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NYC Watershed

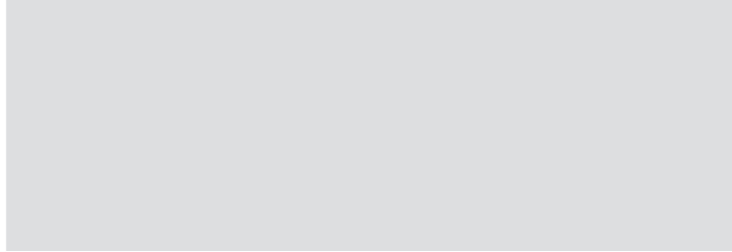
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NYC Watershed



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Protecting the 2,000-square-mile New York City Watershed requires partnership. New York City and upstate communities, residents, local businesses and environmental groups must cooperate to preserve the quality of drinking water supplies and the quality of life in watershed communities.

Basics

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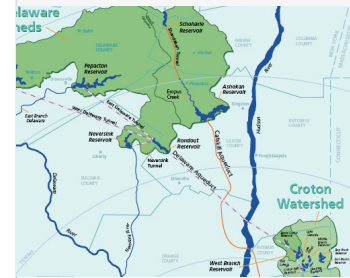
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Watershed Map



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NYC Watershed > Basics

Basics

Most of the drinking water for New York City travels by aqueduct from three up-state reservoir systems, called watersheds. The watersheds, while comprising only 4.2% of New York State's land mass, provide up to 1.5 billion gallons of unfiltered drinking water to over nine million New Yorkers daily. The campaign to protect that drinking water demands vigilance on multiple fronts, and will be active for decades to come. Riverkeeper played a critical role in the first broad-based watershed legislation in 1997, and continues to be one of the primary watchdogs enforcing compliance in the City's three major watershed regions.

Watershed Map

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NYC Water Supply

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Watershed Protection Budget

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- [> 09.02.08](#)
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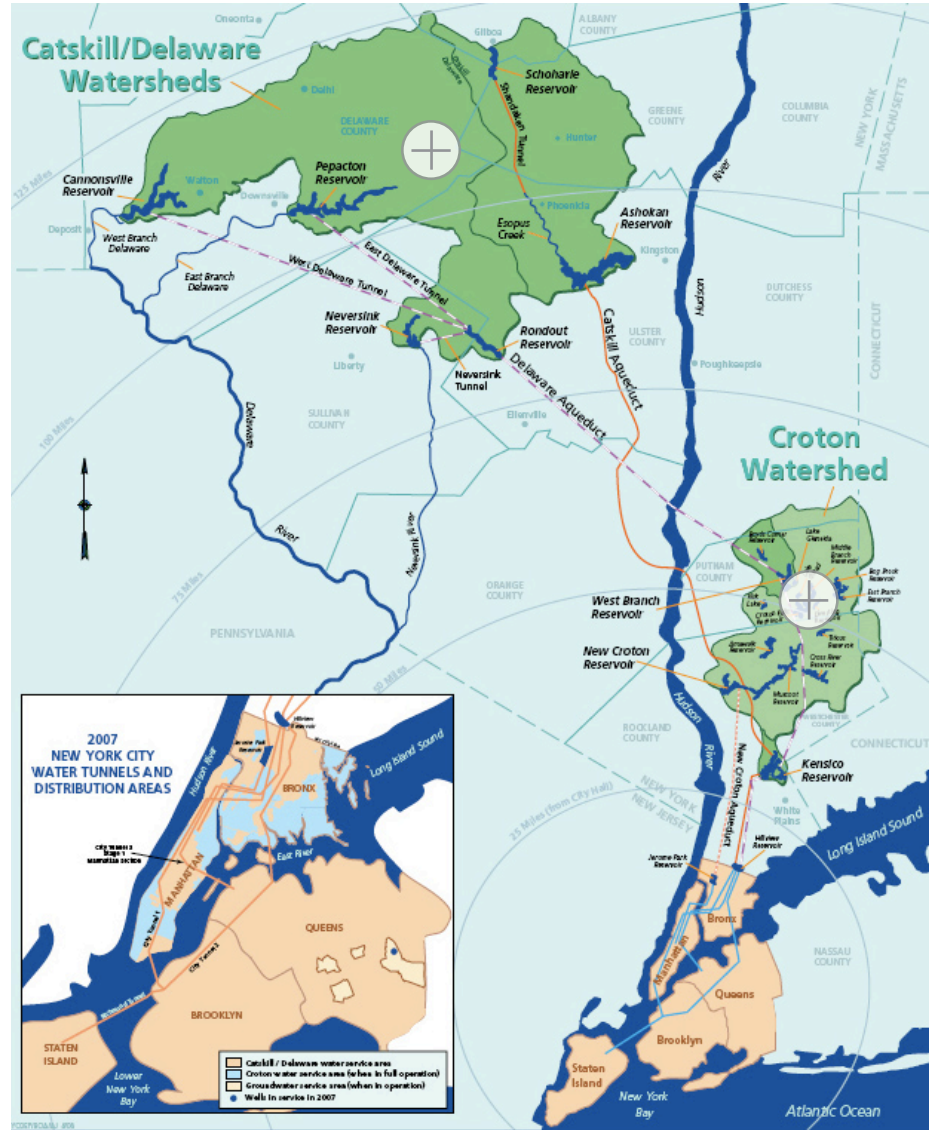
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The New York City Water Supply

