



Photo by Meagen Reeve

WASTELAND—Lawrence Aviation in Port Jefferson Station was one of three Superfund sites due to be visited by the 'Toxic Tour,' led by the New York Public Interest Research Group on April 6.

Environmentalists Offer 'Toxic Tour'

Superfund Program Still Bankrupt

By Amy Basta

"Bad Neighbor of the Year" awards were to have been issued to several once-polluting companies this past Saturday, April 6, as the New York Public Interest Research Group led residents and officials on what they called a "Toxic Tour" of some of Suffolk's Superfund sites.

With Representative Steve Israel (D-Bay Shore) and county Legislator Vivian Vioria Fisher (D-East Setauket) in tow, NYPIRG representatives were scheduled to visit Lawrence Aviation Industries in Port Jefferson Station, Glaro, Inc. in Hauppauge and the Huntington Town

Landfill in East Northport to call attention to the fact that these and 55 other Superfund sites in Suffolk are in desperate need of cleanup.

The state Superfund program, which identifies and remedies inactive hazardous waste disposal sites that threaten public health or the environment, has been bankrupt since April 2001. Funded by the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act, the program saw all of its money either spent or obligated by March 31 of last year. There are almost 800 Superfund sites in need of funding across the state, according to the Department of Environmental Conservation, and approximately

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'Toxic Tour'...

FROM Page 1

20 additional sites are identified each year. But with the money gone, "Pretty much nothing has gone on with these sites ... they have been stranded," said NYPIRG environmental associate Edward Vale.

Of the 58 Superfund sites in Suffolk County, 40 are listed as class 2, meaning they pose a "significant threat to the public health or environment." In fact, "The Island is in a pretty dire state, both in Nassau and in Suffolk," Sarah Meyland, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said. "In Nassau, there is a Superfund site that has already contaminated 17 public water supply wells in five water districts."

"Cleaning up waste sites is an issue of public health," Israel stated. "We have a responsibility to clean these sites for the health and safety of Long Island children and for the well-being of our economy. I am working on the federal level to provide adequate resources for Superfund waste cleanup."

There are officials working on the state level, as well. Governor George Pataki introduced a bill last year to address the Superfund dilemma, as did state Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-Selden) and Assemblyman Alexander Grannis (D-Manhattan). But Pataki's bill is not sitting well with many environmentalists, who are voicing support for the LaValle-Grannis bill and accusing the governor of trying to weaken cleanup standards.

"The governor's bill eliminates the pre-disposal cleanup goal of Superfund," reads a NYPIRG report. Pataki's legislation "proposes to spend \$138 million annually for three cleanup programs, including Superfund. This proposal splits the cost of the program evenly between industry fees and the general fund. Approximately \$80 million per year will be spent on Superfund. That level will lead to a 20-year timeline to clean up all known sites."

"Opponents have been erroneously characterizing what the governor's bill does," responded DEC spokesperson Jennifer Meicht. "In reality, the governor's bill maintains the 'polluter pays' philosophy."

"Our division did come out in support of the Grannis bill," said Wayne Bayer, a member of the Public Employees Federation Environmental Conservation union, division 169. "The primary reason we support this bill is because of the funding mechanism that calls for a greater percentage of the funding to come from fees

and private industry."

"This is set up as what we think is the best possible bill that could pass," said Grannis's legislative aide, Mike Lenane. The governor's bill, he noted, would rely more heavily on taxpayers' money.

"Superfund sites must be cleaned up and the polluters must pay their fair share for the damage they have done," LaValle stated.

"The Grannis-LaValle proposal will generate approximately \$277 million annually for Superfund, with industry fees covering 75% of the cost [of cleanup] and the general fund covering the rest," according to NYPIRG. This legislation "will fully fund the Superfund to clean up all known sites in a 10-year timeline."

"We haven't taken an official position on anybody's legislation," said Meyland. "The current program is not working on Long Island and we want that addressed by everybody." The activist is primarily concerned with the effect these contaminated sites have on Long Island's groundwater; once the toxins leak into the groundwater, the affected area grows, and, "If it's a very large contamination scenario, they just throw up their hands and say, 'Well, this is way too large to clean up,'" she asserted.

"We have groundwater that will be affected as [toxins] work their way through the soil," Fisher agreed. "It also works its way into the Port Jeff Harbor."

Fisher expressed concern over the Superfund sites in Suffolk, particularly Lawrence Aviation, where the company once manufactured titanium sheet metal for planes. Vale said the site is so contaminated, it was "bumped up to the national Superfund list." Surrounded by residential communities, the site contains "known discharges" of various chemicals and "private wells, ponds, creeks and the groundwater have been contaminated with lead, trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene," according to the DEC.

"We need to keep the pressure on to have it cleaned up," said Fisher, especially since Maryhaven Center of Hope is proposing to build senior housing nearby.

