

# The Journal News

## Riverdance: for polluting will benefit environmental center

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How appropriate that as fines for polluting the Bronx River continue to be levied against public and private entities, one beneficiary will be a non-profit group that has made educating the public about local rivers and their environment its business for more than two decades.

Four municipalities - Greenburgh, Mount Vernon, Scarsdale and White Plains - reached agreements this week to spend more than \$150,000 to upgrade their storm-water systems to exclude sewage, in addition to paying thousands of dollars in penalties. Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's office reached earlier settlements with the Bronx Zoo and New York Botanical Gardens. Yonkers is appealing more than \$1 million in penalties for permitting sewage into storm-water systems that drain into the Bronx River.

Of the \$9 million in fines that Yonkers Raceway agreed to pay earlier this month for discharging raw human sewage into the Bronx River, \$1 million will go to the Beczak Environmental Education Center on Alexander Street on the Hudson River in Yonkers. Beczak is the Lower Hudson Valley's only waterfront environmental center and offers workshops on the ecological, cultural and historic aspects of the Hudson River estuary for the public, with recent expansions to include the Saw Mill and Bronx rivers.

Of the remaining \$8 million raceway fine, \$6 million will go toward reducing storm-water pollution and \$2 million to the state in penalties. The fines are part of a series of settlements in Spitzer's ongoing Bronx River Watershed Initiative, which began in the early 2000s to reduce pollution along the 24-mile river.

Beczak, which has a 300-gallon tank that demonstrates the Hudson's tidal movement - the only tank of its kind open to the public - plans to use half the \$1 million to expand programs and publish a teachers' guide to the Hudson, Saw Mill and Bronx rivers. That's a sweet turnaround for a group that has had trouble more than once in its past just meeting payroll. It's also a salute to its namesake, the late Hudson River enthusiast and environmentalist Joseph Beczak.

The remaining \$500,000 will be put in to an endowment to secure the center's future. "This will ensure Beczak will be here forever," said center Executive Director Kathleen Savolt. Well, for as long as the Hudson flows, it is hoped.