

The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

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JUVENILE WHITE SEA BASS FOUND IN LAKE: Although not quite positively identified, a 1.5 inch fish now in the "Sailing Into Science" aquarium has all the characteristics of a juvenile white sea bass. Given the size of this individual, it was either hatched here in Lake Merritt or was using our urban estuary as a nursery area. These important sport fish cannot be legally kept unless they are at least 28 inches long, and reach a length of 5 feet! They are known to spawn in March and April (when it was found) and the young are often found in bays (like Lake Merritt).



Adding further credence to its presence, a white sea bass about 30 inches long was often seen on the Lake side of the tide gate barriers in the Estuary channel at 7th Street. This fish was observed for many months during 2001 by several people, but has since disappeared. It may have been trapped in the channel, unable to navigate through the bars at the tide gate structure.

Lake Merritt is not commonly recognized as a spawning and nursery area for fish, but then again, hardly anyone is looking for them. One state game warden commented that it would not be worthwhile to consider restoring steelhead because they would all be killed by the pollution! The white sea bass don't know this; but maybe they know something we don't.

NEW FOUNTAIN PROPOSED FOR 18TH STREET GATEWAY: In response to our listing of potential water quality improvement projects in the May Newsletter, a generous donor has offered \$15,000 for an aeration fountain and bubbler system at Lakeshore and 18th. This area, identified as a gateway in the Lake Merritt Master Plan, is an ideal location for a fountain. It is out of the rowing lanes, is a focal point between Lake Merritt and the adjacent commercial/residential district and would benefit from more oxygen to counteract the build up of organic matter in the shallow cove. To be located about 75 feet from the dock (which will eventually be repaired with DD funding) the unit would be lighted at night.



The new spray pattern would be similar

If city approvals are prompt, the Institute could install the fountain and have it running by November 1st. An aeration bubbler system would also be installed to determine if a curtain of bubbles can keep seaweed from drifting onto the intake screen. This device would include a small, onshore air compressor, weighted tubing and a circular diffuser manifold on the bottom.

TALES OF BACTERIA, RAINFALL AND GEESE: County bacteria monitoring was temporarily stopped last year, but has resumed with analysis of samples from four stations every Wednesday. In addition, St. Paul's students are conducting weekly counts of the geese on Thursdays, and the Institute maintains a rain gauge at the Lake. The results are as follows:

DATE	TRESTLE GLEN	LAKE CENTER	GLEN ECHO	SAILBOAT HOUSE	# GEESE	RAIN*
2/26	23	n/a	n/a	50		0.35
3/05	80	2	500	17		0
3/12	110	2	4	50		0
3/19	170	8	240	8		0.21
3/26	8	13	22	50		0.02
4/02	1600	2	500	50		0.22
4/09	14	ND	7	7	81	0
4/16					215	0.04
4/23	170	ND	80	2		0.39
4/30	80	2	30	110	304	0
5/07	1600	17	130	300	244	0.15
5/14					336	0
5/21					432	0

*Bacteria as fecal coliforms; MPN/100 ml. Rainfall in inches during previous 2 days.

As you can see, the Trestle Glen arm of the Lake has by far the highest bacteria counts, which is due to waterfowl at the refuge area. Data also indicate that the Lake center and Sailboat House areas are suitable for body contact (i.e. wind surfing etc.). Also note that goose numbers are increasing (last year we counted 1800 in July) as young of the year hatch and geese from other areas arrive to molt. We will be monitoring to determine if high goose numbers cause an increase in bacteria. Finally, except for rain on May 7th, there was not enough runoff to cause a significant increase in bacterial numbers throughout the Lake.

REPORT ON OAKLAND'S FIRST STORM DRAIN FILTER: About two years ago, the City of Oakland installed its first storm drain filter by outfall #5 at Lake Merritt. There was little fanfare, no publicity and the informational sign commissioned to be placed above it was never completed. The device is a lesson in simplicity. It has:

- No moving parts: Works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Needs cleaning only several times per year
- Takes only 20-30 minutes to clean and
- Keeps everything larger than several millimeters from entering public water.

Is there a more simple, efficient and cheap way to solve the trash problem?

Someone on the City staff has said there needs to be an evaluation of how well it works. But what is to evaluate? Since installation it has worked perfectly. It does not (indeed cannot) back up water and cause a flood. The trash, as well as sand and gravel it keeps out of the Lake, is readily visible. The unit is stainless steel and concrete, that's all.

The Institute has recommended several sites where additional filters can easily be installed at Lake Merritt, including outfalls 1, 2, 4, 27, and 45. Let us hope that they can be approved without many more rounds of studies, paperwork, delays and red tape.

NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE VIA EMAIL: If you would like to receive this newsletter via Email rather than as a paper copy, let us know at lmi@netwiz.net.

DD UPDATE

Lake Merritt – Water Quality – Waterfront – Estuary Channel - Aquatic Center - Studio 1 – Creeks

DD CITIZEN COALITION UP AND RUNNING: The following “Statement of Purpose” was approved at the April meeting:

The Measure DD Committee is an inclusive coalition formed by people who are interested and want to be involved in the implementation of Measure DD. The Committee will maintain an overall view of Measure DD projects and the citywide benefits that can accrue from their completion by:

- 1. Acting as an oversight body that brings a community voice to the planning table;*
- 2. Interacting with city and stakeholders to ensure that projects are planned and completed in a timely fashion;*
- 3. Monitoring financial accountability;*
- 4. Interacting with City and stakeholders to distribute current information to the public; and*
- 5. Working to find additional funding for projects.*

FIRST BOND MONEY MAY BE AVAILABLE IN SEPTEMBER (maybe): Apparently, bonds are sold by special “bond people” who are hired for the job. Assuming city council approval this summer, and if the people can be hired and all the legal preliminaries can be finalized, the first DD bond funds could be available in September. Don’t be surprised if it becomes October, but if it stretches to November, why does it take a year after passage?



COALITION URGES SPEEDY PROGRESS: Since inflation devours money each year, the Coalition is urging the City to move rapidly in getting the DD projects designed and built. The City has responded, in part because of the budget crunch and in part because it makes sense.

Twelve Year, not Twenty Year Process Likely: It now appears certain that the target completion dates for projects will be 2015, not 2022 as originally envisioned. That is good. Some of us hope to be around in 2015, but 2022 is less certain. We still want to be able to ride a bike when the trail from the Lake to the airport is opened! **Two Bond Issues, Not Four:** It looks like the bonds will be sold in two issues several years apart. The City has agreed to the more concentrated work to produce the scopes of work, hire the specialists and manage the contracts. **Three Year Limit:** Driving the timetables will be the legal requirement that 85% of each bond sale must be spent or encumbered by contract within three years of the sale. So DD bond money arriving this fall would have to be used by the fall of 2006. That should be enough time to plan and design the major portions of the projects, such as re-building the flood control station, the 12th Street area renovation, the 10th Street bridge etc. These things take time, especially for things such as public hearings, environmental review etc. Bond money available in 2006 would have to be contracted out by 2009, but some of the construction contracts are likely to last several years.