



Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition



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LET HIZZONER HEAR THE REAL OPINION OF NEW YORKERS

... so that he knows we know the need to protect our watershed. The arguments supporting the need to filter Croton water have a long history of being colored by political interests. So, let's let NYC Mayor Bloomberg know that votes are on the line, and let our opinions be heard about the need to study alternatives to filtration and to provide necessary watershed protection. Enclosed is a letter to Mayor Bloomberg, who will be needing for his re-election to know the real hearts and minds of the voters. Let's help make the future health of the Croton an important issue for the Mayor. Would you please read and sign the enclosed letter and return it to CWCWC? The address is 9 Old Corner Rd., Bedford, NY 10506.



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A Needless Argument About Siting an Unneeded Filtration Plant

By *Marian Rose, PhD,*
President, CWCWC

In its January 22, 2004, editorial titled, "A New Look at the Filtration Plant," *The Riverdale Press* points out an underlying contradiction in the NYC Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) latest environmental review of the Croton Filtration Plant. While trying to promote the Mosholu Golf course in Van Cortlandt Park as the best site for the plant, DEP inadvertently promotes the Eastview site in Westchester as being the most suitable. The editorial happens to agree that Eastview is where the plant should be built.

The editorial misses the real point in this long controversy. It is simply that this \$1.5 billion chemical treatment/filtration plant for the Croton is not needed – not needed in the Bronx; not needed in Westchester; not needed anywhere.

The Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition (CWCWC), a coalition of over 50 groups throughout NYC, Westchester and Putnam Counties has solid reasons to believe that the solution to problems with Croton water does not require this huge expenditure. The CWCWC bases its conclusions on extensive information gleaned from DEP's own website, related links, and on consultations with engineers who are leaders in the field of water quality management.

The DEP concedes that Croton water is high quality and continues to fulfill all federal and State health standards. Its reasons for promoting filtration are 1) the "frequent," or "occasional," or "periodic" (depending on which report you read) color violations; 2) DEP's concern that Croton water will be unable to fulfill future, more stringent EPA regulations governing the byproducts of applying chlorine as a disinfectant, and 3) the need to control cryptosporidium, a potentially dangerous waterborne protozoan parasite that can cause severe illness.

Color violations are an aesthetic, not a health problem. DEP cites many instances when the Croton was taken off-line due to supposed color violations. A CWCWC Freedom of Information Act (FOIL) request showed that many cases of so-called violations when the Croton was off-line were due to repair work on the aqueduct. The longest off-line period, from 2000 to 2001, was caused not by a color violation, but by a leak into the New Croton Aqueduct, south of Jerome Park Reservoir. Building a filtration plant in Westchester or the Bronx would be immaterial to that problem. Repairing the aqueduct would solve it.

***The DEP
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In order for drinking water providers to comply with future regulations for unfiltered systems, EPA is suggesting the use of UV, ozonation or chlorine dioxide, in conjunction with chlorine. None of these alternatives produces the byproducts of chlorine disinfection that are of present concern to DEP. DEP is planning to use UV for its unfiltered Catskill/Delaware system. Why not test these alternatives for the Croton system? The Croton reservoirs have extremely low levels of cryptosporidium, lower than most filtered systems in the US, and less

than half the low levels in the Catskill/Delaware reservoirs. One, or a combination of the alternatives might work, and save the City a large part of the cost of the plant.

However, there can be no guarantee of a sustainable, healthy water supply without effective protection of the watershed that comprises the source waters. The residents of the Croton watershed are deeply committed to its protection. They show their commitment by attending public hearings in large numbers and opposing insensitive developments that would destroy the local wetlands, streams and water quality. They have been successful in spite of the lackadaisical support of the watershed regulatory authorities. In the past three years, not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

a single major development in the watershed has won approval.