10-30% of the city's water comes from the Croton System.

The source of New York City's drinking water is generally not well understood by the people it supplies. Yet it is imperative that people understand where their water comes from so that they are motivated to monitor and protect their cherished resources.

▼ Water Capacity

The NYC Watershed supplies up to 1.5 billion gallons of unfiltered drinking water per day to more than 9 million people – approximately half the population of the State. In addition to serving New York City, there are more than 60 connections and provide an average of 120 million gallons per days to approximately 1 million people in parts of Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster Counties. The system's total storage capacity is 580 billion gallons.

▶ [New York City's Watershed](#)

▶ [Interconnections](#)

▶ [Drought Management](#)

Related Information

- [Learn More About Each Reservoir](#)
- [Current Reservoir Levels \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)
- [DEP's Drought Management Plan and Rules \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)
- [History of Drought and Water Consumption](#)
- [Drought Regulations and Water Use Restrictions](#)

Relevant Riverkeeper Work

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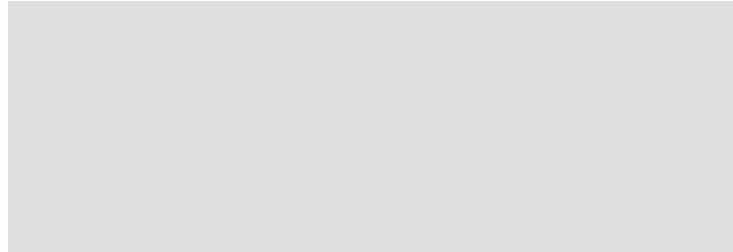
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Water Infrastructure



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Over nine million people living in New York City, Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster Counties enjoy clean, unfiltered drinking water from the Croton, Catskill and Delaware watersheds. The 6,000-mile network of pipes, shafts and subterranean aqueducts carries an average 1.4 billion gallons of pristine water each day from 19 upstate reservoirs. The City water delivery system is a remarkable engineering achievement and the single largest man-made financial asset in New York State. Four decades ago, the City of New York was known as the mecca of civil engineering and water delivery, and the City water supply was regarded as one of American civilization's proudest engineering accomplishments. But the City's reservoir infrastructure is now in a state of disrepair that threatens its ability to continue to supply the City with water.

In 2001, Riverkeeper published "Finger in the Dike, Head in the Sand" exposing this deplorable state of disrepair. Years later, little has changed.

While we recognize that the engineering required to fix the City's crumbling infrastructure is complex, Riverkeeper urges the City to move quickly - from researching to repairing the problems. In this section of our website, we provide updates on the status of the City's ongoing infrastructure projects.

