

Our Water, Our Future

Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition Newsletter



Issue #11, September/October 2002

***Our Water, Our Future** is the newsletter that keeps you, our valuable members, on the leading edge of watershed protection activities. Through the generosity of the Noyes Foundation, both this newsletter and our website, www.newyorkwater.org, have been made possible.*

CWCWC HITS THE AIRWAVES WITH WBAI-FM'S ECO-LOGIC

Ground-breaking New Program Draws on CWCWC Board Members

*By Fay Muir
CWCWC Board Member*

On June 18 of this year, a ground-breaking program was initiated on the New York City commercial-free radio station, WBAI-FM. It is *Eco-Logic*, and it is a show that will give a tremendous boost to educating New Yorkers on the fragile future of the world-famous water that pours so reliably out of their taps. Over the past few years, fellow CWCWC Board member David Ferguson and I have contributed to a number of shows on WBAI on the watershed and the water supply. With the inception of *Eco-Logic*, both of us have had even more time to be on the airwaves, and now I have the great luck to be a regular contributor to this feature.

The hour-long program, which airs 11:00AM on alternating Tuesdays, is dedicated to the outdoor environment; health tips; the subject of environmental justice; and promoting focused activism for its listeners. The other regular correspondents are Pica Trenkle, from the

American Herbalist Guild, who specializes in natural health; Omar Friella, from the citizen (*cont., page 2*)

WHEN BUGS TELL PEOPLE WHERE IT HURTS

The CWCWC Critical Resource Waters Monitoring Program

*By Natara Feller
Hudson Basin River Watch Regional Coordinator*

Hudson Basin River Watch, the regional network of water-quality monitors throughout the Hudson Valley, is teaming up with the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition to create a team of top-notch citizen stream monitors for the Croton Watershed. Skilled in training stream monitors through its extensive middle- and high-school programs, HBRW will now turn its hand to helping adult volunteers provide hard scientific data on the water-quality conditions of the tributaries and wetlands that are part of the Croton watershed, data that will then be provided to the DEC and allow this agency to enforce the important Critical Resource Waters designation that became effective this spring. [See the July/August '02 issue of *Our Water, Our Future*, well as visit the CWC website, www.newyorkwater.org]

At select sites throughout the watershed, monitors will conduct a biological assessment of the benthic

macroinvertebrate (BMI) community. That sounds so technical! Well, for starters, BMI (*cont., page 2*) WBAI-FM'S "ECO-LOGIC," cont. group Sustainable South Bronx, who discusses the topic of environmental justice; and myself on New York's precious, bountiful water, specifically that of the Croton Watershed and filtration avoidance. The producers and hosts are David Occhiuto and Ken Gale, and the time slot alternates with the show, *Create Your Healthy Home*, which is dedicated to the indoor environment.

Pacifica Radio Network, owner of WBAI, broadcasts nationwide on five stations, and many of its programs are carried internationally as well. WBAI Radio, the New York affiliate, broadcasts on 99.5

New York Community Fund

has generously donated a cash gift of \$1,000 to CWCWC in support of our efforts to protect the Croton Watershed.

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FM. As a non-commercial radio outlet, the station is supported solely by the financial contributions of the region's citizenry and listeners. Since the station has no pressure from commercial interests, it is uniquely positioned to present news and information from the grass roots, with an ability to present the topic with minimal bias. It goes without saying that this type of unfettered reporting is totally non-existent in most media sources.

For those of you who didn't have a chance to listen, on August 13, the subjects of the Croton Watershed and filtration avoidance received considerable airtime as part of the producers of *Eco-Logic's* generous interest in NYC water issues. The hosts invited experts Jim Roberts, P.E., Water Resources Engineer, who was in the studio; along with Geoff Welch of the non-profit Highlands Coalition, who joined via telephone. New York's water resources and protection at the source were the themes. Geoff delved into the geology of the region and, through that depiction, was able to explain the essential link that the Highlands greenbelt provides in protecting the headwaters. Jim then explained to listeners the intriguing history and planning of the

NYC reservoir system and the best methods of protecting the future of the drinking water supply, and, just as importantly, its quality. (*cont., page 3*) VOLUNTEERS TEAM UP TO MONITOR W'SHED, cont. are insects that breathe underwater and are visible to the naked eye. These insects live in the water through all conditions (dry spells, rain events, oil spills). Therefore, they are the best indication of the health of the stream. By assessing the BMI (insect) community as well as the physical properties of the stream and surrounding watershed, monitors will gain a clear understanding of how these streams are doing, and how they might be impacted by nonpoint source pollution (road run-off, poorly secured construction sites, sewage overflows, etc.).