"The site that's in question is not a Superfund site," Maryhaven CEO Louis Grossman said of where the complex would go. "This piece of property has never, ever been listed."

Still, Fisher and NYPIRG representatives are alarmed, and spent Saturday trying to educate people about Lawrence Aviation and other contaminated county land. "I applaud NYPIRG for taking a leadership role, and that's why I'm participating," said Fisher.

Residents may obtain information about Superfund sites in their area by visiting www.nypirg.org.

Lawrence Aviation: 'We're Not Guilty'

By Susan McGinn

Officials at Lawrence Aviation are claiming that their company is not responsible for contamination of a pond located off Brooke Road in Port Jefferson. However, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is not convinced.

The Suffolk County Health Department found traces of trichloroethene, a solvent used to clean machine parts, while doing routine sampling of water in the area earlier this year. Lawrence Aviation has submitted information to the state DEC that "demonstrates the contamination coming from the pond is not us," said Gerald Cohen, president of Lawrence.

Lawrence Aviation believes the source of contamination is coming from a leaky sewer pipe located near the pond. Mr. Cohen and Frank Fantigrassi, also of Lawrence, brought pictures and information to the Port Jefferson Board of Trustees on Monday. They approached the board because of village concern about the pond and to explain their findings. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Fantigrassi say the information was submitted to DEC six weeks ago, but they have heard no reaction.

"We did find the source of contamination," said Mr. Fantigrassi. "Anyone connected to that sewer pipe could be dumping something."

Since the level of trichloroethene, 1,200 parts per billion, is the same from the sewer pipe leak as in the pond, Mr. Fantigrassi believes the leaky sewer pipe is the source. He submitted a photograph depicting a hole in the road, near a sewer manhole cover, on Brooke Road as the leak.

"It's as a steady source. We've been monitoring it since April," said Mr. Fantigrassi. "We feel the solution would be to fix that leak. It's an easy problem to cure, I believe."

"We have the information and we're aware of it," said Joshua Epstein, citizen participation specialist in the DEC's division of hazardous waste remediation. Lawrence Aviation is classified as a class two hazardous waste waste by the DEC. Class two indicates that contamination has been documented at a site but there is no immediate health threat.

"To date we've seen nothing that would make us change our mind that it is not Lawrence Aviation. It's not sewage, it is groundwater contamination," said Mr. Ep-

stein. "We feel it is Lawrence Aviation, but we can't document that until we finish the remedial investigation feasibility study."

Although Lawrence Aviation has a "vested interest" in refusing the contamination charge, Mr. Cohen said the company would like the board of trustees to intercede with the DEC and check out the leak.

"We would like to see the problem downtown cleaned

up," said Mr. Cohen. "It's a nice town." Although the pond contamination is a health hazard, the level of pollution does not constitute a need to fence the pond or take further action. To keep residents away from the pond, the health department posted signs alerting the community to "avoid prolonged contact with the water."

Port Jefferson Village officials were informed of the contamination by representatives of the state DEC in April. ■



Photo By Tina Palomquist

Arsenic And Old Lace

Earl L. Vandermeulen High School students Mary Shea, Teddy Brewster and Amy Justman rehearse for this weekend's production of *Arsenic And Old Lace*. Brian Barecik, Amy Justman, Mary Shea, Jonathan Todillo and Michael Still, who will be directed by his father, Timothy Still, hold major roles. The rest of the cast includes Samantha Abelson, Thomas Austin, Dimitri Dover, Eve Erikson, Zack Garsak, Rakal Marin, Cauby Miles and Tim Pappalardo. The performance will be held at the high school on Old Post Road on Saturday at 8:15 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets, \$2.50.

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Daughter Neva Dukmejian holds her father's 100th birthday cake.

Griffin photo

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McNamara empire just fading away