▼ Croton Aqueduct

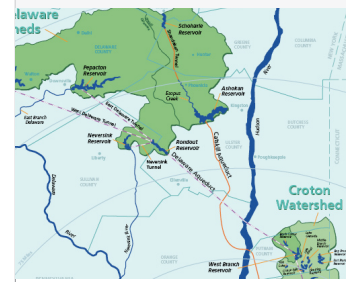
The Old Croton Aqueduct, built between 1837 and 1842, is no longer in commission. The New Croton Aqueduct, built between 1885 and 1890, is three times larger than the aqueduct it replaced. The New Croton Aqueduct stretches 31 miles from the New Croton Reservoir in Westchester County to the Jerome Park Reservoir in the Bronx and the 135th Street Gatehouse in Manhattan. The aqueduct draws on upstate reservoirs to supply 10% of New York City's drinking water supply. Communities in Westchester County also withdraw water from the aqueduct. [Learn More >](#)

▶ Delaware Aqueduct

Publications

FULL REPORT:
 ■ "Finger in the Dike, Head in the Sand"
 (pdf, 1.1MB)
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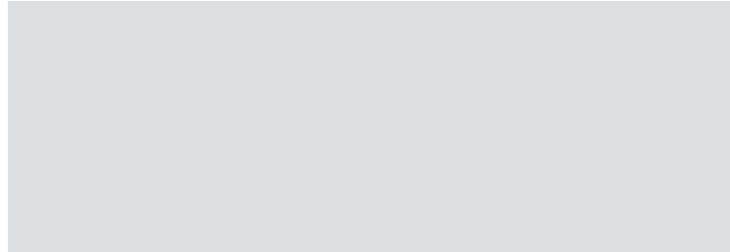
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Croton Aqueduct



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The Old Croton Aqueduct, built between 1837 and 1842, is no longer in commission. The New Croton Aqueduct, built between 1885 and 1890, is three times larger than the aqueduct it replaced. The New Croton Aqueduct stretches 31 miles from the New Croton Reservoir in Westchester County to the Jerome Park Reservoir in the Bronx and the 135th Street Gatehouse in Manhattan. The aqueduct draws on upstate reservoirs to supply 10% of New York City's drinking water supply. Communities in Westchester County also withdraw water from the aqueduct.

Being more than 100 years old, the New Croton Aqueduct's tunnels and shafts are in serious need of rehabilitation. This aging infrastructure must be repaired in order to ensure the system will operate at current capacity into the future. Repairs to the New Croton Aqueduct are particularly important, particularly if the Croton supply is more heavily used when the City moves on to repair leaks in the Catskill and Delaware Aqueduct systems.

Croton Aqueduct Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of the New Croton Aqueduct is being carried out in two phases.

▼ Phase I: Inspection and Evaluation

In accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) completed an Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) and issued a Negative Declaration on June 7, 2004. Inspection and evaluation of sections of the aqueduct and ancillary structures took place between June 2004 and June 2006. During Phase I inspection, water supply from the aqueduct was stopped during winter months and then resumed in the summer, when demand for water is greatest. Phase I of the project has already been completed.

► Phase II: Repairs

Publications

- FULL REPORT:
 - ["Finger in the Dike, Head in the Sand"](#) (pdf, 1.1MB)
 - > [More Publications](#)

Related Information

- [NCA Rehab Neg Dec](#) (Download PDF, 2.3 MB)
- [DEP Press Release: New Croton Aqueduct to be Shut Down for Inspection \(2004\)](#)
- [DEP Press Release: Croton Aqueduct Resumes Distribution to Parts of the Bronx \(2005\)](#)
- [Croton Aqueduct Rehab EAF](#) (PDF, 2.3 MB)

Watershed Map



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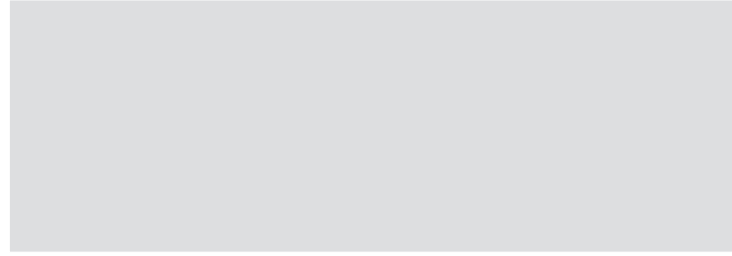
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History



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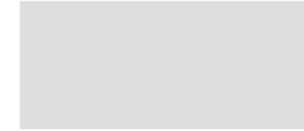
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▼ Timeline