DEP and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) should support the residents by greatly expanding their programs for land acquisition in the watershed. Under the 1997 Watershed Agreement, DEP was allocated \$10 million for Croton land acquisition as opposed to \$250 million for the Catskill/Delaware. Recently, DEP has appropriated another \$25 million. DEC has appropriated a total of \$17.5 million. These sums are grossly insufficient for any meaningful protection. A sum of at least \$200 million should be assigned to the Croton for land acquisition. If the City was able to find \$240 million to "sweeten the deal" for siting the filtration plant at Mosholu, why not \$200 million for Croton land acquisition from the same funding source?

Finally, DEP should try and renegotiate the Consent Decree through which New York State

and the federal government mandated that the City had to filter the Croton. A Consent Decree is a contract, no more and no less, that the parties may renegotiate. Indeed, the Consent Decree contains a clause that allows the parties to modify it, in light of new and improved technologies. In the course of over 10 years since the City was ordered to filter, new technologies have evolved that could comply with new regulations at far less cost than the filtration plant.

In 1913, nearly a century ago, funds were allocated for a Croton Water Treatment Plant based on sand filtration. As a new technology using chlorine began to look promising, the sand filtration plans were abandoned in favor of chlorination. Although the idea of a Croton filtration plant has acquired considerable momentum, it is not too late for the signers of the Consent Decree to reopen the issue: to study promising, less costly alternatives and effectively protect the Croton watershed. In these times of severe fiscal constraints, the ratepayers deserve no less. ■

A CLOSE LOOK AT OUR WATER'S INFRASTRUCTURE

*By Carolyn Zolas, Chair, Sierra Club -
Atlantic Chapter, Lower Hudson
Watershed Committee*

Mayor Bloomberg and the other involved state, city, and federal agencies have a good deal on their plates when it comes to maintaining the New York City water system. Here's a look at one truly key aspect of the system and just what it needs in order to keep delivering the great water of New York:

Water from the Croton Watershed was first piped into Manhattan 160 years ago, and, amazingly, some of the components from that original system are still in operation.

Yet, many components of this system are well beyond their reasonable lifespan, a fact evidenced by the high annual number of water main breaks in the City.

Other parts of the NYC water delivery system

are also in poor shape. According to Robert F. Kennedy, in *Finger in the Dike, Head in the Sand*, "Dilapidated shaft houses, crumbling aqueducts and antique machinery all contribute to the City's eroding ability to deliver reliable quantities of safe drinking water ... This deplorable state is the result of both institutional neglect and political shortsightedness."

A recent article in the American Water Works Association (AWWA) magazine cites old, corroded pipes as one cause of water contamination, stating that corroded iron pipes can be a principle cause of color problems in water, especially in late summer months.

Infrastructure is so important to water quality that the Massachusetts Water Regional Authority (MWRA) went to court against the EPA and won the right to rehabilitate its water delivery system before building a filtration plant. It emphasized that, regardless of the quality of the water post-



filtration, the water would have to travel through the distribution network, which contained rusted and bacteria-prone iron pipes.

The Draft SEIS for the Croton Filtration Plant distributed by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) on January 8, 2004, reported a study of the New Croton Aqueduct (NCA), which conveys water from Westchester to Jerome Park Reservoir in the Bronx. The brick-lined NCA has been in service for 100 years. It has numerous "weep holes," which allow infiltration of ground water, and old, rusted service shafts are still in use. Portions of the NCA are in standing water, such as Gould's Swamp and under the Saw Mill River. Much of the masonry structure is deteriorating, with cracks and holes allowing contamination into the tunnel. Imagine a brick building, 100 years old, never maintained. Now imagine it under water for that period of time.

Yet, rather than admit that the NCA undoubtedly affects water quality, the DEP blames color and taste problems on the Croton reservoirs themselves, and insists that filtration is the only answer.

As proof of this theory, DEP published a chart of color exceedances in the Croton for 2002. A close look at this chart shows that the worst color spikes were at the "entry point" (Jerome Reservoir); while on the same date, color decreased in the "raw water" (Croton Reservoir.) A logical conclusion from this chart is that the NCA, which carries the water 25 miles from the Croton to Jerome, could have impacted the water!