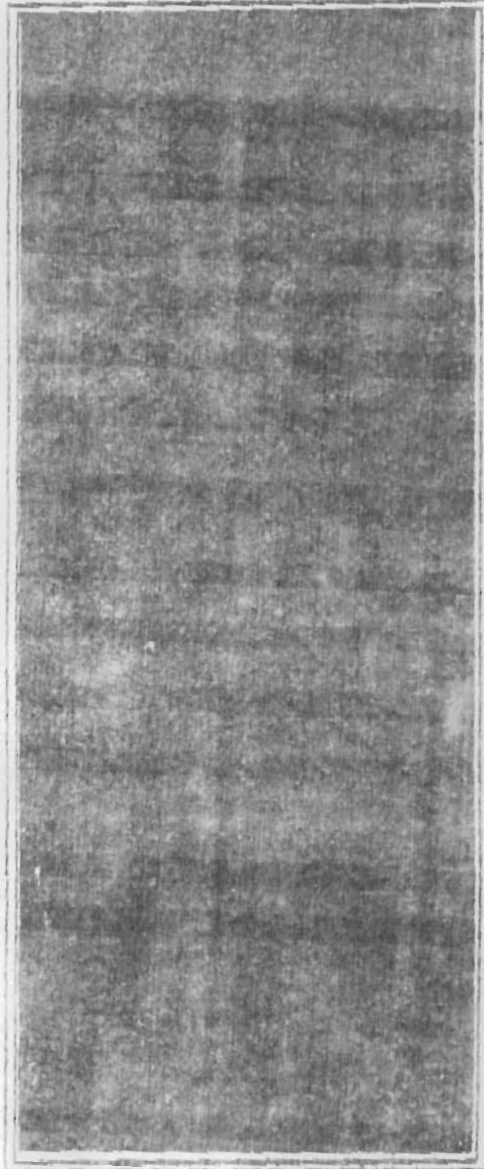
DEC calls Lawrence Aviation a hazard

by Susan Bridson

As John McNamara's empire is sold to pay off his debts, concern mounts over a substantial loss of dollars. McNamara's revenue-producing companies are being sold — but not before debt theft removes large windows and plumbing fixtures from unoccupied sites, according to a source close to the case.

After McNamara's arrest last April, Domestic Dinapoli of the Price Waterhouse Brokerage Company was put in charge of liquidating that car dealer/developer's assets. Controller Laura Southard of the Route 347 Realty Company and comptroller Gail Hummel of McNamara Pontiac are working with Dinapoli (reportedly after being granted immunity by federal authorities investigating the skein of problems uncovered in the McNamara case).

Continued on page 10



Officials are studying a plume of contamination which is tracking north from the Lawrence Aviation industries plant on Sheep Pasture Road. Griffin photo

by Susan Bridson
When Lawrence Aviation Industries was reclassified as a significant threat to the public health or environment, there was no commotion. Local officials say that was because the Department of Environmental Conservation did not notify them of the reclassification. Now, however, word is out and a commotion is building up.

The DEC report on the site notes, "A drain removal was completed in 1991. Private wells and a monitoring well downstream from LA1 have been contaminated. A pond and a creek

downgradient have also been contaminated." LA1, located on Sheep Pasture Road in Port Jefferson Station, had previously been classed as 2a — a site about which the DEC had only inadequate or insufficient data to assign a hazardous waste site rating. But in April of 1992, the DEC reclassified LA1 in the "significant threat" category. LA1 owner Jerry Cohen says of that, "We think it was very premature on the part of the DEC."

He adds, "The DEC did their annual inspection last week and gave us a clean bill of health." That inspection dealt specifically with on-site conditions and did not pertain to the plume of contamination which the DEC and the Suffolk County Department of Health Services have traced from Sheep Pasture Road north to Port Jefferson Harbor. A DEC spokesman says study of that plume will begin soon — with remediation to follow after officials determine how to mitigate that contamination. For several years, reports of plumes

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and zoning appeals boards who received bribes, according to McNamara. He said additional bribes went to members of Brookhaven's highway department and to members of the Village of Port Jefferson's planning board. In some instances, McNamara stated, he paid \$200,000 in cash to single individuals as "part of the way business was done."

Once the US Attorney's office started questioning McNamara, its officials

Lawrence Avlation

Continued from page one

moving north ("downstream") toward Long Island Sound from Sheep Pasture Road have set residents to muttering about the nearby LAI and the work done there since 1950.

Data from the DEC's Division of Hazardous Waste Remediation cites two decades of fluorides, sludges, caustic acids, and halogenated solvents being dumped in cesspools and lagoons at Lawrence.

Lawrence produces titanium sheet metal for use in the aviation industry — a strong, light-weight metallic chemical element highly resistant to corrosion. It is used in making steel and alloys for jet engines. (Cohen says, "It's all metallic. We don't work with acids.")

The report states hazardous wastes disposed of at the site include: fluorides TCE, acids, metal waste, halogenated solvents, hydrofluoric acid. Surface water and groundwater (at 180 feet below ground) were found to be affected.

But Cohen notes, "We have our own well on our property -- which has been tested and found totally clean. And the health department has also drilled a test well on our property and that has been found totally clean."

The report continues, "Groundwater contaminated with volatile organic compounds potentially threatens any private well users not connected to the available public supply. A Suffolk County Water Authority public

the gem of McNamara's holdings.

But not every parcel of McNamara land can be sold at once and while some properties are unoccupied, the previously mentioned thefts have occurred. As a night watchman put it, 60 windows were stolen, one by one.

A source familiar with the disposal of McNamara properties and assets estimates that the liquidation will be finished by May.

wellfield, located one mile down-gradient, is currently being monitored monthly (as a pre-caution.....the Health Department continues to monitor contaminated groundwaters."

