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Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition



NEW YORK CITY WATER BOARD RAISES WATER RATES 3% FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006 JUST THE BEGINNING FOR NYC RATEPAYERS

On May 13, 2005, the New York City Water Board approved a 3.0% hike in water rates for the Fiscal Year (beginning on July 1, 2005). New York City residents, businesses and other city water rate payers will soon begin to pay dearly for the construction of the DEP's planned chemical treatment/filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park, in addition to the other infrastructure repairs the city is faced with making.

This is just the beginning for ratepayers, as the city's water rates are projected to

more than double by 2013, placing a burden that will be unbearable for many of the city's residents and businesses.

According to the Water Board's *Public Information Regarding Water and Wastewater Rates* Information Booklet of April, 2005, "...scheduled investments in the capital improvement program for rehabilitation and construction of wastewater treatment facilities and other projects will cause the ratio of wastewater system costs to increase in the future." This is an understatement.

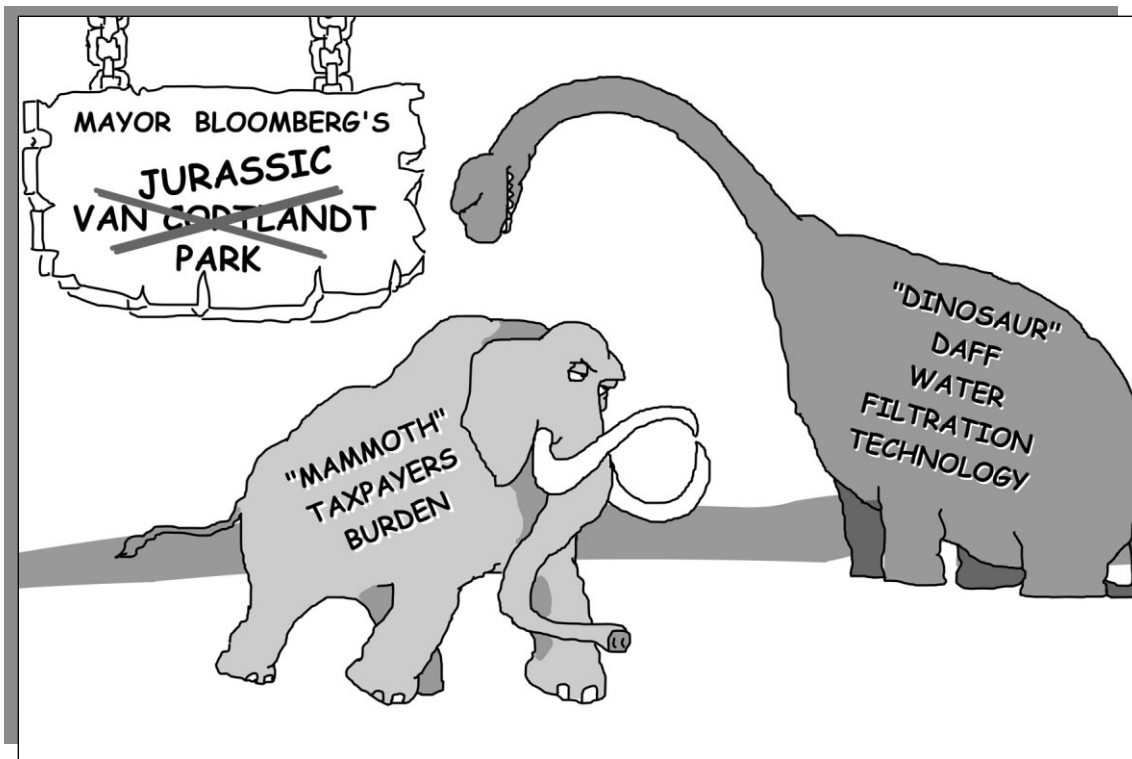
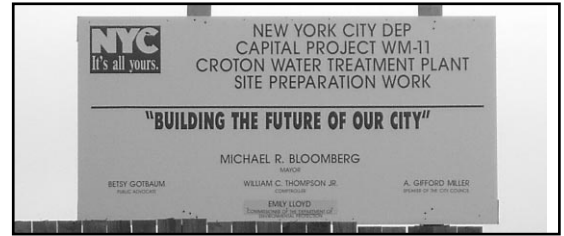


Illustration by Enrique Dura

This issue of *Our Water, Our Future* will examine some of the tremendous financial and health/quality of life impacts that the planned projects will have on New York City communities.



