

Ecochannel Design

Program Listings for a Television Channel

Dedicated to the River that Runs Both Ways (The Hudson River)

BULLETINS
REGULARS ON THE RIVER

WATCHING THE RIVER FLOW
INSCAPING THE ESTUARY

HISTORY OF THE HUDSON
OF SCIENCE AND THE RIVER
INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING
THE HUDSON AD HOC

CELEBRATING THE RIVER
LOCAL NEWS
PLANET NEWS
WEATHER NEWS

CELEBRATING RBW
SPONSORING RBW
POLICING RBW

REGULATING RBW

**Call letters for the TV Channel*

Native Peoples and the River that Runs Both Ways

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AND THE HUDSON
AFRICAN HERITAGE AND THE HUDSON
ASIAN HERITAGE AND THE HUDSON
LATIN HERITAGE AND THE HUDSON

THE RIVER AS FISHERY
THE RIVER AS RECREATION
THE RIVER AS HEALER
THE RIVER AS TEACHER

THE RIVER AS HOME
COMMON SENSE ALONG THE HUDSON
CRITICAL COMMON SENSE ALONG THE HUDSON

CONSENSUS ALONG THE RIVER: TERMS
CONSENSUS ALONG THE RIVER: EVIDENCE
CONSENSUS ALONG THE RIVER: ECOLOGY
CONSENSUS ALONG THE RIVER: FIGURES OF REGULATION
CONSENSUS ALONG THE RIVER: POLICY
CONSENSUS ALONG THE RIVER: PRACTICES

The programs listed above are described below under three headings: programming, format and rationale. The letters RBW are used to designate both the design for the ecochannel and the television channel itself. These “call letters” are taken from the native name for the Hudson River, i.e., The River that Runs Both Ways.

Ecochannel Design

What follows is a design for a television channel dedicated to monitoring the ecology of the Hudson River Basin and developing consensus about how best to live there on a long term basis. While the presentation is explicitly for the Hudson, the design could be readily adapted to other river basins and to other natural regions such as islands, coastlines and mountain ranges. Any coherent ecological system or “bioregion” would be appropriate. Basically, the ecochannel design outlines a way people can use television to understand and respect their local ecology.

Bulletins

Programming:

When and where to hike, fish, swim, watch leaves turn, observe bird and animal habitats, observe duck and geese migration, observe estuary events and man-made environments. Notification of equinox, solstice, and other bioregional events.

Format:

Clear instructional text with maps and light graphics. Concise. Run with appropriate frequency.

Rationale:

First-hand familiarity with the Hudson, unmediated by television signals, is critical for maintaining an understanding and respect for the ecology. Smells, winds, sights, cold, sunlight: people need to know their place through the skin as well as through the electronics of television. Getting out on the river is the best antidote to electronic distortions.

Regulars on the River**Programming:**

Spending time with people who regularly relate to the ecosystem directly: Fishermen, boaters, birdwatchers, hikers, wildflower enthusiasts, long term residents.

Format:

Follow the contour of their activity. Over the shoulder participation. Share observations, listen to stories, comments, folklore, oral history.

Rationale:

Gain familiarity from those who are familiar. Turn over the folklore. Recognize and cultivate it.

Watching the River Flow

Programming:

Wonder of the Basin. Ongoing systematic video studies of the bight/estuary/watershed phenomena. Live and taped, fed from satellite scanning of Hudson. Fixed camera monitoring key features of the system checked on regularly.

Format:

Satellite and fixed cameras punctuated by Zen perception. Small teams trained in Zen, Ta'i Chi, and method of orchestrating perception to see what is there without judgement or comment. Single color camera work with live sound and minimal editing. Keyed to phases of the moon.

Rationale:

Approach the basin with as few preconceptions as possible. Take advantage of advanced observational technology. Small trained groups can gain a more reliable perception than individual videomakers.

Inscaping the Estuary

Programming:

Careful observational video studies of the natural patterns identified by scanning the basin. The self-evident natural patterns or "icons" of nature's own "language." The iconography of the ecosystem.

Examples: waterflow patterns, insect and animal behavior patterns, tidal dynamics, cloud formations, flower cycles.