Legislator Nora Bredes (D-Stony Brook) states, "Many of my constituents are fearful that the owner of Lawrence Aviation Industries may attempt to negotiate a settlement [with the DEC] without the completion of a full-site assessment including soil tests, groundwater testing on and off site, and a comprehensive investigation of potential health hazards."

Assemblyman Steven Englebright (D-Setauket) says, "I'm going to be communicating directly with the [DEC] commissioner, asking him to look into the questions of why his agency is moving so slowly with what is obviously a matter of potential harm to the residents of this area — and why the local legislators have not been briefed."

Cohen says the problem dates back to the DEC's Phase One study in 1980. "I guess in the opinion of New York State, the materials were hazardous. At that time, the state was unsure whether any of that material may have contaminated the groundwater. We are in the process of doing Phase Two now. I would say it will be complete within six months."

In 1989, Cohen sought subdivision approval for his 44 acre-site from Brookhaven in order to build 100 to 150 condominiums. That request was rejected, Cohen says. "Right now, we have no intention of pursuing it."

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State looking into source of PJ creek contamination

BY RACHEL KREIER

Regional hazardous waste engineer Ajay Shah is not yet ready to name names, but he does confirm that the New York Department of Environmental Conservation is investigating a possible downtown source for the contamination of a Port Jefferson pond and creek. The alleged contamination source was brought to DEC's attention during a meeting two weeks ago with representatives of Lawrence Aviation, a Port Jefferson Station manufacturer of airplane parts. Lawrence has been a prime suspect as the source of trichloroethene contamination which has been detected in private wells, the Port Jefferson Creek, and the village-owned

pond just behind the Caroline Avenue athletic field. Trichloroethene is a common industrial solvent.

While Shah would not release the name of the suspected downtown source of the contaminant, he said that a DEC employee "has looked at the potential source, and we are planning to take samples soon."

"If this does prove to be a source," Shah said, "there would be a fairly easy way to stop that flow into the pond."

Shah raised the possibility that there may be more than one source of trichloroethene contamination. He noted in an interview prior to the meeting with Lawrence Aviation representatives that contamination detected in private wells

between Port Jefferson Station and downtown could not come from a downtown source since water flows towards the Sound.

"Even if this turned out to be the source, it does not get Lawrence Aviation off the hook," Shah said. "If this source is stopped but we continue to find contamination, it is still possible it comes from Lawrence."

Shah would not specify a date for making the suspected downtown source of contamination public.

"Once we take the samples and we find something, we'd be ready to go public," he said. "I don't have a schedule for that, but I think we can do that fairly soon."

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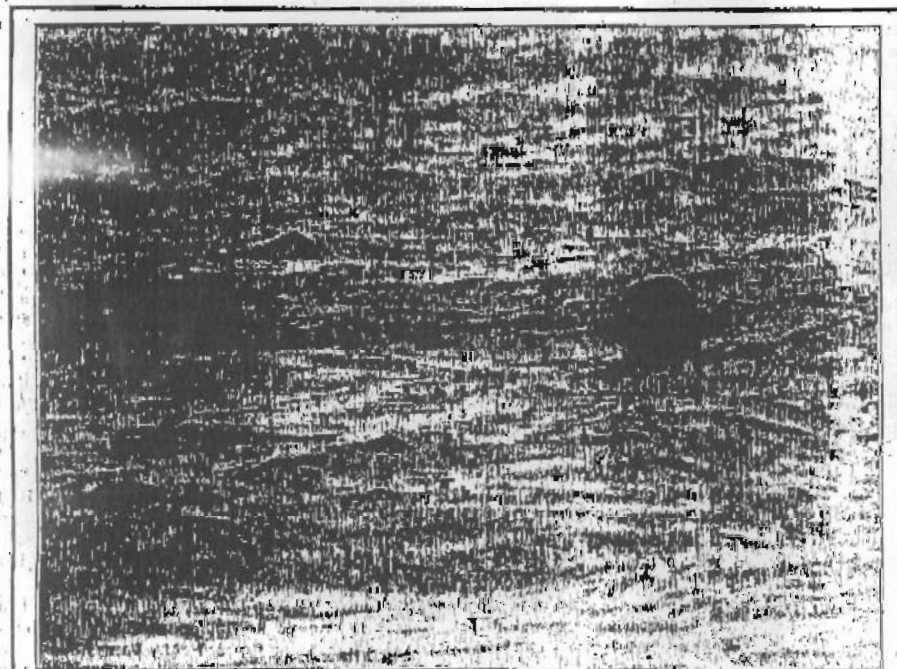


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Passers-by

TWO offshore swimmers pass port to port.

