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# Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition



## One Specific Opportunity for You To Help Protect Our Watershed

**Y**ou Can't Wash Dirty Water is a five videotape history of the fight to protect and enhance Croton waters without chemical treatment/filtration. The set is compiled from hundreds of hours of videotapes of hearings, events, workshops, meetings and field trips to wetlands, streams, reservoirs and a filtration plant, all taken over the years since 1998. These tapes provide a window on many of the discrete events that determine the quality and cost of the region's water supply.

Excerpts from these videos are roughly arranged in sections responding to statements made by DEP Commissioner Ward at a January 31, 2003 public meeting in the Bronx. The first section, for example, responds to DEP's novel assertion that wetlands are one of the fundamental reasons we have to filter, thus transferring the onus from development to nature. This section begins with excerpts from an excellent 1998 DEP presentation on the value of wetlands. Too often, when it comes to dealing with unwise development proposals, DEP would rather filter than fight.

Each of the 95 excerpts examines a small, comprehensible piece of a much larger picture. Unfortunately, it takes all of the various pieces

before the whole picture can be fully understood. This is not an academic study, but a very human, compelling, often exciting story, even illuminated on occasion by humor. The tapes include:

- a comprehensive, inspiring talk by Robert Kennedy Jr.;
- excerpts from an EPA Health Effects workshop in Washington DC in which a number of experts express uncertainty about the assessment of the risks cited by EPA to justify Croton filtration;
- a tour through the type of filtration plant proposed for the Croton; spirited testimony of articulate, informed citizens fighting unwise developments;
- a canoe trip in the Great Swamp; a number of significant presentations of John Keane's Trout Unlimited report and how its detailed recommendations to improve existing good water quality at a very modest cost have been ignored for years by those governmental agencies charged with protecting our water supply;
- testimony on the value of sewage treatment upgrades and how far behind schedule these upgrades are in the Croton watershed; the potential benefits of upgrading septic systems;
- the resistance of EPA to the initiatives of

- watershed residents and alternatives to filtration;
- testimony contradicting EPA's multiple barrier approach - that filtration encourages unwise development;
- testimony on the serious weakness of DEP's approach to protecting the Croton by F.X. Browne, a watershed expert, hired by DEP at the insistence of the Croton Citizens' Advisory Council (CAC), which DEP then discontinued despite Browne's recommendation that it be continued;
- press conference statements in support of an alternative to Croton filtration by Senator Hillary Clinton, Congress Members Jerrold Nadler, Eliot Engle, Carolyn Maloney, State Assembly Member Jeff Dinowitz, and City Council Member Oliver Koppel;
- shots of leaks in the Croton Aqueduct and presentation on how weep holes work and;
- views of CWCWC group monitoring streams and watersheds whose natural beauty represents the best system for protecting our water supply.

The video set is accompanied by a 132 page book containing: a preface; introduction; video index with descriptions of each selection; extended transcriptions of statements on videos, along with a few comments and additional materials; a conclusion and recommendations.

Since protection of our water supply requires a wider public understanding of the issues, it is imperative that the public has a chance to get the full story. Getting this story out has been difficult, especially to the majority of New York City residents who drink and pay for the water. An edited version of the video history, condensing this vast array of material into a form that can be shown on TV, would be one important way to do

this—perhaps in a short series of programs, each focusing on one aspect at a time. But time is fast running out. DEP may well have chosen a site for the filtration plant by the time you read this.

The videotape set and book, **You Can't Wash Dirty Water**, is available to anyone who commits to viewing the entire 12 hours and reading the book. *But what is desperately needed right now is an editor and producer.* If you have any idea of how we can find people interested in this project please let us know. This project will also require additional funds that will be most gratefully received. It's now or never to begin to properly protect our watersheds.

David Ferguson, 212 989-0519; fax 212 741-0583

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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: 5/1, 7/1, 9/1 and 11/1

Artwork and layout by Enrique Dura 914-232-4333



## A Management Plan for the Croton Watershed

By the end of June, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will have selected the site for its proposed chemical treatment (CT/F) plant to treat the waters from Croton reservoirs.

Regardless of the site, whether in the Bronx or in Westchester County, this “Mother of all Treatment Plants” will end up costing in excess of \$1.5 billion. Raising this huge sum of money is not a problem for the City. The ratepayers are the “cash cow” from which the necessary funds are obtained on an ever-increasing annual rate.

If Croton water failed to comply with federal and state health standards, there might be some justification for this huge expenditure. However, according to DEP’s own quarterly reports, Croton water continues to satisfy those standards.

Furthermore, unless the DEP enforces a strict watershed protection program, the CT/F will eventually fail to provide safe water. So far, DEP has shown little inclination to provide effective watershed protection for the Croton. Its efforts have been concentrated on the Catskill/Delaware watershed for which DEP is trying to avoid having to build an \$8 billion CT/F. DEP is relying on its proposed CT/F to take care of Croton water and is putting very little effort into protecting its watershed and reservoirs.

DEP’s lack of protection of the Croton is a very short-sighted policy because the effectiveness of a CT/F plant decreases with the quality of the raw water that it treats. And lack of protection will entail a flood-tide of development with its stormwater runoff from new and widened roads, shopping mall parking lots, and fertilizers and ‘cides applied to lawns in new residential developments. All of this toxic, carcinogenic mix will be carried into our streams and reservoirs during storm events. Petroleum products such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are known to be bioaccumulative carcinogens. They are common components of stormwater runoff from roads and parking lots.

CT/Fs, as presently designed, are unable to eliminate petroleum products. For example, on MOSGRO page 5 of the Draft SEIS for the Croton Water Treatment we find the statement: “A number of contaminants...cannot be eliminated or completely controlled through filtration i.e. petroleum products

and hazardous substances...In addition, raw water quality entering a filtration plant affects its efficiency...All of these reasons argue for continuing the implementation of a strong watershed protection program.” The result is clear: we shall be drinking less safe water that costs more unless there is a strong watershed protection program.

DEP has included a watershed protection plan as an addendum to its 2003 White Paper. It is mostly a recapitulation of past studies, some of which have been unsuccessful (such as the hypolimnetic aeration of the New Croton Reservoir), and some new studies. In addition to the paltry \$10 million that DEP originally assigned for acquisitions in the Croton Watershed (as opposed to \$250 million for the Catskill/Delaware), DEP is now proposing an additional \$25 million that will buy about \$700 acres.

Despite DEP’s assertions that a strong protection program is needed, the plan it is presenting falls far short. For this reason, CWCWC has crafted a management plan for the Croton that, we believe, provides far stronger protection. We are asking other organizations to sign on as equal partners (so far, over 15 have signed on and others have promised to do so) so that we will be able to present a strong, united front when we urge top officials at DEP and DEC to adopt the plan.

Here are a few among the many recommendations that are included in the Management Plan:

- \$200 million for land acquisition;
- 150 foot minimum buffers for wetlands;
- Strong forest protection and tree protection laws;
- The use of pervious surfaces wherever possible;
- No crossing of wetlands unless by means of a bridge.

The Management Plan for the Croton can be accessed on our website at [www.newyorkwater.org](http://www.newyorkwater.org). It includes a simple sign-on section. Please sign on! Thank you!



**PLEASE JOIN US**, the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, which through regional action, is dedicated to providing alternatives to 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 free copy of the multi-award winning video, The Fight for the Croton Watershed, and most importantly, a chance to preserve one of our most precious resources, our water.

Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition Membership Application

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

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

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

- 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?

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  
Croton Watershed Clean  
Water Coalition  
9 Old Corner Road  
Bedford, N.Y. 10506

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