

Arsenic has seeped into Carmel's soil, water for 30 years: Schumer pushes EPA to act

Isabel Keane, Rockland/Westchester Journal News Published 6:30 p.m. ET Oct. 8, 2019 | Updated 9:44 a.m. ET Oct. 9, 2019

The Environmental Protection Agency needs to stop "dragging its feet" as toxic arsenic seeps into the town of Carmel's soil and water from an abandoned mine, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer said.

Arsenic that has been spilling onto private property since 1987 and exposing residents to contaminated water and soil, and has even hospitalized two residents, was added to the EPA's Proposed National Priorities List in June.

Schumer says this isn't good enough. After contaminated sites are added to the National Proposed List, the next step is moving from proposed to final, a distinction Schumer is pushing for the Kent Arsenic Mine, as it will expedite the EPA's investigation of the site.



U.S. Senator Charles Schumer calls on the Environmental Protection Agency to add the Kent Arsenic Mine to their final National Priorities List. (Photo: Submitted)

With the Kent Arsenic Mine, located near the intersection of Gipsy Trail Road and Mount Nimham Court, a federally-funded clean-up cannot commence until it is moved to the final list.

Schumer, along with concerned residents, advocates and Putnam County officials, gathered Tuesday afternoon at Ninham Mountain's multiple use area to call upon the EPA to add Kent's Arsenic Mine to its Final National Priorities List.

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In a letter addressed to Andrew Wheeler, the EPA's administrator, Schumer urges the agency to take "decisive action.

"The EPA has spent 30 years dragging its feet on this issue and even one more day is too much for the people of New York," he said.

The mine site in Kent was in operation from the mid-1800s through around 1918, and was mainly used to extract arsenic ore for manufacturing products such as pesticides, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, according to the EPA.



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In 1987 the EPA installed a tank for trucked-in water, so residents would not have to use contaminated well water. In 2016, however, while repairing the tank, the EPA found high levels of arsenic had contaminated the water. Additionally, the EPA found that levels of arsenic in soil in this area were almost 1,000 times higher than the EPA's removal management level of 35 parts per million.



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"For over 30 years, Putnam communities have been forced to live with a toxic arsenic mess in their backyards, and with the chemical seeping into their soil and drinking water, endangering their health and well-being," Schumer said. "Simply put, this is wrong, and the EPA knows it, too."



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The National Priorities List is updated twice a year, with its second update expected this fall, a spokesperson for the EPA said.

The EPA said adding the Kent Arsenic Mine to the proposed National Priorities List was an "important first step."

As of 2019, the EPA has identified 1,100 sites for cleanup, with 100 sites slated for completion in 2020.

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