Photo by Joseph D. Sullivan

DEC plans on plan for Lawrence

BY ED ROGERS

After years of negotiations, conflicts and legally imposed delays, the New York State Department of Conservation is moving to come up with a comprehensive clean-up plan for the Lawrence Aviation Industries site in Port Jefferson Station.

The state has already hired an environmental consulting firm that has begun working to determine just what the nature and extent of environmental pollution exists on the site, if any. Lawrence Aviation has been manufacturing metal products at its 126-acre site off Sheep Pasture Road since the 1950s, and over the years the fenced and gated site has been the subject of repeated complaints by neighbors regarding noise and pollution, as well as government cleanups and investigations.

At a public hearing on Thursday, the state presented its plan to begin a comprehensive cleanup at the site. "Over time, the housekeeping standards [at Lawrence] were certainly not up to current standards," said Steven Schurf, the DEC's project engineer for the Lawrence site.

The first step in the cleanup process is a "remedial investigation," which will assess the extent and nature of the pollution on the site through soil and water testing and available records. That work is already being done by Camp Dresser and McKee, an environmental consulting firm located in Woodbury.

Following the remedial investigation, a feasibility study will be done to determine what steps can be most effectively and efficiently taken to clean up the site and to produce a final cleanup plan.

"We expect the work is going to cost about \$600,000," said Susan McCormick, an engineer with the DEC. According to the DEC's schedule, Camp Dresser and McKee has already begun their preliminary research and should begin field investigations at the site by mid-September and have a report ready for public presentation by June 1998. At that point, work will begin on the feasibility study portion of the project.

The current cleanup action, which is being funded

Continued on page 5

Village mulls bond for Mobil

Public information meeting on September 8

BY C.M. DAVIS-WIEBELT

Plans are moving ahead for the proposed financing of the Village of Port Jefferson's purchase of the Mobil property. The trustees heard from bond counsel and a financial planner at their Monday business meeting. Robert P. Smith of Hawkins, Delafield & Wood, an attorney specializing in municipal bonding, outlined the procedure the village must follow to pursue a bond. Board members translated his guidance into a timeline for the public process that will, they hope, culminate in the village purchasing the property by Mobil's December 1 deadline.

The first step is an informational meeting on September 8 so the public can ask questions. The board then set September 15 as the date to adopt an authorizing resolution to proceed with a public referendum. A summary of the resolution will be published in the paper and residents will have 20 days to comment. The village cannot take any action before the end of this comment period. The referendum is set for October 6th.

This timeline allows just enough time for the village to walk away from the deal should the referendum be defeated. But the trustees are hopeful that this will not be necessary and that they will be able to authorize Smith and Robert F. Sikora, president of Municipal Services, Inc., the financial advisor for the village, to proceed with preparation of a package for sale on the bond market.

"The board has not made a final decision on the amount to be bonded," said Strong. "It is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$1.8 million to cover the purchase price (of \$1.7 million), bonding costs and property enhancements to make the site more user friendly." The general obligation bond would be repaid through a special property tax assessment tentatively estimated at this time to be \$.80 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

"Basically, we are looking for a 20-year time period. We will put out one series of bonds at this time and will look into the availability of state and federal money after receiving input from residents, committees and people from the village about exactly what they would like to see done on the property. Possibly in two to three years we will go back for another bond," said Strong. The board will meet with state elected officials and departmental representatives on September 3 at 7 am to discuss funds available on the state level.

Residents will soon receive a special mailing on the September 8 meeting. The trustees also plan to speak to civic and community groups about the proposed bonding referendum to give residents ample opportunity to understand the proposal. There was some concern residents may feel the board is rushing by keeping to this timeline. "Some may say we're rushing, but I think most of the people feel this is way long overdue," said trustee Mark Lyon.

Gateway to fall

See stories on pages 3, 5, 7 and C7.

Inside this week: Photos of the Hellenic Festival. Page 45.

News

DEC plans

Continued from page 1

under the state's Superfund law, got its start back in 1992, when the site was included in the state's registry of inactive hazardous waste disposal sites. Based on data compiled in past checkups, Lawrence is listed on the registry as a "Class 2" site, which is defined as one which presents a "significant threat to human health" and requires state action. However, a representative of the state department of health said the site does not present any immediate risk to local residents. "Although the extent of the on-site contamination has not yet been determined we do not believe that community exposure is occurring unless people are trespassing on the site," said John Olm, a public health specialist for the state.

Once Lawrence was listed as a Class 2 site in 1992, the state entered into negotiations with the company, seeking an agreement to have Lawrence pay for all or some of the cleanup. However, after three years of negotiating, no agreement was reached. "We under state law cannot spend taxpayer money until we try to get the responsible party to do the cleanup," McCormick said.

Instead, the state is now spending taxpayer money to clean up the site with funds from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act. If the results of the state remedial investigation find that Lawrence was at fault in causing pollution on the site, the state can then seek reimbursement from Lawrence through legal action.

