



EPA Begins Soil Investigation at the Arsenic Mines Site located in Kent, Putnam County, New York

Community Update No. 1

Summer/Fall 2017



SITE BACKGROUND

The Arsenic Mines Site is the location of a historic mine that was operated from the mid-1800s through approximately 1918, near Pine Pond in Kent, Putnam County, New York. The mine, which has also been known as Pine Pond Mine, Silver Mine and Nimham Mountain Mines, contained arsenopyrite, a metal ore that was used in pesticides, pigments, and other industries. The mine's two entry shafts were near Mt. Nimham Road and Gypsy Trail Road. The southern mine shaft is located in Nimham Mountain State Forest and the northern mine shaft is located on private property.

As part of mining activities, waste rock and soil known as tailings were separated from the valuable ore, and the tailings were discarded in areas surrounding the mine, including on several residential properties. The tailings are contaminated with arsenic at levels that exceed the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) health-based standards. The hills surrounding the tailings pile were partially regraded when the area was operated as a ski slope for a short time, potentially spreading arsenic contamination.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact:

Cecilia Echols
EPA Community Involvement
Coordinator
212-637-3678
Echols.Cecilia@epa.gov

Margaret Gregor
EPA On-Scene Coordinator
732-321-4424
Gregor.Margaret@epa.gov

Sandra Richards
EPA On-Scene Coordinator
732-452-6402
Richards.Sandra@epa.gov

The arsenic issue was discovered in the late 1980s when a couple was hospitalized with arsenic poisoning from their well water, after the well had been unknowingly installed through the tailings pile. The EPA installed a system for water filtration and clean water storage, which was repaired in 2016. Groundwater in the area has been monitored by the Putnam County Department of Health since the 1980s, and several residences have filtration systems installed.

The soil in the area was tested by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and EPA in the 1980s, but since there are naturally high levels of arsenic in soil in this region, it was unclear whether the arsenic was from the tailings or was naturally occurring, and no action was taken for the soil.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

EPA will begin investigating soil at private properties surrounding the historic Arsenic Mines. Historical sampling results indicated several residential properties had elevated arsenic concentrations in soil. Additional sampling data is needed to delineate the tailings pile, to

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If you would like information on general environmental concerns or the federal Superfund hazardous waste program, have concerns or complaints about the Superfund program, or if you seek assistance in resolving site-specific issues that were not fully addressed by the EPA, please contact:

George Zachos
U.S. EPA
Regional Public Liaison
(732) 321-6621
zachos.george@epa.gov

Or toll free at (888) 283-7626

determine if anyone is being exposed to contaminants from the historic mine. EPA encourages all property owners who are contacted by EPA to participate in the soil sampling event. The NYSDEC is conducting a separate investigation in Ninham Mountain State Forest, and will be conducting a study on concentrations of arsenic in the area, which may help EPA to interpret sampling results from the areas near the suspected tailings pile.

NEXT STEPS

Soil sampling is planned for late summer or fall 2017. If arsenic contamination is found that is clearly from the mine tailings, the EPA can take action to reduce exposure to the soil contaminants. The EPA is not authorized to take action if the arsenic is suspected to be naturally occurring in soil. The EPA is coordinating activities with the property owners, the Putnam County Department of Health, NYSDEC and local officials.

ARSENIC IN RESIDENTIAL SOIL

Exposure to elevated levels of arsenic in residential soils happens through contact with contaminated soil. Common activities that may increase exposure are:

- Eating without first washing hands and face.
- Eating unwashed vegetables grown in contaminated soils.
- Children playing in contaminated bare soil.
- Gardening or digging in contaminated bare soil.

SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO ARSENIC IN SOILS

Following these steps can reduce your potential exposure to arsenic contamination that may be present in the surface soils:

- Wash children's hands frequently, but especially after playing outside, before they eat, and before bedtime. Adults should also wash hands frequently.
- Thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables, especially those grown in soils in the yard.
- Place washable rugs at all entries into the home. Leave shoes at the door to prevent contaminated soil from being tracked into the home.
- Clean your home weekly to keep it as dust free as possible. Clean floors, window sills, doorframes, and baseboards with soap and water. Use a vacuum with HEPA filter for cleaning.
- Keep children away from bare soil areas; mulch bare soil areas and maintain grass cover.