What Kind of Future?

CWCWC's May 2, 2005 Press Release Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition Warns NYC Water Board of Ratepayers Being Overcharged

**On Wednesday, May 4, 2005, 5 PM
At NYC Water Board Hearing
St. John's University, Room 118, 101
Murray Street, Manhattan**

Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, Inc. (CWCWC) charged that NYC is imposing unnecessarily high water rates on ratepayers. Failure to perform due diligence in selecting best water treatment technology for Croton chemical treatment/filtration plant is costing millions more than necessary for ratepayers.

Since 1997 when NYC approved technology for the Croton plant, Dissolved Air Flotation with Filtration/DAFF, rapid advances in membrane filtration have made membrane the technology of choice. 200 membrane plants are operating or under contract in US, compared to 21 DAFF plants.



Protesters Outside DEP's Van Cortland Park Site Headquarters.

Reasons for membrane plant popularity include:

- Less cost. \$900,000 for Croton membrane plant compared to \$1.5 billion for DAFF
- Membrane pore's small size prohibits passage of dangerous pathogens and most viruses into drinking water. Fewer chemicals needed to eliminate them than with DAFF plant.
- Membrane plant's small footprint allows flexibility in siting. Siting plant at either Van Cortlandt Park or Eastview, Westchester County, is unnecessary. The people's Van Cortlandt Park could be saved.

Since 1999 when DAFF was approved, DEP has not given indication that it has seriously considered less costly membrane technology. The unnecessarily high cost of Croton's plant contributes to astronomically increased capital budget and debt service City now faces. According to Independent Office May 2004 Fiscal Brief, by 2008 debt service will be 56% of expenditures. By 2013, 63%. By 2013, water rates will more than double to over \$1,000 annually, an impossible burden for many Bronx families where

Van Cortlandt Park Destruction



Before photo courtesy of www.handsoffourparks.org

natural environment.”

Membrane filtration (MF) is half the cost, one sixth the size, blocks pathogens and viruses without the need for transport and storage of 360,000 lbs. per day of dangerous chemicals used for DAFF. MF could be expected to be 1000 times more effective in removing such pathogens as Cryptosporidium. This is confirmed by the EPA. Pathogen removal is the single most important objective of a water system. There are approximately 20 DAFF plants in operation today compared to 161 MF plants on line or scheduled to begin operation before the end of this year.

The \$1.5 billions for this DAFF plant is a significant proportion of the \$6.5 billions under mandated programs. This is stated to be driving the debt service to an incredible 63% of expenditures, within eight years. In addition, noted economist A.J. Blackburn’s study of the NYC water rates stated that this tax is hyper-regressive and the poor pay eight times more than the wealthy. The hearing booklet states that rates are an average of 1.5% of household income. Using economist Blackburn’s equation, NYC residents who have a fixed or low income face a 12% hike. Also, since debt collection is “enhanced,” they could possibly face a lien on their property and have their home sold at auction. Does it make sense for the City to make more people homeless unnecessarily?

Security around the water supply is reported to have been augmented and NYC DEP is proud of its one-of-a-kind Environmental Police Academy. I certainly applaud efforts to police polluters. However, I understand that the DEP has been busy giving traffic tickets to speeders but nothing is done about the Westchester County Airport planes that constantly pollute the Kensico Reservoir and surrounding water bodies. The Kensico is

the main reservoir for 90% of the City’s water just before it enters the distribution system. The aviation industry is the worst polluting industry internationally. I know that the members of the DEP police would be very proud of a history that proves them to be true guardians of clean and safe water. This should be the main thrust of their activities and training.