One of the reasons for the failure of negotiations is that there has been a long disagreement on the extent of the pollution at Lawrence, and whether the plant is responsible for pollution that has been found at locations away from the site. Lawrence Aviation owner Gerald Cohen said that the study will put to rest much of the controversy and vindicate his contention that the company has not been polluting on and around the site.

"I think that will all be resolved. We welcome the DEC's investigation," Cohen said. "There's been an extensive amount of testing and we feel that the results of the study will be helpful for both us and the DEC."

One substantial point of contention since 1992 is the extent to which pollution from the site may have migrated into the Village of Port Jefferson over the years. A pond on Brook Road next to the Caroline Avenue ball field in lower Port Jeff was found to contain elevated levels of trichloroethylene (TCE), a degreasing solvent that is suspected of being a carcinogen. In 1993 and signs were posted warning of contamination in the water. The most recent tests indicated that TCE is still present in the pond, according to Sy Robbins of the county health department. Olm said that the contamination signs would be going back up.

While the DEC believes that Lawrence may be the source of that pollution, Cohen believes the source of the pollution is in downtown Port Jefferson, not his company.

Part of the Remedial Investigation being done right now will involve mapping the groundwater flow around Lawrence and getting a more accurate picture of just how far any potential pollution may have travelled. Donald Coyle, the chairman of the village Conservation Advisory Committee, said he is relieved that the state is investing the funds to settle the question of where the pollution in the pond is coming from.

The latest investigation at Lawrence caps almost two decades of environmental actions by various levels of government and neighbors near the plant allege, the plant continues to pollute their neighborhood after 30 years of complaints, phone calls and public meetings.

The Lawrence site was first investigated back in 1970 following complaints by nearby property owners. In the years since, the site has been the subject of investigations and cleanup efforts by an alphabet soup of county, state and federal government agencies. In 1980, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) required Lawrence to remove drums of waste material from the property, some of which were suspected to contain various industrial solvents, acids, oils and degreasing agents.

In 1987, the federal Environmental Protection Agency intervened at the state's request after private wells near the site were found to be contaminated with chlorinated organic solvents. At that time, a number of nearby homes with private wells were hooked up to the Suffolk County Water Authority's public water lines.

Drums of waste material were removed from the site again in 1991, this time under the supervision of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

Residents who live near the site, how-

ever, have grown weary of hearing about more studies and cleanup efforts, pointing out that their struggle with Lawrence has gone on for almost 30 years with little success. They tell stories going back 20 and 30 years about the strange sights, sounds and smells that have been coming from the Lawrence site for as long as they have lived near it.

One resident who lives along the southern edge of the site — which runs along the neighborhoods off Old Post Road in the area of Ward Melville High School — said that neighbors have grown accustomed to strange occurrences over the years.

"They used to flood the neighborhood with what we used to call the 'Yellow Fog,'" he said during an interview at his home on Friday.

A fine yellow dust, sometimes more orange in color, would occasionally descend on the neighborhood, covering homes and cars and staining clothing. The yellow fog has stopped, but strange smells continue to drift in periodically.

"Now, it's a sweet smell, like air freshener," he said. He said that just two weeks ago, a light gray ash fell from the sky and coated cars in the neighborhood.

Cohen acknowledged that there have been isolated incidents over the years but said his company had not disregarded the needs of nearby residents.

"We've tried to be good neighbors over the years," he said.

After more than 20 years of living next door to Lawrence, though, the resident said he finds it strange that more government studies are needed to find out if there is pollution on the site considering what neighbors say they have witnessed over the years. "This has been going on for how long? And nothing's ever been done?" he said.

Local man

Continued from page 3

Internet and ALS bulletin boards, that there are over 100 people in Suffolk County who have ALS.

His involvement is not limited to cyberspace. "I testified before the FDA on a new drug application for a new treatment for ALS. I do a lot of 'patient counseling,' lending an ear to people who have been recently diagnosed with ALS," said Pendergast. He was even instrumental in having Suffolk County designate this past May as ALS month.

Pendergast is happy to speak out for

the MDA. "They do so much for the neurologically-impaired. They spend approximately \$5 million per year in funding projects on ALS alone."

The telethon will air for 22 hours from 9 pm on August 31 through 7 pm on September 1 on WWOR Channel 9. Pendergast's interview will air on Monday at 2:30 pm and 5 pm. The segment was filmed at a number of spots in Miller Place including the North Shore Little League fields where his son plays ball.

Comsewogue

Continued from page 3

A new, larger band room will be in use at the high school. The increased size will easily accommodate the new marching band. The room has a rear exit, providing easy access to the athletic fields. The room will also function as a mini theater and some 1997-1998 productions are planned.

