Another 5-year Term

The Long Island Commission for Aquifer Protection (LICAP) received approval from Suffolk and Nassau County legislatures to continue in operation for another 5-year period. LICAP was scheduled to sunset in December 2018. Even though LICAP has not completed four of the eight direct mandates given to it when it was formed in 2013, LICAP’s term was extended. In each county, the legislative members became involved in serious and heart-felt debates on the work and value of LICAP.

The inherent conflict of interest at LICAP was a major point of debate. The principle leadership of LICAP is made up of the Suffolk County Water Authority (SCWA), and two other water-supplier professional associations. SCWA boasted to county legislators that it drafted the authorizing ordinances that created LICAP. Even though LICAP has received \$450,000 from New York State, it asked

and was granted an additional \$100,000 per year for the next five years from the two counties. This would bring the total funding promised to LICAP to nearly \$1 million. Yet, LICAP has failed to complete a groundwater protection strategy or propose a regional management entity (which LICAP refuses to do). *Water for Long Island* and a number of other groups and members of the public spoke against the effort to reauthorize LICAP.

Glen Cove Nears a Fix for Freon Contamination in Its Drinking Water

Of the 6 drinking water wells serving the City of Glen Cove, three wells have been affected by high Freon 22 levels. The City has closed wells on and off as the Freon 22 levels have fluctuated. The City decided, as an interim measure, to purchase and install components of an unused air stripping system that could more quickly be made functional. This would return the affected well to service sooner while awaiting a custom-designed air stripping system to be constructed. The City expects the interim air stripper to receive final approval for use in October 2018.

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