

Clinton urges study of Tonawanda Landfill

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WASHINGTON — Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton on Tuesday asked the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a new study of a controversial landfill in the Town of Tonawanda to determine if it is posing health risks to the nearby neighborhood.

In a letter to Lt. Col. John S. Hurley, district commander of the Army Corps, Clinton asked for an additional assessment of the Tonawanda Landfill to make sure that radioactive materials at the site will not endanger residents of nearby homes and people at Riverview Elementary School.

"The people of Tonawanda have suffered enough" because of the legacy of Manhattan Project nuclear waste in the town, said Clinton, D-N.Y. "They deserve to know with absolute certainty that it is safe for them to live and work in their own community, and for their children to play in their own back-

yards.

"Unfortunately, the Corps' proposed cleanup plan does not provide these assurances, and I ask that you make a number of improvements to the plan," Clinton said.

The Army Corps, which issued that plan March 26, concluded that the levels of nuclear contamination at the site are within acceptable U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidelines. That study also said uranium, radium and thorium waste at the site is unconnected to the nearby Linde waste site and other Manhattan Project facilities.

But Clinton said those conclusions must be re-evaluated to ensure that the site will be cleaned up properly.

Clinton also called for an expanded human health assessment. Given that the site is targeted for recreational uses once it is cleaned up, she suggested that the entire site be completely surveyed using "the most stringent federal standards" to assess the health risk posed by remaining contaminants.

Noting that the landfill is near 700 homes and Riverview Elementary School, Clinton said the Corps also should

make sure that those properties are safe.

"The Corps must verify that radioactive materials have not migrated through soils or hydrology outside of the landfill vicinity property and into the backyards and homes of Tonawanda," she said.

Bruce Sanders, a spokesman for the Army Corps, said the agency has a policy of responding to congressional correspondence within 10 days, meaning Clinton would hear back from Hurley by April 27.

Sanders said he would defer to Hurley for reaction to Clinton's letter, which will be included in the record of the public comments being collected on the proposed cleanup plan.

The public comment period ends June 26.

The Corps will hold a public meeting to detail its plan and take comments from residents at 7 p.m. tonight in the auditorium at Tonawanda High School, 150 Hinds St.

The landfill is located in the northwest corner of the town near Two Mile Creek Road. It was used as a dumping ground for uranium, radium and thorium as the byproduct of Manhattan Project nuclear weapons

research in the 1940s and 1950s.

In addition, EAD Metallurgical, a company that made smoke detectors, dumped radioactive material in the town's sewer system in the 1970s and 1980s. That waste was turned into sludge, incinerated and dumped at the landfill.

A Clinton spokesman said the senator wrote the letter based on requests from local politicians and citizens who are concerned about the potential dangers of the site.

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