The new high school stadium press box will be in place for the opening of school. Additional portable bleachers have also been purchased for use at the high school and middle school athletic fields. The bleachers in the JFK gym have been repaired and refinished.

The physical education, health and athletic offices have been moved back to the high school after six years at the middle school. This will provide greater access for more coaches and increased storage space for athletic equipment. A small conference area will be available for staff meetings.

All the lockers at the middle school have been refinished, and 250 new lockers have been added to eliminate the need to share lockers. The running track at the high school has been resurfaced and newly painted. The boys' soccer field has been regraded.

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DEC plans on plan for Lawrence

BY ED ROGERS

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The first step in the cleanup process is a "remedial investigation," which will assess the extent and nature of the pollution on the site through soil and water testing and available records. That work is already being done by Camp Dresser and McKee, an environmental consulting firm located in Woodbury.

Following the remedial investigation, a feasibility study will be done to determine what steps can be most effectively and efficiently taken to clean up the site and to produce a final cleanup plan.

"We expect the work ... is going to cost about \$600,000," said Susan McCormick, an engineer with the DEC. According to the DEC's schedule, Camp Dresser and McKee has already begun their preliminary research and should begin field investigations at the site by mid-September and have a report ready for public presentation by June 1998. At that point, work will begin on the feasibility study portion of the project.

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Port Times Record

DEC plans

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under the state's Superfund law, got its start back in 1992, when the site was included in the state's registry of inactive hazardous waste disposal sites. Based on data compiled in past checkups, Lawrence is listed on the registry as a "Class 2" site, which is defined as one which presents a "significant threat to human health" and requires state action. However, a representative of the state department of health said the site does not present any immediate risk to local residents. "Although the extent of the on-site contamination has not yet been determined we do not believe that community exposure is occurring unless people are trespassing on the site," said John Olm, a public health specialist for the state.

Once Lawrence was listed as a Class 2 site in 1992, the state entered into negotiations with the company, seeking an agreement to have Lawrence pay for all or some of the cleanup. However, after three years of negotiating, no agreement was reached. "We under state law cannot spend taxpayer money until we try to get the responsible party to do the cleanup," McCormick said.

Instead, the state is now spending taxpayer money to clean up the site with funds from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act. If the results of the state remedial investigation find that Lawrence was at fault in causing pollution on the site, the state can then seek reimbursement from Lawrence through legal action.

One of the reasons for the failure of negotiations is that there has been a long disagreement on the extent of the pollution at Lawrence, and whether the plant is responsible for pollution that has been found at locations away from the site. Lawrence Aviation owner Gerald Cohen said that the study will put to rest much of the controversy and vindicate his contention that the company has not been polluting on and around the site.

"I think that will all be resolved. We welcome the DEC's investigation," Cohen said. "There's been an extensive amount of testing and we feel that the results of the study will be helpful for both us and the DEC."

One substantial point of contention since 1992 is the extent to which pollution from the site may have migrated into the Village of Port Jefferson over the years. A pond on Brook Road next to the Caroline Avenue ball field in lower Port Jeff was found to contain elevated levels of trichloroethylene (TCE), a degreasing solvent that is suspected of being a carcinogen, in 1993 and signs were posted warning of contamination in the water. The most recent tests indicated that TCE is still present in the pond, according to Sy Robbins of the county health department. Olm said that the contamination signs would be going back up.

While the DEC believes that Lawrence may be the source of that pollution, Cohen believes the source of the pollution is in downtown Port Jefferson, not his company.

Part of the Remedial Investigation being done right now will involve mapping the groundwater flow around Lawrence and getting a more accurate picture of just how far any potential pollution may have travelled. Donald Coyle, the chairman of the village Conservation Advisory Committee, said he is relieved that the state is investing the funds to settle the question of where the pollution in the pond is coming from.

The latest investigation at Lawrence caps almost two decades of environmental actions by various levels of government and neighbors near the plant allege the plant continues to pollute their neighborhood after 30 years of complaints, phone calls and public meetings.

The Lawrence site was first investigated back in 1970 following complaints by nearby property owners. In the years since, the site has been the subject of investigations and cleanup efforts by an alphabet soup of county, state and federal government agencies. In 1980, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) required Lawrence to remove drums of waste material from the property, some of which were suspected to contain various industrial solvents, acids, oils and degreasing agents.

In 1987, the federal Environmental Protection Agency intervened at the state's request after private wells near the site were found to be contaminated with chlorinated organic solvents. At that time, a number of nearby homes with private wells were hooked up to the Suffolk County Water Authority's public water lines.

Drums of waste material were removed from the site again in 1991, this time under the supervision of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

Residents who live near the site, how-

ever, have grown weary of hearing about more studies and cleanup efforts, pointing out that their struggle with Lawrence has gone on for almost 30 years with little success. They tell stories going back 20 and 30 years about the strange sights, sounds and smells that have been coming from the Lawrence site for a long as they have lived near it.

