



Issue 23  
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OUR  
WATER  
OUR  
FUTURE

## Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition



# WATERSHED PROTECTION A PRIORITY FOR WESTCHESTER LAND TRUST

*By Tom Andersen  
Projects Director  
Westchester Land Trust*

**With protection of the Croton watershed an ongoing priority, Westchester Land Trust is currently working on land purchases that would protect more than 900 acres in four towns.**

**The purchases, which are in varying stages of negotiation, would add to the 1,700 acres the Land Trust has already protected in Westchester's portion of the Croton. Westchester Land Trust is based in Bedford Hills.**

Since 2000, the Land Trust has been working with local communities to raise money to buy land. North Salem, Somers, Bedford, Lewisboro, Pound Ridge, Cortlandt and New Castle have set aside more than \$15 million for land acquisition.

To date, they have combined \$2.8 million of that with \$3.7 million from Westchester County, New York State and private citizens to buy about 220 acres.

The four new prospective purchases are Eagle River (650 acres) in Somers, the



Illustration by Enrique Dura

Bell property (383 acres with 200 of them in the Croton) in Lewisboro, Lakeview (49 acres) in Cortlandt, and Leatherman's Ridge (33 acres) in Bedford Hills.

Leatherman's Ridge is the farthest along. The town of Bedford signed a contract in September to buy the property for \$1.325 million. Of that, \$1.275 million will come from the town's open space fund and the remainder is being raised by the Land Trust through donations from private citizens. Closing is scheduled for December 10.



Spillover from the Amawalk Reservoir

town officials to negotiate an agreement with the owners. The town's open space

committee has recommended that Lewisboro contribute money from its open space fund to help with the purchase; the Jerome Levy Foundation has pledged \$5 million and the Dextra Baldwin McGonagle Foundation has pledged \$500,000 toward the purchase.

The Eagle River property, which lies just north of the Muscoot Reservoir, is being proposed for a 108-lot subdivision. The Angle Fly Brook, a key reservoir tributary, bisects the property. The town of Somers and the Land Trust have begun negotiations on a purchase with the owners.

The Bell property lies partly in the Cross River reservoir watershed and partly in the watershed of Stamford's reservoirs in Pound Ridge. Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection announced that the city would contribute \$1 million toward the purchase price.

Westchester Land Trust is working with

The Lakeview property, which is being proposed for an 11-lot subdivision, sits above the Croton in Cortlandt, near Colabaugh Pond. The Land Trust has begun negotiations on a purchase with the owners.

Land purchases are a relatively new endeavor for the Land Trust. Of the 1,700 acres the organization has protected in the Croton almost 1,300 acres have been protected through conservation easements – binding agreements with landowners to keep their land out of development forever.

If you're interested in learning more about WLT's land protection programs, visit [www.Westchesterlandtrust.org](http://www.Westchesterlandtrust.org).

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Visit our web site: [www.newyorkwater.org](http://www.newyorkwater.org)

Please send articles for submission to:  
CWCWC  
Wendy Appleton  
9 Old Corner Road  
Bedford, NY 10506  
(914) 234-6470

2004 deadlines for materials are: 1/1, 3/1, 5/1, 7/1, 9/1 and 11/1



# NEW YORK CITY'S WATER SUPPLY IN DANGER

*By Marian Rose, PhD  
President, CWCWC*

**No - We do not mean a terrorist attack, although that could be the first thought that comes to mind.**

**What we mean is something more insidious, the gradual loss of our region's most vital resource - safe, clean and affordable drinking water.**

New York City's extraordinary watershed, 2,000 square miles on both sides of the Hudson River, of which approximately 380 square miles cover large areas of northern Westchester and Putnam County, provides over half of New York State with drinking water. Nine million people are the fortunate recipients of high quality water, arguably the best drinking water of any large city in the world.

Thanks to the foresight and engineering skills of our predecessors, this water was conducted by gravity via three huge aqueducts to New York City and environs. The oldest system, the Croton, whose reservoirs lie in Westchester and Putnam Counties, still provides us with 10% of our needs, and up to 30% in times of drought. Despite development pressures in both counties, Croton water is still high quality thanks, in large part, to the abundance of wetlands and forests, both of which have the ability to slow



stormwater runoff and absorb pollutants before they reach the reservoirs.

The more recent Catskill and Delaware systems lie on both sides of the Hudson. The Delaware was completed as recently as 1964 and provides over 70% of the region's needs.

With such a magnificent resource at their disposal, one might reasonably assume that the City and the State would spare no effort to protect it. Frighteningly, this is not happening. Lack of enforcement by the responsible agencies of the rules and regulations that protect the reservoirs from pollution is gradually destroying the quality of our water.

DEC, with responsibility to regulate the amount of pollution that enters streams and reservoirs, and with regulatory powers over large wetlands, is understaffed due to cuts in the Governor's annual budgets, and is incapable of enforcing regulations in a timely manner, even if it wanted to.

DEP faces huge budgetary problems. Over the next ten years, it has allocated \$17.4 billion for infrastructure repairs. These include the ongoing construction



of a third water tunnel, the building of the Kensico/City tunnel, the patching up of the New Croton Aqueduct and also \$1.5 billion for the construction of a chemical treatment/filtration plant for the Croton system.