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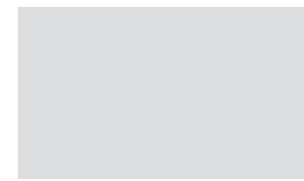
Traveling Exhibit



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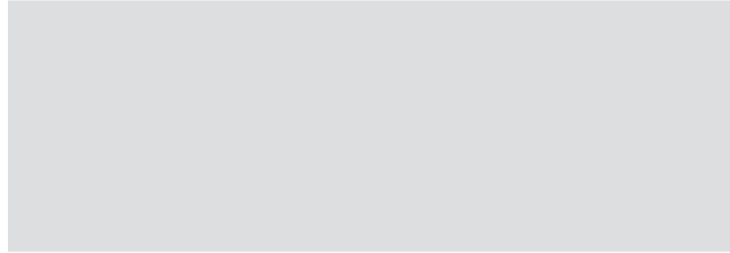
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A Brief History



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Henry Hudson first came upon the Hudson River by accident in 1609. Hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a short passage to India, the Englishman sailed his ship Half Moon 150 miles up the Hudson to Albany before realizing that it was not the route he was seeking. At that time, there were approximately 10,000 natives living on both sides of the river. The tribes were part of the Algonquin Confederacy which included the Delaware, Mohican (aka Mohegan) and Wappinger tribes. The Mohican tribe was friendly and peaceful, but Hudson's crew distrusted them and fighting followed. As Dutch and other European settlers arrived in the Hudson Valley, they struggled with the natives for land. By the end of the century, most of the native tribes had been forced west or were destroyed by war and small pox brought in by the Europeans.

▼ Topic

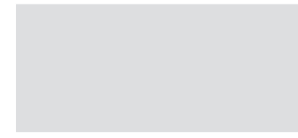
During the 1700s, the colonists realized that the river was essential for the transport of troops and supplies and that if the British gained control of it, they would be able to divide and conquer the American forces. West Point, Fort Montgomery, Fort Clinton and Fort Constitution had all been built in the Bear Mountain region to prevent the British from advancing up the river. In 1778, colonists created the Great Chain, two-foot long iron links which stretched across the river between West Point and Constitution Island to prevent the British from sailing upriver from New York City. The British, however, never came that far up the river so the chain was never put to the test. General Benedict Arnold, in command of West Point, was offered 20,000 pounds sterling by the British if he would help them take control of the Hudson and in 1780, he attempted to surrender the fort to the British. Fortunately for the colonists, the plot was discovered when the American forces captured Major John André, the British officer to whom Arnold had passed plans for West Point. Arnold narrowly escaped to a British war ship. [Learn More >](#)

▶ Topic

▶ Topic

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Traveling Exhibit



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Riverkeeper on YouTube



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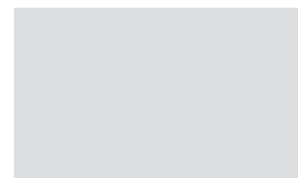
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Success Story



LEGAL CASE:
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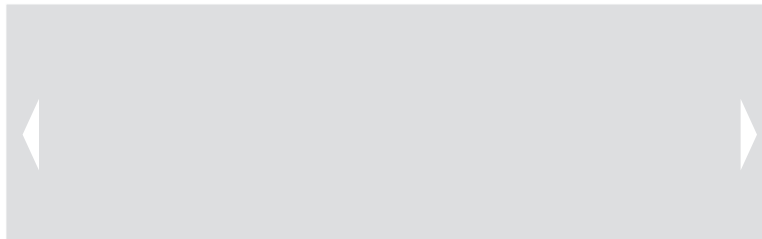
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Timeline

- 1960s**
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s
- 2000s



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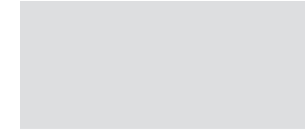
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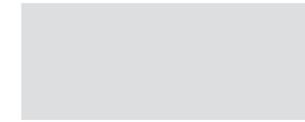
Traveling Exhibit



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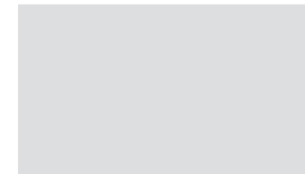
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[Concrete Polluters Case](#)

