

A Proposal for a  
Use and Preservation Study  
of the Croton River and its Banks

Prepared for the Five Towns and Villages Most Concerned

by the Open Space Institute

Foreword

There is no question about the beauty of the Croton River Gorge or of its unique environmental and ecological significance. While it is only about 3 1/2 miles from the Cornell Dam of the Croton Reservoir (by far the main source of the river's water) to the Hudson River it is doubtful if there is any river in the country that - for its size - offers such diversity as well as quantity of both fresh and salt water life together with a wide variety of birds and small game. Along with outstanding scenic beauty there is great present, as well as future, potential for such recreational activities as hiking, day camping, swimming, fishing and possibly boating (canoes and row boats only) plus wide possibilities for nature and conservation education.

There are two main reasons why this proposal is addressed to a group composed of representatives of the five municipalities whose jurisdictions include land bordering on the Croton River. 1. The environmental and recreational advantages of a sound program for the use and protection of the river and adjoining areas are especially important to all those in the five municipalities who live within a mile or two of the Croton's shores. 2. Many of the objectives outlined in the study proposal can be better achieved by such a "compact" representing all five river towns and incorporated villages i.e., the towns of Cortlandt, Ossining and New Castle; and the incorporated villages of Croton and Ossining.

This fact is most apparent in relation to objectives which involve dealings with governmental units whether federal, state, county or municipal - with special emphasis on dealings with the New York City Department of Water Supply which has jurisdiction over all city owned reservoirs and the rate at which water is released from them to out-flow streams.

The Institute would like to express its gratitude to all those concerned citizens of the various towns and villages who have worked hard for many years to preserve the Croton River. The map of the river and the inventory of landowners along its banks has been most helpful. We would like to give special thanks to Mr. Joel Gingold, Chairman of the Cortlandt Conservation Advisory Council for making the aforesaid map and other data available to us...and to Mr. Robert Boyle for his kindness in taking the writer on a most informative canoe tour of the lower part of the river from the Croton Village side of the former Route 9 bridge to the narrow, rocky course of the river just below the Silver Lake Recreation Area.

The basic purpose of this proposal is to indicate what the Open Space Institute believes should be included in a study designed to assure optimum protection and use of the River - including permanent preservation of certain key areas which are now in private ownership whether by acquisition, easements or special zoning.

With cooperation from all the municipalities concerned there is no doubt that the Croton River and its shores will become recognized as one of the most valuable and exciting natural areas in the entire Metropolitan Region.

The proposed Institute study would be developed in three parts:

#### Part I

General Description of River Area  
Including a Landowner Inventory

This opening section of the proposal would present in text and maps a description of the current state of the river, its general recreational and conservation uses and an up-to-date inventory of all landowners (public and private) along its banks.

## Part II

### Designation of High Priority Land Use Projects and Preservation Areas

This section would be a detailed study of specific areas or projects which the Open Space Institute feels of outstanding importance in the development of an optimum plan for public use and preservation of both sides of the river from the Cornell Dam to the Hudson. Typical high priorities would be:

1. Trails for hiking on either side of the River. In some cases these would be new trails - in others, old trails would be improved.
2. Expansion and improvement of both shores at Silver Lake and Black Rock recreation areas.
3. Development of a new multi-use facility for the Mayo's Landing - Paradise Island area including the nearby small islands. Among the possible uses would be fishing, camping, nature education and boating (canoes and/or rowboats only).
4. Organization of a strong effort to secure conservation easements on as much shoreline as possible from the County Park to the mouth of the river. The once promised Seibert easement could become a valuable "bellwether" for obtaining other easements.
5. The value of the river as a recreation resource would be greatly enhanced by the creation of a public access facility on the Ossining side of the river between Paradise Island and the old Route 9 bridge abutment.

## Part III

## Public Education Campaign

As soon as the proposed study or some modification of it is accepted by the municipal governments which have agreed to join in the over-all project, then the Open Space Institute would develop a strong public education campaign. This campaign would include copy and layout for a brochure to be mailed to all voters in the area PLUS educational releases concerning the project for the local press and radio. In addition, the Institute will be glad to take part in any public hearings, neighborhood or association meetings set up for presentation of the Croton River Preservation Project.

## Part IV

## Possibilities of Federal,

## State and County Cooperation

In terms of an effort to put pressure on the N.Y. City Dept. of Water Supply to maintain a reasonable water flow for the river from the Croton Reservoir we believe considerable cooperation can be obtained from relevant departments and officials in all three of the levels of government listed above.

In terms of grants for development of public recreation areas there seems to be a possibility of substantial help from the Federal Government under the terms announced in President Nixon's request to Congress known as the "Legacy of Parks" proposal. There is also some reason to believe we might get help from N.Y. State's Environmental Conservation Dept.

It is important to note that the value of land owned or acquired by a municipality can be credited as part of the municipality's contribution on a 50-50 grant basis under the terms of "Legacy of Parks" proposal.

Approximate Time and Cost  
for Proposed Open Space Institute  
Croton River Study

The finished study complete with maps and implementation recommendations - including a proposed public relation program - would take approximately three months from the day of an official "go ahead" and would cost approximately \$1200 which would be less than one half the actual time and out-of-pocket costs for the Institute.

The Croton River Compact which Mr. Joel Gingold is trying to develop would bring together all of the municipalities with shorefront jurisdiction along the Croton River. These would include the Village of Croton, the Town of Cortlandt, the Town of Ossining, the Village of Ossining and the Town of New Castle. Such a Compact would be the ideal sponsor for the Institute's Study.

Fee Payment Schedule

The Institute has found in its experience in dealing with more than 30 municipalities on a fee basis that it is very desirable to stipulate a definite payment schedule in order to avoid unnecessary delays and possible misunderstandings.

Payment of the \$1200 fee would be made in three equal installments:

1st Payment would be made when the study is officially authorized by one or more municipal governments.

2nd Payment would be made upon submission of the completed study.

3rd Payment would be made on completion of the public education activities as outlined above.