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Lawmakers to Propose Tougher Anti-Dumping Rules

Long Island state lawmakers introduced legislation earlier this month that would make it easier to prosecute and punish individuals suspected of illegally dumping toxic materials and better protect the region's sole-source aquifer. The bipartisan legislation would create a host of new laws to target the illegal disposal, possession and acceptance of solid waste and hazardous materials while addressing gaps in existing statutes the lawmakers said failed to protect the public and environment. Long Island, and particularly low-income Suffolk communities, have been ground zero for illegal dumping in recent years, largely fueled by its proximity to New York City's booming construction industry, according to Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy Sini. The legislation stems from a 55-page report unsealed by a special Suffolk grand jury empaneled in July 2018 to investigate illegal dumping and other environmental crimes on Long Island. The grand jury's findings came from "Operation Pay Dirt," the largest bust in the state's history for the illegal dumping of construction and demolition debris.

The proposed legislation would create a host of new felony and misdemeanor environmental waste crimes. Lawmakers, prosecutors and environmental advocates said there are few laws to specifically address damage to Long Island's groundwater or the dumping of hazardous substances. The legislation includes a conspiracy component, allowing prosecutors to charge suspects with scheming to defraud, and targets the lucrative business of mining for sand. Criminal penalties would be heightened when the illegally dumped materials cause the aquifer to become contaminated.

Lawmakers from both parties across Nassau and Suffolk urged passage of the bill when the Senate and Assembly return to session in January. "We already have bipartisan support," said Sen. Phil Boyle (R-Bay Shore), the ranking minority member on the Environmental Conservation Committee. "This bill should come to the floor soon in the new session and pass unanimously."

Proposed legislation targeting illegal dumping —

New criminal law statutes would include:

- * Criminal disposal and aggravated criminal disposal
- * Scheme to defraud by disposal of solid waste
- * Criminal possession of solid waste
- * Criminal acceptance of solid waste or construction and demolition material
- * Criminal acceptance of a hazardous substance
- * Criminal acceptance of an acutely hazardous substance
- * Scheme to defraud by sand mining
- * Criminal sand mining
- * Criminal disposal incident to sand mining

[Bellone Signs Balloon Release Ban For Suffolk County](#)

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone signed into a law a ban on intentionally releasing balloons in the county. The law applies to latex and Mylar balloons. Supporters of the law say it's a no-brainer to protect marine life and the environment. "When these balloons are released, they don't go to heaven, but they sure send marine mammals there prematurely. The bottom line is these balloons, when they come down into our oceans, kill whales, dolphins, seals, turtles and they also kill birds," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

Violators could face fines of up to \$1,000.

[Environmental Officials to Test for Contaminants at Former Steck Philbin Landfill](#)

State environmental officials are planning to launch an investigation into hazardous materials that may be present at the former Steck Philbin landfill in Kings Park. The 25-acre site is located off Old Northport Road in Kings Park. The DEC says its preliminary investigation will sample soil, ground water and surface water for PFOS and PFOA. Those chemicals are used to make stain and water-resistant materials. Exposure over certain levels can cause cancer.

The outcome of a probe could delay a Suffolk County landbank plan to sell the tax-delinquent property. If DEC officials find the former Steck landfill is a source of contamination and poses a "significant threat," the agency could designate it as a superfund site. That could tie up any redevelopment of the site for 10 or more years. Less dire findings could allow cleanup through the state's Brownfield Cleanup Program, which could return the property to tax rolls in two to three years.

[Officials Want to 'Explore the Feasibility' of Tapping into NYC's Upstate Water Supply](#)

Local and state officials want to study the idea of tapping into New York City's upstate water supply because of concerns about emerging contaminants in Long Island's aquifer. Members

of the Island's delegation to the State Legislature and local officials plan to explore purchasing city water to service residents of western Nassau County in what would be a dramatic change for a region that long has relied on its underground aquifers for tap water.

State environmental and health officials said they are open to the idea of Long Island water providers tapping into New York City's supply. State Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach) sent a letter to the Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos and Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker. He asked the state environmental and health commissioners to "explore the feasibility" of using New York City's water system to supply western Nassau residents with drinking water.

Pipes connecting Queens and bordering Nassau County water districts already exist for emergency water supplies. However, significant hurdles would have to be overcome to use them regularly, including the work to lay wider pipe and studies on whether differing water chemistries between Long Island groundwater and upstate surface water could cause corrosion. There's also the question of whether New York City could cut off the water supply in case of drought.

Groundwater also has been the landing spot for decades of industrial, commercial, agricultural and residential pollution. A report this summer found Long Island had the most emerging contaminants in its water of any region in the state. New York City, which has spent billions of dollars protecting watersheds in upstate New York, had the least. The problem is coming to a head now as the state looks to regulate a trio of new contaminants for the first time in 20 years. It could cost water districts up to \$840 million to treat the likely carcinogen 1,4-dioxane, which is found in industrial solvents and is difficult to remove. Only one treatment system so far has been approved for use in the state. The state is also regulating a pair of what scientists call "forever chemicals" because of how persistent they are in the environment and human bodies. Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) is found in firefighting foams, and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) is found in nonstick and stain-resistant products. Environmental advocates have stressed that long-term exposure to contaminants can increase health risks, including certain cancers

Patrick Halpin, chairman of the Suffolk County Water Authority, said water providers need to think regionally about how to deal with the problem, including buying water wholesale from New York City or the Suffolk County Water Authority. "We should be utilizing all the best regional water resources we have and get beyond thinking that local fixes, and local filtration systems, will solve this problem, because it won't. We have an obligation to provide the highest quality drinking water," said Halpin, a former Suffolk County Executive. He said local districts, governed by locally elected boards or municipalities, traditionally have worried about losing jobs or local control through consolidation, but the Suffolk County Water Authority has sold water wholesale to local water districts, which have maintained operations and jobs maintaining and testing the local water system.

Environmental advocates said the idea is worth looking at, but can't be a substitute for protecting and cleaning Long Island's aquifers.

[Land Deal in Calverton Includes Environmentally Sensitive Land](#)

Petitioners are urging the Town of Riverhead to not include environmentally sensitive land in the Enterprise Park sale at Calverton. The former Grumman site has been the topic of intense debate for years. Many residents are pushing back against a plan to sell the land to a developer, saying its' sweetheart deal that will hurt taxpayers. Initially the plan was to sell 600 acres of the property to a group called Calverton Aviation and Technology for \$40 million. The agreement then changed, and another 1,050 acres was added to the deal for the same price. Some residents say there are two major problems with that addition: the low-price tag, and that the land is "environmentally sensitive" and should be left as is. A petition with approximately 1,600 signatures is asking the Town Board to remove the extra 1,050 acres from the deal.