Most disturbingly, at the Delaware aqueduct near Kingston, over 35 million gallons of water per day have pushed their way up to the surface from a depth of 600 feet and have formed a wetland and small waterfall on the surface. The limestone rock surrounding the aqueduct is being dissolved, threatening the aqueduct with collapse and thereby depriving New York City of 70% of its water.

On the other hand, DEP is making an effort to protect the Catskill/Delaware watershed and reservoirs in order to avoid having to build what could amount to an \$8 billion chemical treatment/filtration plant. DEP has

appropriated \$250 million to buy land. Unfortunately, this has not prevented developers from trying to force development. One example is the Belleayre project that would cut off the tops of two mountains to accommodate two hotels, golf courses, individual homes and all the other accoutrements that accompany such developments. So far, DEP has been unable to prevent it despite the fact that two important reservoirs would be adversely impacted.

Faced with these immediate problems, DEP and DEC have, in fact, abandoned any serious attempt to protect the Croton watershed and the still high quality of the water it provides. DEP has appropriated only one tenth as much funding for acquiring land in the Croton as it has for the Catskill/Delaware watershed. Since 1997, DEP has bought slightly over 500 acres in the Croton watershed. By contrast, well over 3,000 acres are in the hands of developers.

## ***CROTON WATER IS HIGH QUALITY!***

### ***DEP's \$1.5 Billion Chemical Treatment/Filtration Plant for the Croton is not Justified!***

***Cryptosporidium* (number of oocysts) and *Giardia* (number of cysts) results for NYC Watersheds from May 3, 2004 to September 13, 2004:**

	<b>Croton</b>	<b>Delaware</b>	<b>Catskill</b>
<b>Crypto</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Giardia</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>37</b>

*Cryptosporidium* is a dangerous pathogen that caused over 100 deaths and over 400,000 illnesses in Milwaukee, in 1993. That disaster was the trigger for many of the subsequent EPA regulations on protection of drinking water. However, all three unfiltered NYC watersheds have lower levels of *Cryptosporidium* than most filtered systems in the US. The Croton is on a level with the Catskill and Delaware watersheds regarding *Cryptosporidium* and has much lower counts of *Giardia*. In other respects, also, Croton water is high quality. Any problems with Croton water could be remedied at far less cost and with far less environmental impact than the proposed \$1.5 billion chemical treatment/filtration plant.

Rather than protect it, DEP did not seek filtration avoidance for the Croton and is now under a consent order by the federal and state authorities to build a filtration plant. DEP is expecting to spend \$1.5 billion on this plant that it proposes to site in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx.

The building of the plant will have several serious consequences. First, there is a likelihood of severe health consequences to the residents of the densely populated areas near the construction site who will have to endure the dust and noise of up to six years of drilling an 80-foot hole with an area of two football fields. In addition, there will be the constant flow of trucks and the loss of use of essential parkland.

Second, water quality in the reservoirs will diminish since there will be less incentive to protect them. State law even allows less protection for reservoirs that are the sources of filtered and heavily chemically treated water. This will create hardships for watershed residents who depend on the reservoirs for their drinking water.

And third, DEP has picked a filtration method (dissolved air flotation, DAF, preceded by chemical treatment and followed by sand and gravel filtration) that is being rapidly abandoned in favor of ultrafiltration by membranes. This latter treatment is far more effective at removing pathogens than DAF. It also has

a far smaller footprint; it uses practically no chemicals besides the disinfectant mandated by law, and it is far less costly.

The Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition (CWCWC), a 50+ group coalition dedicated to protecting the Croton watershed has detailed the advantages of membrane filtration over DAF in its extensive comments on DEP's environmental impact statements (EIS)

regarding the siting of the proposed plant. However, since DEP is in the unusual position of being the lead agency reviewing its own EIS, it is perhaps not surprising that its response has been minimal.

The efficacy of any plant depends directly on the quality of the raw water that it treats. Therefore, unless DEP and DEC decide to really protect the Croton watershed, whatever plant gets built will fail to perform at its maximum potential.

New York City has some of the best water in the world.

It is in danger of losing it both in terms of quality and quantity due to DEP's and DEC's lackadaisical approach to watershed protection and DEP's reluctance to consider new technologies. Good water is too valuable a resource to squander. If the regulatory authorities don't do their job then we, the citizens, will have to make them do it. It is still not too late. ■

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**PLEASE JOIN US**

Through regional action, CWCWC is dedicated to providing alternatives to chemical treatment/filtration, and to protecting and improving the naturally-filtered, high-quality waters of the Croton Watershed for today and for generations to come.

Send in your membership and receive membership mailings, a subscription to CWCWC's newsletter, "Our Water, Our Future" and (at your request) a free copy of the multi-award-winning video, "The Fight for the Croton Watershed."

Most importantly, your membership will help you get involved with the preservation of one of our most precious resources, our water.

**Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition Membership Application**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- Group/Coalition Membership (Voting)    \$25/year [For Groups/Assoc. only]
- Individual Membership (Non-Voting)    \$10/year [For Individuals only]

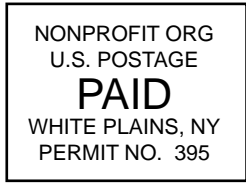
Is this a Renewal or a New Membership? (Circle one)

Make checks payable to Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition and mail, along with your membership form, to:

FAY MUIR, Secretary, CWCWC, INC., 9 OLD CORNER ROAD, BEDFORD, NY 10506



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