A critical look should be taken at budget items before increases are passed, and I thank the Board for the opportunity to speak. However, if you do nothing but rubber stamp these items, I see no need for your existence which also drives up costs.

Decisions made now will determine the future viability of our bountiful supply of excellent drinking water as well as the natural areas that protect the source. Please give due consideration to these comments intended to help the City plan effectively for the future of this irreplaceable water resource.

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Van Cortlandt Park



per capita income of typical Croton user is \$13,801 per year.

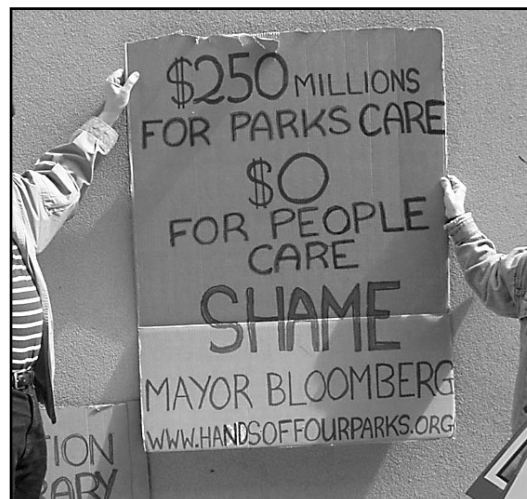
Marian Rose, president of CWCWC, states, "In these times of dire financial straits for NYC, the Mayor and DEP should be particularly careful to cut costs without endangering the safety of the residents. Given a particular situation such as the Croton water treatment plant, they should be considering all alternatives and especially those that are less costly and would have less of a negative environmental impact on nearby communities."

Fay Muir, Clean Water for the Bronx member, protests "I feel it a personal affront that I am helping pay cost of mismanagement and apathy. To prevent pollution, the DEP has many excuses but to destroy a precious natural area the people need for health and build a dinosaur DAFF chemical factory, construction is ahead of schedule."

Housing activist and CWCWC board member David Ferguson observes that "DEP intends to spend \$200 million of water rate payers' money on improvements to parks throughout the Bronx in order to entice other Bronx officials to support siting the plant in Van Cortlandt Park despite steadfast opposition from State Assemblyman Jeff

Failure to perform due diligence in selecting best water treatment technology for Croton chemical treatment/filtration plant is costing millions more than necessary for ratepayers.

Dinowitz who represents the Bronx community who will live with obsolete monster of a DAFF chemical treatment/filtration plant. This use of water rates for non-water related projects is illegal, unnecessary and regressive. Former Commissioner Ward has said that "the water system and its rates have a regressive effect on low income households." This \$200 million for Bronx parks will come out of the water bills paid by those least able to pay in other boroughs where park budgets have been slashed." Ferguson concludes, "If Mayor Bloomberg wants to protect affordable housing, he should oppose this egregious waste of DEP's limited resources."



Shame on the City.



Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that comprises over 50 groups throughout NYC, Westchester and Putnam Counties. It is an alliance of individuals and groups formed to protect and improve the quality of the waters in the Croton Watershed through regional action and to provide alternatives to the DEP's proposed DAFF chemical treatment/ filtration plant for Croton waters. The disincentive such a plant has on effective watershed protection and the adverse impacts of its



Van Cortlandt Park

construction and maintenance on neighboring communities present grave ecological and environmental justice concern.

Comments for the Manhattan Water Board Hearing By Marian Rose, CWCWC President May 4, 2005

There are three items in the budget that are of critical importance for the future of New York City water and the health and financial viability of its residents. Yet, not one of them receives the careful scrutiny it deserves. These are such serious omissions that we urge that the process of determining the budget be reopened.