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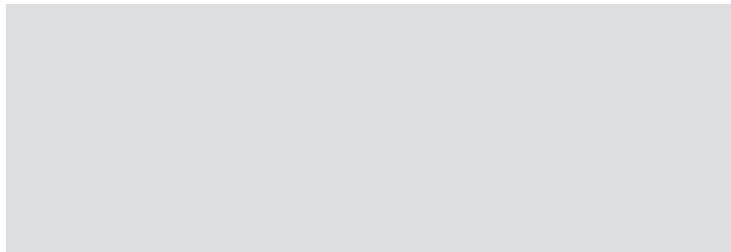
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Protection



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Riverkeeper believes that access to clean, affordable drinking water must be a human right. In the interest of protecting human health and preserving freshwater ecosystems, filtration of public drinking water supplies should be considered as a last resort to be employed only when an unfiltered water supply poses an imminent threat to public health. Sound watershed protection programs not only safeguard human health and aquatic life but also are vastly more economical than filtration.

Watershed Protection Law

As a chief architect of the 1997 New York City Watershed Agreement, Riverkeeper managed to leverage a \$1.4 billion government program designed to protect a vast 2,000 square mile landscape. This plan was a coup, and a bargain for the City, as estimates for a filtration plant ranged to \$8 billion in capital construction costs alone.

Although the 1997 Watershed Agreement is an historic accomplishment with the potential to permanently protect New York's drinking water from decline, the agreement is not self-enforcing. Absent aggressive efforts by New York City and the other signatories to implement and enforce its provisions, the agreement will fail. As a signatory to and author of the agreement, Riverkeeper has a unique public role to ensure that the agreement succeeds and special authority to enforce and oversee its implementation.

▼ 1997 Watershed Agreement

The Watershed is protected by the historic 1997 Watershed Memorandum of Agreement, which was negotiated by New York City, New York State, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, watershed municipalities, and five environmental groups: Riverkeeper, New York Public Interest Research Group, Catskill Center, Trust for Public Land and Open Space Institute. The Watershed Agreement provides a framework by which the City can meet the requirements of the FAD. It is divided into three components: watershed regulations, land acquisition, and partnership programs. To download the full text of the agreement [Visit the Environmental Facilities Corporation >](#)

▶ Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD)

▶ Safe Drinking Water Act

▶ New Watershed Regulations

Watershed Protection Budget

New York City's watershed protection efforts demand full funding to protect this valuable resource for this and all future generations. Compared to the expense of a filtration plant, the City's watershed protection expenditures are a bargain. To date, the City's approximate \$1.5 billion investment in watershed protection has paid off: New York continues to enjoy some of the cleanest and least expensive drinking water in the world.

If New York City fails to demonstrate that it can continue to successfully protect the source of 90% of its water supply, the Catskill/Delaware (Cat/Del) system, then EPA will likely order New York City to build a filtration plant. And the price is steep: the cost of filtration for the Catskill/Delaware water supply is estimated at \$8-12 billion for construction with operating costs around \$350 million a year (\$1 million a day!). The practical consequences of that decision will be that water rates will rise even higher, and badly needed funds will be drained from essential City services such as police, infrastructure, health care, education, and transportation. And, worst of all, if a filtration plant is ever built, the City's watershed protection efforts will most likely fall by the wayside.

As part of the Clean Drinking Water Coalition, Riverkeeper advocates for City spending – for the City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), DEP police force, and watershed protection programs – that is necessary to fully protect source waters throughout the NYC Watershed.

Related Info

- [DEP: FY 2009 Water and Sewer Rates \(May 2008\) \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)
- [IBO Fiscal Brief: City's \\$17 Billion Water & Sewer Plan \(May 2004\) \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)
- [IBO Fiscal Brief: Water and Sewer Rates: Factors Driving the Increases \(May 2008\) \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)
- [IBO: Impact if Cat/Del Filtration on Water and Sewer Rates \(Nov. 2000\) \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)
- [IBO: Ltr re Status of FAD Program Spending \(Mar. 2002\) \(PDF,2.3 MB\)](#)

Relevant Riverkeeper Work

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- [> Drink NYC Tap Water](#)
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