

The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

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PROTECTING LAKES AND RESERVOIRS IN URBANIZING AREAS: This year, the National Conference on State Lake Management Programs will focus on (guess what) urban lakes: Just like our own Lake Merritt. Lake managers from all over the country will convene in Chicago from April 26 to 29 for a forum sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Co-sponsors include the North American Lake Management Society, which will provide a collection of lake and watershed management guides, manuals, pamphlets and other public outreach documents.

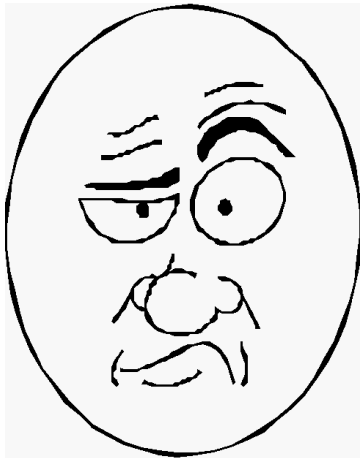
Attendees can choose from workshops and presentations such as:

- *Fundamentals of Urban Runoff Management*
- *West Nile Virus, Canada Geese, and Other Urban Wildlife Problems: Real or Perceived?*
- *Building More Effective Lake Organizations*
- *Use of Re-Development and Retrofitting BMP's in TMDL Implementation Plans: Lake Tahoe*
- *An Urban Approach for Improving Streams to Enhance Water Quality and Habitat*
- *Pollutant Management Considerations For Urban Lakes and Ponds*

and many other topics. Registration and other details can be obtained from Bob Kirschner at bkirschn@chicagobotanic.org or by fax at 847/835-1635. Anyone interested?

PIEDMONT GARDEN CLUB SUPPORTS STORM DRAIN MARKERS: When the Piedmont City Council allocated \$2,000 for Jack Seabolt to purchase and affix markers to the City's 330 storm drain inlets, the Garden Club could not just sit idly by. They support the idea of the colorful markers with the message "No Dumping; Drains to Bay" (see article in our October, 2004 newsletter). So they donated \$2,000, which will cover the costs of this eagle scout project, educate folks and (since the entire City of Piedmont drains into our Lake) reduce urban runoff to Lake Merritt. Thank you Piedmont Garden Club!

WHAT IS LAKE MERRITT'S BIGGEST PROBLEM? Is it trash, low oxygen, or bacterial levels? Nope. Lake Merritt's biggest problem is ignorance. Why? Because too many people don't know the source of trash in our Lake. Nor do most folks understand the oxygen problem, tidal flows and salt water.



If you think about it, this is not surprising. No one taught me about storm drains when I was in school, and as far as we know, such knowledge still has not made it into the standard curriculum.

And so most people don't know that storm drains carry trash from the streets into our Lake. Some think that storm drain flows are treated, like sewage from your house. Some think storm drains are the same as sewers. Some have not ever thought about it at all. And if people don't understand the trash problem, how are they going to solve it?

It is amazing that we live most of our lives several feet above a network of underground storm drains, and yet most people don't know their purpose, or where they go.

Storm drains are for flood control. They go to the nearest body of public water; your water. Along with the water goes anything that will fit into the street grates and down the drain it goes. It is the ignorance of this information that makes it so hard to control urban runoff. And it is ignorance of storm drains that keeps bringing trash into Lake Merritt.

DUCKWEED DRIFTS INTO LAKE: In what has become an annual event, masses of floating plants commonly called duckweed are washed down from ponds upstream in our watershed. For you scientists out there (hopefully we still have a few) the plants are comprised of two genera: *Lemna* and *Azolla*. They are not algae, but tiny plants with roots and leaves, and are favored as food by coots and other ducks.



Most of our duckweed comes from ponds near the cemetery and golf course along Glen Echo creek. These two types of land uses are notorious for the amount of fertilizer applied to keep lawns green, and these nutrients overstimulate the ponds, resulting in massive growths of duckweed. This year the tiny green plants also appeared behind the Trestle Glen barrier, indicating that they may have also come from the three ponds upstream of Indian Gulch creek in Piedmont.

Although harmless looking, this influx brings additional nutrients to a eutrophic lake, thereby contributing to our oxygen problem. When salt water kills the plants, they rot and release nitrogen, which then fertilizes the growth of plankton, algae, widgeon grass and wireweed.

HURRY, I'M LEAVING SOON: Its your last chance to see our migratory wonders before next winter. Soon they will be off to the north to find mates, build nests and lay eggs. Oakland to the Bering Sea, and without an SUV!



DD PROJECTS MAKE PROGRESS: Two workshops were held in late February to feature work being done to implement the Lake Merritt Master Plan using funds from Measure DD. This work was also summarized in a presentation for the City Council Life Enrichment Committee. Although it is impossible to list all the work in this newsletter, key features of the schedule include:

- Children's Fairyland work is expected to be completed in mid 2006.
- Path and street projects at El Embarcadero and to 18th Street are expected to be completed by mid 2006.
- The path from 14th – 19th Street is expected to be completed at the end of 2006.
- Municipal boathouse renovation (1520 Lakeside) is expected to be completed at the end of 2006.
- The 12th Street project is expected to be completed in mid 2008.
- The path from 18th – 12th expected to be completed in mid 2008.
- 7th Street pump station work is expected to be completed in early 2009.
- 10th Street bridge replacement is expected to be completed in early 2009.
- Sailboat house restoration is expected to be completed in mid 2009.
- Miscellaneous park improvements are expected to be completed in mid 2009.
- The path from 19th to Grand Avenue is expected to be completed by 2011.
- Channel path/wetland improvements are expected to be completed in early 2011.
- Snow Park and adjacent areas work is expected to be completed by 2012.
- Water quality project work (storm drain filters, fountains, aeration et cetera) is expected to extend into 2012.
- Bellevue Avenue work is expected to be completed in 2012.

The annual version of the DD Citizens Coalition meetings will be held on Saturday, March 12th, from 10 am to 1 pm. You may contact Kathy Raymond, Executive Director, Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation (465-1850) for more information.



Institute Educational Presentations Now Include Power Point: A new tool has been added in the battle to explain Lake Merritt, stop littering and teach about urban runoff. With member donated funds, we have purchased a used laptop and a projector for use in our educational presentations, which are given to just about anyone who will listen (especially school groups).

This equipment allows us to superimpose text and photos, and display them in a manner that everyone can see. For a free presentation, call us at 510/238-2290.

The Lake Merritt Institute is sponsored and supported by the Oakland Public Works Agency and members like you.