



# Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition



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## Is What's Best for the Politicians Also Best for the Drinking Water for 9 Million New Yorkers?

*By The Board of CWCWC*

**T**he Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, Inc. (CWCWC) has long opposed NYC Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) plan to build a massive chemical treatment/filtration plant in Van Cortlandt park to treat Croton water. Such a plant, as presently designed, will obliterate a large section of magnificent park area that is greatly used and desperately needed by the adjoining minority community. CWCWC has been advocating for a much smaller, more effective and far less environmentally destructive membrane plant and has sued DEP for not having performed due diligence in examining this alternate technology.

In its lawsuit against DEP, CWCWC contended that DEP should have considered

the revolutionary progress made by membrane filtration since 1999 to treat drinking water. Since that time, however, DEP has not reconsidered its decision made in 1997 to use Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) for its Croton water chemical treatment/filtration plant. Yet, the extraordinary progress made in the field of membrane filtration warranted such a review. The record is clear that from 1999 to the present, DEP did not perform "due diligence" in trying to mitigate adverse environmental impacts "to the maximum extent practicable," by giving membrane filtration the requisite hard look. Clearly, a membrane filtration plant would be far less labor-intensive to build because of its smaller footprint, not to mention lower costs, fewer chemicals, better protection against dangerous pathogens



Illustration by Enrique Dura

such as *Cryptosporidium*, far less power usage and less air pollution.

For the many NYC and Croton watershed residents who supported CWCWC, the recent decision of the Appellate Court, Second Judicial Department rejecting CWCWC's appeal was a bitter disappointment. The court said in only one sentence that the "new information" that CWCWC submitted during the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process, was "not of the type that would require further environmental review." The case it cited (*Matter of Pleasant Valley v. Town of Poughkeepsie Planning Board*) has the same language as the decision, but nothing about the facts on which it was based. The City did not even cite the case in any of its briefs.

In short, the decision provides no information as to why the Court ruled as it did.

One can only surmise that the court's ruling could well have been influenced by the overwhelming power exercised by the managers of "the capital of the world" and by the resulting political climate that permeates NYC decisions.

The DAF plant that DEP has proposed is a labor-intensive, hugely expensive project that the City unions have been clamoring for. At public hearings held by the DEP during the review process, the

unions consistently disrupted the meetings by shouting and screaming "We want jobs," with next to no attempt to restore order by then DEP commissioner Christopher Ward.

This resulted in members of the communities most affected by the plant, as well as other opponents, from being granted a fair hearing.

It also resulted in helping Mayor Bloomberg receive the endorsement of the construction unions, by contrast with his original bid for mayor, when only one union supported him.

On the political front, Bronx politicians originally deferred to their colleagues who

opposed the plant because it abutted their constituents' neighborhoods. But most were won over by an exquisitely timed \$243 million deal offer by Mayor Bloomberg to improve parks throughout the Bronx with new playgrounds, ball fields and other amenities. Although many of these improvements were long overdue, they could have continued to languish in the City's bureaucratic maze that controls funding. For these politicians to be able to tell their constituents that they had obtained funding for park embellishments apparently proved irresistible. It overcame any scruples they may have had regarding the huge negative impact on their fellow Bronx residents in the neighborhoods adjoining the plant.

The public should be aware that these park improvements are in no way water-related. Yet, they are being funded through Municipal Water Finance Authority bonds that are slated to be used for water-related projects only. However, DEP's overriding control allows it to use the ratepayers as the cash cow that provides an easy source of revenue for financing its projects. The \$1.5 billion DAF plant, despite the unfair and continuing hardships it will impose on the neighboring minority community, is one such example.



DEP has also argued that no membrane plant close in capacity to the projected 290 million gallons per day (mgd) plant needed for Croton water has ever been built. That is correct but neither has a DAF plant even close to that size ever been built. Indeed, larger membrane plants than DAF plants are now in operation. As examples, the Lakeview plant in Ontario will be operating next year at 228 mgd, upgraded from its present 148 mgd; the Fridley plant in Minnesota is soon to be upgraded to 120 mgd from its present 70 mgd. Both will be far larger than any presently operating DAF plant.

Finally, the public should note that the same engineering-design-construction management company, Hazen & Sawyer, that recommended the DAF technology to DEP back in 1997 is now building a 20 mgd, up-to-date membrane filtration plant at Rye Lake to treat water from NYC's Catskill/Delaware system.

DEP's stubborn adherence to DAF since its 1997 decision defies logic. One can only conclude that the course it has chosen is being guided by politics and expediency rather than by science.

Even at this late stage, CWCWC continues to hope that the City will change course and exert its tremendous power towards doing what's best both for the pocket books and especially the health of the 9 million New Yorkers who depend on NYC's water supply.



## **YOU CAN ACCESS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS THROUGH CWCWC'S WEBSITE!**



Multi-media educational tools are accessible through our Website, or you can request the same materials to be sent to you from our office!

### **AVAILABLE PRINTED MATTER:**

Can be downloaded from our Website or ordered from our office.

#### **The Real Price of Filtration: Is it Worth it?**

By Anthony J. Blackburn

NOTE: Available only from our office.

#### **A Management Plan for the Croton Watershed**

Presented by CWCWC

#### **The CWCWC Position Paper On the Need for Examination of the Use of Membrane Technology to Treat the Waters of the Croton System**

By Michael Cole, Esq.

#### **Membrane Water Filtration**

By Professor Audrey D. Levine, PhD, PE

NOTE: Available only from our office.

### **AVAILABLE VIDEOTAPES**

Can be viewed on our Website or ordered from our office.

#### **The Fight for the Croton Watershed: Protection Vs. Filtration**

Produced by Rose Films, Inc. for CWCWC

#### **Unfiltered Facts**

Produced by David Ferguson for CWCWC

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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



**Our Water, Our Future**  
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