Now to the essential question: how do the bugs tell the people what is going on in the stream? Each BMI is assigned a water-quality tolerance value. Some BMI, such as stoneflies and mayflies, are highly sensitive and can only exist in healthy water-quality conditions, while leaches and worms are tolerant of poor water-quality conditions. There are a variety of ways of evaluating the water quality based on the BMI. Typically, one hundred species are evaluated from the sample collected. The average tolerance value provides a number, which is correlated to indicate whether the study stream is non-impacted, slightly impacted, moderately impacted or severely impacted. The presence or lack of presence of certain types of species is also an indication of the water quality.

Now we have collected our data. What are we going to do with it? CWCWC will be using the data its volunteers collect to protect the tributaries and wetlands and ensure that they are meeting their minimum water quality standards set by the New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC).

All data will be provided per testing session to the DEC, so that it, too, can keep a watchful eye on the health of the waterbodies and pursue any protective actions needed. Another "best use" of the data is on the local level. By getting involved in monitoring, you, the volunteer, will become your stream's or your wetland's stewards. Let the community know that you are out there: your presence will be the first and most important step towards protection. Throughout the United States, the very presence of monitors has prevented inappropriate development, as the volunteer monitors educate community members to the impact such action would have on their precious streams and watersheds. As well, several areas in the Long Island Sound Watershed in Westchester County received funds for

restoration projects based on data collected by community volunteers. (cont., page 3)

WBAI-FM'S "ECO-LOGIC," cont.

Listeners heard about bills before the House of Representatives and the Senate (HR-5146 and S-2749), which ask that \$25,000,000 per year be allocated to purchase land to preserve 100,000 acres of the Highlands. They also were alerted to the folly of spending billions of dollars on chemical treatment/filtration; and listeners were requested to write U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-New York), asking her to support alternatives to the EPA mandate to filter, building on her campaign-trail support of no-filtration [to learn more about alternatives to filtration and to find a sample letter to Clinton for your use, please log onto the CWCWC web site, www.newyorkwater.org; click on Action Alerts]. I also had the opportunity to introduce CWCWC's fledgling volunteer stream-monitoring program, created to help ensure the Critical Resource Waters designation is enforced [see adjoining article].

This radio show is one method of reaching a diverse audience interested in the environment. It is an educational tool for the public and for officials alike. We would like to see awareness raised within the general public on the importance of preserving the natural environment and, with that, a parallel awareness of protecting source waters as the best method of having clean water for the future.

On September 24, Jim Roberts joined us again, this time to talk about how water quality can be improved by intelligent rehabilitation of degraded or damaged streams and retrofitting stormwater management methods in old commercial and residential developments as well as along highways. As with this and future shows, we will be calling on the responsible agencies to do the appropriate hydrological monitoring or studies of the water courses. Contrary to the misleading claims of these agencies, there are many effective and low-cost methods of treating the water other than filtration. CWCWC, with the help of cutting-edge programs like *Eco-Logic* and stations like WBAI, will educate the public to understand likewise. [CWC](http://www.cwcwc.org)

A great Thank You to the many members who responded so generously to our August fundraiser!

Your response let us know that the Croton is important and needed!

VOLUNTEERS TEAM UP TO MONITOR W/SHED, cont.

So, now that you are wondering how you can get involved . . . It's an easy phone call: Just contact Marian Rose, PhD, CWCWC president, at 914-234-3179; or the CWCWC office, at 914-234-6470.

HBRW will be conducting a training session in Westchester for the CWCWC program on Sunday, October 6. As well, a press conference will be held on Friday, October 18, the 30th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. And, on Saturday and Sunday, October 19 and 20, volunteers will conduct their first official stream monitorings. Location to be determined. Please contact the CWCWC office to sign up. We're looking forward to having you! [CWC](http://www.cwcwc.org)

For more information concerning the CWCWC Volunteer Critical Resource Waters Monitoring Program, contact:
Fay Muir – (718) 944-4668 -- Bronx County
Liz Hoskinson – (914) 234-6470 -- Westchester County
Ann Fanizzi – (845) 228-4265 -- Putnam County

CWCWC Calendar

October 6: Stream monitoring training session. Everyone is welcome to join this session and help monitor streams this fall and in spring '03. Location tba (Westchester County). For more information, please phone 914.234.6470.

October 18, 19 & 20: CWCWC celebrates the 30th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act. Join in to make this a prominent and important date, which will include a press conference. And then please join our trained volunteers on October 19 & 20 as they conduct the inaugural on-site CWCWC stream monitoring. Please phone 914.234.6470 for more information.

October 23: CWCWC General Membership Meeting, Purchase Friends Meeting House, Purchase, N.Y., 7:00PM. Refreshments to be served, interesting people will attend, and our guest speaker to be announced. See www.newyorkwater.org for updates.

Directions (by car): If traveling South on I-684, take exit 2 (Airport) and make left turn at top of ramp. *At first traffic light, turn right onto Rte. #120. Look for sharp left turn after approximately one mile; Rte. #120 becomes Purchase Street. Take first driveway on left after that sharp turn. Meeting is in rear of house. If traveling North on I-684, take exit 2 and make right turn at top of ramp. Follow directions from asterisk (*) above.