Marian Rose, PhD

years that will rise to \$1,000 annually. This will create extraordinary hardship and, possibly, social disruption for many families in the Bronx where the per capita income of the typical Croton user in the Bronx is \$13,801 per year. (See FSEIS Exec. Summary, pg 5)

These items are as follows:
The sky-rocketing debt service;
Funding for the Croton Filtration Plant.

The Debt Service

There is only one way to describe it. It is astronomical!

According to the figures in the Independent Budget Office, Fiscal Brief release, May, 2004, pp.5-6):

- By 2008, debt service will be 56% of expenditures.
- By 2013, debt service will jump to 63% of expenditures.

The debt service will contribute to the doubling of water rates over the next 10

Funding for the Croton Filtration Plant

One of DEP's main arguments for choosing the Mosholu site at Van Cortlandt Park (VCP) over Eastview was that it would be less expensive, albeit by a very small amount. Indeed, the FSEIS indicated that the difference would only be \$12 million.

In the FSEIS, the construction and



Van Cortlandt Park

Comments for the Bronx Water Board Hearing

By Fay Muir, Clean Water For The Bronx

May 4, 2005

Clean Water for the Bronx is a grassroots organization concerned with clean and safe water at the source and in its delivery system.



Fay Muir

I am a 28-year resident of the Bronx and live in the Norwood community. I read your information booklet regarding this hearing and quote "NYC water system is economical, flexible and reliable.

Approximately 95% of the total daily water supply is delivered to the consumer by gravity. Only about 5% of the water is regularly pumped to maintain the desired pressure. As a result, operating costs are relatively insensitive to the cost of power." I also read closely the Environmental Impact Statement for the Croton water treatment plant (chemical treatment/filtration) to be sited in Van Cortlandt Park. The energy required to run this plant is 24 megawatts of power, perhaps enough to supply the entire Bronx. This is just one of the problems I have with this foolhardy project.

The cost of this chemical treatment/filtration plant is projected as \$1.5 billions and not only will it destroy the Southeast corner of Van Cortlandt park but it will also pollute the City's already poor-quality air with particulate matter for many years. This comes from the exhaust of 365 trucks per day and dozens of heavy off-road construction equipment. Particulate matter is very fine particles of a mixture of chemicals that cause cancer and suspected of causing heart disease. Asthma, of course, is of grave concern to Bronx residents since we have the highest incidence in the entire nation, especially

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among children and the elderly.

This chemical treatment/filtration is not a mandated program, as stated in the booklet, because the Croton supplies only 10% of the City's water and if that were so, the City would be mandated to build a \$9 billion filtration plant for the Catskill/Delaware portion of the water supply. Instead, \$119 millions are being spent to protect the source waters of the Catskill/Delaware. The Croton system should receive equal treatment, that is, to be protected at the source at a small portion of the \$1.5 billions cost of filtration. Should the City continue on its path to filtration, advanced methods that are cheaper, safer and more effective need to be adopted. I quote from Hazen & Sawyer, the engineering firm that recommended the Dissolved Air Flotation Filtration (DAFF) method the City is currently building. Printed on their website:

"Membrane filtration was selected as a less expensive and more environmentally compatible treatment process. The process was confirmed through pilot testing and a new 1mgd membrane filtration plant was built at the site of an existing chlorinating facility in the Black Rock Forest Preserve.

Having a safe, reliable source of drinking water will enable the Village to prosper and grow. People can also continue to hike through the nature preserve, since the new plant has not negatively impacted the surrounding





\$1.5 billion to dig a hole 80 feet deep, over 8 acres in area, and which will require the removal of over 1 million cubic yards of dirt and rock. The dust raised by the rock blasting and drilling, the destruction of over 200 mature trees and the constant back and forth of trucks and heavy equipment will further pollute the air for a community where asthma rates are already the second highest in the nation.