One resident who lives along the southern edge of the site — which runs along the neighborhoods off Old Post Road in the area of Ward Melville High School — said that neighbors have grown accustomed to strange occurrences over the years.

"They used to flood the neighborhood with what we used to call the 'Yellow Fog,'" he said during an interview at his home on Friday.

A fine yellow dust, sometimes more orange in color, would occasionally descend on the neighborhood, covering homes and cars and staining clothing. The yellow fog has stopped, but strange smells continue to drift in periodically.

"Now, it's a sweet smell, like air freshener," he said. He said that just two weeks ago, a light gray ash fell from the sky and coated cars in the neighborhood.

Cohen acknowledged that there have been isolated incidents over the years but said his company had not disregarded the needs of nearby residents.

"We've tried to be good neighbors over the years," he said.

After more than 20 years of living next door to Lawrence, though, the resident said he finds it strange that more government studies are needed to find out if there is pollution on the site considering what neighbors say they have witnessed over the years. "This has been going on for how long? And nothing's ever been done," he said.

DEC hearing on Lawrence Aviation contamination

By Susan Bridson

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation held an August 21 hearing about remedial investigation at Lawrence Aviation — the site from which a pollution plume has reached all the way to the Village of Port Jefferson town hall.

Speakers noted their perceptions that Lawrence Aviation has been an on-going problem for decades. Some recalled ball games at nearby schools which had to be canceled when a "cloud" of matter from Lawrence drifted over the playing field — and officials in HazMat gear arrived, telling those present to go home and wash everything, pets included. Others rejected the DEC's assurances that

Lawrence is "a secure site" — a property no one can broach. Another speaker said there is at least one spot on the grounds where anything thrown in "sizzles."

A state health department official noted that a sign is supposed to mark the "pond" by the Port Jeff town hall, warning that the water is contaminated and "We wouldn't want anybody to have contact with the water."

Additionally, the plea was made: if you know anybody downgradient of Lawrence, as the "pond" is, who has a private well, please let the health department know.

Finally, to the thrust of things: DEC

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Lawrence contamination

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officials noted that, after four years of negotiating with Gerald Cohen, head of Lawrence Aviation, the remedial investigation is just beginning.

However, in December of 1992, Joshua Epstein, the DEC's current representative for the Lawrence matter, said if negotiations went well, work should be completed in six to nine months. Mr. Epstein said that, if negotiations broke down, the DEC would mobilize state superfund and begin cleaning up immediately.

Be that as it may: the remedial investigation will be done by Camp Dresser & McKee.

Lawrence Aviation is located on 126 acres along Sheep Pasture Road in Port Jefferson Station where the Long Island Railroad tracks form its northern border. Plant buildings occupy about 34 of those acres.

The company originally was located in Long Island City where it conducted business as Leadkote Products, Inc. Its

These remain the main products today.

Lawrence Aviation's troubled history first came to the fore in 1980 and 1981 when the Suffolk County Department of Health Services required Lawrence Aviation to remove a horde of drums of waste materials from the site. "Reportedly," the DEC states, "many of these waste materials were spilled during the removal process. Drums reportedly contained spent acid sump sludges, salt waste, perchloroethylene, trichloroethylene, hydraulic oils, zyglon penetrant, solvents, hydrofluoric acid, nitric acid, and other plant wastes."

Then, in 1987, the DEC requested the US Environmental Protection Agency to perform an emergency removal action in the Village of Port Jefferson — a response to private wells there which were contaminated with chlorinated organic solvents. The EPA's work included extending a Suffolk County Water Authority waterline, and connecting several homes that had private wells downgradient from Lawrence Aviation to the water authority lines. The remedial investigation aims to see if those private wells are free of contamination today.

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products included lead gutters and spouts for roof drains. The company moved to Port Jeff Station in 1951 and, in 1959, changed its name to Lawrence Aviation. By this time, its products were titanium sheet metal and other titanium products.

In 1991, a second drum removal was conducted at Lawrence Aviation, this time overseen by the DEC's resource conservation and recovery act program. In March of 1992, Lawrence was listed on the New York State Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Site — a Class 2 site. That designation means it poses a significant threat to human health and/or the environment.

The purpose of the remediation is to identify any environmental concerns still existing at the site. As the DEC puts it, "Based on the information gained from the Remedial Investigation, the lateral and vertical extent of site contamination will be determined. A Feasibility Study will then be conducted to determine the best course of action to protect human health and the environment."

And so to the August 21 meeting, attended by about 30 people at the Port Jefferson Library, including representatives of the state health department, the Suffolk County health department, the Village of Port Jefferson, the office of Nora Bredes (D-Stony Brook), and community residents.