Considering the deplorable state of the NCA, this is not a far reach.

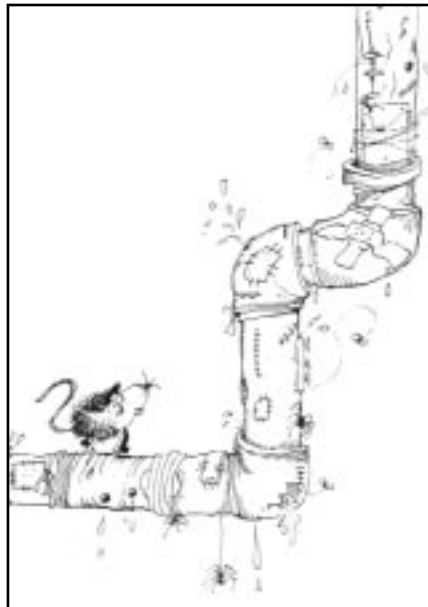
The aqueduct is not the only portion of the Croton system that needs considerable rehabilitation. David Ferguson, a Chelsea resident who drinks Croton water, witnessed the replacement of the water main on his street

several years ago. Since the replacement, his water has been clean and clear, while his neighbor on the next street (who is in the same Croton district) has problems with color, taste and odor in his water.

The DEP announced plans to spend over a billion dollars in the next 10 years on watermain construction. Yet no plan for the replacement of the old Croton watermains has been announced. The City continues to replace old mains on an emergency basis after they have disintegrated, flooding and disrupting entire areas of the City. This emergency water main replacement plan is

expensive and unnecessary, when a planned replacement schedule would reduce the number of broken mains and be more cost-effective.

Repairing only part of the Croton water deliver system (the NCA), while ignoring the other components, could guarantee continuing water problems for Croton users, even after filtration. Even then, repairing the NCA may not work; it is too old to predict if it can be repaired sufficiently for the expected increased water flows. To spend \$1.5 billion on a filtration plant without being sure of its components is foolhardy.



The DEP should prepare a report on the current condition of the entire Croton infrastructure, as an integral part of their filtration plan. The infrastructure should be completely rehabilitated before starting a filtration plant, because the rehab work would undoubtedly improve water quality – water that already meets federal standards.

The City should apply to the EPA immediately to delay filtration until the delivery system is rehabilitated, since it is well established that infrastructure impacts water quality.

Most of all, the DEP should stop its practice of announcing half-truths regarding the Croton and ignoring any fact that doesn't fit neatly into its plan to filter at all costs. ■

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

Visit our web site: www.newyorkwater.org

Please send articles for submission to:
David Ferguson
411 W. 22nd St., #4-F
New York, NY 10011
(212) 989-0519

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





Date: _____

*The Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor, The City of New York
Office of the Mayor
New York, NY 10007*

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

New York City water comes from watersheds that collect and naturally filter water. They are truly an environmental treasure that should be protected for their valuable forests, streams, rivers and wetlands, elements that filter the water and provide us with clean air, recreation, and beauty.

I oppose a chemical treatment/filtration plant for Croton water because:

- Croton water is very high quality. It has met and continues to meet federal and State health standards. This costly plant is not needed.*
- New York City water ratepayers, especially low-income residents, would face disruptive increases in their water rates to build and maintain the plant.*
- The Croton must be protected from pollution at the source to ensure safe, clean and affordable water for future generations. Filtration lessens this incentive.*

Name (print): _____

Name (sign): _____

Address: _____

What the NYC water is really like...

Some of the most monitored water pathogens in the NYC system are compared here. Please note that the Croton numbers are the lowest of the entire water system!

New York City's Water Supply System, Information and Monitoring System:
Totals from 28-July-03 to 20-January-04, at :

	Croton	Catskill	Delaware
Cryptosporidium Oocysts/50L	7	17	17
Giardia Cysts/50L	56	102	97



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