A membrane filtration plant, wherever it is built, would have a far smaller negative environmental impact on the neighbors, and for good reason. The footprint of a membrane plant would be about 1/3 of the DAFF plant thereby allowing great flexibility in siting. The plant would not have to be sited at either Mosholu or Eastview, and VCP could be saved. According to conservative estimates on relative costs that were carefully worked out by CWCWC and Riverkeeper, based on the most recent figures, the City could save close to \$600 million with a membrane plant. It would be

40% cheaper, If the parks embellishment costs are not included in the \$1.5 billion for the plant, then another \$200 million could be added making a total saving of close to \$800 million.

Membrane filtration, if ultra-filtration is used, presents a superb safety barrier against pathogens and viruses getting into the drinking water.

Since ultra-filtration is such an effective barrier against pathogens and viruses, there would be a big reduction in the need for chemicals. In addition to their everyday danger to the nearby community, chemicals would spread the danger in case of a terrorist attack.

We ask this Board to take time in reevaluating this budget and not pass it in haste...

The City should be looking into membrane technology that has already surpassed DAFF in this country and world-wide. The City should not be needlessly spending money that it does not have and passing it on to the ratepayers. We ask this Board to carefully re-examine this budget and ask DEP to downsize its requests for funds by keeping up-to-date with newer, less costly and more effective technologies. We ask this Board to take time in reevaluating this budget and not pass it in haste at its rapidly forthcoming meeting on May 13.

The ratepayers should not have to bear the burden for the City's lack of due diligence.



Van Cortlandt Park

amenities for the VCP site (i.e., the \$243 million contribution for embellishments in Bronx parks) is listed as \$1,235 billion.

In the Water Board's April 5, 2005 release, the cost of the plant in VCP is listed as \$1,510 billion – a \$275 million increase. No explanation is given for this sudden increase.

Perhaps, the reason for this lack of candor is that the cost of building the plant in VCP is really higher than at Eastview, and the City and DEP knew it from the start. Indeed, the Mayor has been quoted as saying (Norwood News, September 28 – September 10, 2003 “The EIS isn't gonna stop this...” when asked his opinion of the Albany legislature's decision to require an SEIS. To win over the Bronx politicians' support for siting the plant in VCP, the Mayor promised them \$243 million for embellishments for parks all over the Bronx. About \$43 million was for “remediating” the affected area (the Mosholu golf course), but the rest had nothing to do with this area. According to all reports, these embellishments are being financed by water bonds raised by the Municipal Finance Authority. However, such bonds are to be used only for water-related enterprises, not for park embellishments that are in no way related to the work being done at Mosholu.

The Mayor is playing a cruel game. He is



Van Cortlandt Park



Van Cortlandt Park

We have tried to find out the breakdown of the total cost as presented in the FSEIS. We have simply been stonewalled.

tempting politicians all over the Bronx to embellish their parks to the detriment of the neighboring community at Mosholu where the plant is being built. Without the inducement of the \$200 million, the Mayor would likely not have won the support of these politicians and he could not have built his plant in the park. It is a cruel game because, clearly, these parks need refurbishing regardless of whether or not the filtration plant gets built at Mosholu. This should be done, and not held hostage. People need well-kept, safe parks.

CWCWC has tried to get information regarding the cost of the Croton filtration plant. For example, we have tried to find out the breakdown of the total cost as presented in the FSEIS. We have simply been stonewalled.

The City is in such dire financial straits that it has had to cut back on the \$24 billion needed for its water system over the next 10 years, to \$19 billion. It should be looking for every possible means to reduce its indebtedness and the cost of new construction. It is not doing so, at least, not in the case of the Croton filtration plant.

In response to the DSEIS that was issued December 31, 2003, CWCWC has urged DEP to seriously investigate membrane filtration as a possibly preferable means of treating Croton water rather than Dissolved Air Flotation with Filtration (DAFF) that is DEP's proposal. DEP is now spending

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)

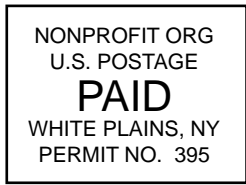
Make checks payable to Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition and mail, along with your membership form, to:

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



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