Format:

Formats that amplify the icons themselves. Camera angles, slow motion, time lapse, whatever arrangement of techniques serve to make each specific icon of the ecosystem an event in the mind.

Rationale:

Connection between the reality of ecosystem and our understanding of the ecosystem found in these icons that are “first for us,” in our instinctive perceptual ability to make sense out of the order of the ecosystem.

History of the Hudson**Programming:**

History of the people in the estuary/watershed. Rendering of Paleo-Indian, archaic woodland, colonial, industrial, and bioregional history.

Format:

Follow nature of historic evidence and research. As little “talking-heads” stuff as possible. On site and with artifacts.

Rationale:

Actual history of human cultures that occupied this region would improve our understanding of how best to live here.

Of Science and the River**Programming:**

Scientific inquiry into the ecosystem. Consideration of various species: biology, population distribution, physiological and ecological

requirements. Study of nutrients, organic and inorganic contaminants and energy patterns. Investigation of physical, chemical, and geological processes and their effects on the ecosystem. Effects of pollutants on biology.

Format:

Would follow the method of inquiry proper to science. Reckon with both on site studies, literature searches and laboratory experiments.

Rationale:

Knowledge base from sciences critical for developing stable consensus. Any abduction or guess-at-workings of the ecosystem arrived at through observation of natural patterns must be tested inductively by rigors of science. Accumulation of scientific expertise and data must be brought to bear, especially since so many toxins escape perception unaided by scientific instrumentation. Work toward establishing a scientifically valid, predictive model of the river ecology.

Investigative Reporting

Programming:

Investigative journalism into issues that effect the river. Water quality, toxic waste, possible uranium mining, proposed developments, health/environmental issues.

Format:

Emphasis on visible evidence gathered by video camera. Presentation of such evidence to responsible parties for comment. Care taken to present opposing views fairly. Context of investigation—consequences for basic ecology.

Rationale:

Must monitor actual facts of ongoing situation. Gather evidence to identify and eliminate practices that transgress the ecosystem.

The Hudson Ad Hoc**Programming:**

Special programs that deal with specifics not considered within the range of normal programming.

Format:

As appropriate to the specific.

Rationale:

Don't want to miss anything. Also, this slot could easily be opened to independent production teams.

Local News**Programming:**

News stories that relate to the Hudson Valley.

Format:

News show. Maximum on-site stories.

Rationale:

Let people know what is happening in a bioregional context.

Planet News

Programming:

Planet wide stories that have to do with bioregional goings on.

Example: acid rain legislation in the midwest that effects the Hudson River.

Format:

On-site as much as possible. Set up exchange of news services.

Rationale:

Keep bioregional context in planet-wide context. Learn from other places and peoples.

Weather Reports

Programming:

Relate weather patterns to the ecology of the bioregion.

Format:

Use satellite extensively and link up to planet wide weather patterns.

Rationale:

On line to the ecology in terms of day-to-day.

Celebrating the River

Programming:

Poetry, stories, theatre, interpretation of phenomenological tapes and icons in music and dance. Explore television as an artistic medium related to the ecology.

Format:

Determined by artists.

Rationale:

Aesthetic amplification of estuary ecology. Pure delight. Encourage regenerative and regenerating models of perceiving basin.

Celebrating RBW**Programming:**

Electronic video art, working with electronic signal itself, without river content.

Format:

Determined by artists.

Rationale:

Keep perceptions of the channel itself enlivened.

Sponsoring RBW**Programming:**

Advertisements: businesses, products, services, institutions in keeping with the health of Hudson.

Format:

Spots determined by advertiser. Arrangements would also be made to allow periodic inspection of operations by a video crew using ecological criteria, a crew could/would report their findings over the channel. Fair format would have to be developed.

Rationale:

Encourage prosperity in keeping with the health of the ecosystem.
Source of revenue.

Policing RBW**Programming:**

Self-inspection of physical basis of the station, electronic components, production practices, and so forth in terms of effects on the ecology.

Format:

Determined by team of investigators.

Rationale:

Electronic technology not innocent ecologically, 500,000 pounds of PCBs in river from dumpings by General Electric. Outside critics would certainly arise, but ought to self-police, as best station can.

Regulating RBW**Programming:**

Public discussion of station policies by management.

Format:

As simple as possible to expose the governing process. Include open feedback channel, guest critics, and commentators. Use two-way capacity.

Rationale:

Workings of the station open to the public for inspection and discussion.

Native People and the Water that Moves Both Ways

Programming:

Reconstruction, celebration, inquiry into way of life of native peoples. Both the traditional way of life before colonialization and contemporary native American life.

Format:

Determined by native people.

Rationale:

Native cultural intelligence is a significant, if not critical, component in long term bioregional stability.

Heritage and the Hudson

Programming:

Varied cultural interpretations of ecology of Hudson Basin, appropriate to various immigrant groups: European, African, Asian, Latin American. History of various ethnic groups along the river.

Format:

Determined by heritage group.

Rationale:

Amplify appreciation of river ecology. Identify possible pathologies in imported cultural attitudes.

The River As.....

Programming:

Series of presentations by special interest groups interpreting the ecology from the stance of their special interests: fishermen, energy companies, government agencies, educators, recreation groups, and so forth.

Format:

Determined by the group.

Rationale:

Any self-identified group with legitimate interest in the river has the right to present its views in process of developing consensus.

Common Sense Along the Hudson

Programming:

Ordinary inhabitants talking about living in this place. Reasoning about best way to live here. Talking issues.

Format:

On-site tapes. Go up and down the river and visit regions systematically. Different sub-basins and sub-tiers of the basin.

Rationale:

Common sense of ordinary people can go a long way toward making sense out of how best to live here.

Critical Common Sense Along the Hudson

Programming:

Discussion of data gathered about the ecology by people and groups with special expertise: scientists, engineers, educators, lawyers, etc. All talking from the base of their particular knowledge.

Format:

Determined by each group in accord with data selected.

Rationale:

Much critical information about ongoing health of the watershed is beyond realm of common sense and in the knowledge terrain of specialists.

Consensus Along the River: Terms

Programming:

Open discussion of what natural patterns discovered by scanning, and what interpretations of those patterns, would be admissible in a general discussion of the whole community concerned with the ongoing health of the ecosystem.

Format:

There are specific procedures for arriving at consensus about what videotapes of what natural patterns would be used in a general discussion. These consensus procedures are based on the theoretical

information provided below. The procedures themselves will not be detailed here. The television programming about consensus of terms and other consensus programming described in what follows will have a format that reflects these consensus procedures.

Rationale:

Community needs to come to a consensus about terms in which discussion of general health of the ecology can take place.

Consensus Along the River: Evidence

As above, only concerned with evidence. Draw on legal tradition for rules admitting evidence.

Consensus Along the River: Ecology

Programming:

Arguments from terms and evidence by various parties, organized to arrive at a working syntax of the ecology of the Hudson Basin.

Format:

Procedure for presenting arguments. Arguments heard by a consent committee. Use two-way capacity.

Rationale:

Must base overall behavior on best common understanding of the ecosystem that the community can muster.

Consensus Along the River: Figures Of Regulation

Programming:

Arguments from the syntax of natural ecology: If we do not do:

1. ?
2. ?
3. ?

then we can be assured that the ecosystem of the Hudson will be regenerative and life-supporting on a long term basis. What are the appropriate figures of regulation for the human species here?

Format:

Argumentation before a consent committee. Use two-way capacity.

Rationale:

Must identify common constraints on human species behavior in the ecosystem.

Consensus Along the River: Policy

Programming:

Argumentation about how these basic ecological restraints translate into public policy about transportation, housing codes, food production, energy, extra-regional relations....

Format:

Argumentation before the consent committee.

Rationale:

Need to translate general constraints into specific policies.

Consensus Along the River: Practices

Programming:

Documentation and development of practices that are in accord with the regenerative health of the river ecosystem.

Format:

Follow nature of the practice. Instructional tapes on how to manage a woodlot, develop permaculture, garden, cook native, build bioshelters. Discussion of relative merits of various practices.

Rationale:

Learning how to live in place requires a whole range of skills and habits we have yet to develop and learn. Reinhabitation.