

# THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

(Lake Trash Removal, Fountains, Education, Lake Expertise)

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## VOLUNTEER LETTER

**MAY TRASH TALK: Rainfall / Trash Levels:** Just a slight shower fell in May (0.11 inches) and the seasonal reduction in trash levels continued with only **1,520 pounds** collected. Previous year totals for May have been 3,080; 3,460; 1,300; 2,680; and 1,980 pounds during 2003 – 1999. In months where trash totals were higher, rainfall was higher (0.71; 1.06; 0; 1.29 and 0.14 inches at our gauge from 2003 to 1999 respectively. Once again, rainfall = trash in the Lake. Trash was removed on **14 of 31 days** by **166 people** who collected **51 bags**. Prize items included: A bible, a barrel, a cell phone and several railroad ties (which we gave to the Parks Department).

**Groups** that cleaned the Lake in May included: St. Paul's School (6<sup>th</sup> grades and kindergarten); Bishop O'Dowd High School; the Lighthouse Charter School; and staff from the Oakland Parks and Recreation Department. Numerous individual volunteers also contributed their time and energy.

**GOOSE NUMBERS:** Because trash levels were so low, students from St. Paul's School conducted watershed education activities and counted geese for several days rather than look for trash. On May 6<sup>th</sup> they found 297 geese; on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 664 geese; and on May 27<sup>th</sup> they counted 1,005 geese. Based on counts in 2002 and 2003, by late June there will most likely be about 2,000 of these big birds here as they flock in from the Bay Area to molt (grow new feathers) at Lake Merritt.

**CONTRACT:** We hope you can still keep volunteering this summer. The Institute's contract with the City of Oakland expired on May 31<sup>st</sup>. However, a renewal proposal (retroactive to include June) is being sent to City Council for consideration by the Public Works Committee on 6/8 and full council on 6/22. If you would like us to continue our work, contact your council representative or come to the meetings at City Hall (12:30 on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7:30 pm on the 22<sup>nd</sup>).

**LITTER AND THE LAW** (in Ireland): In 1997, Ireland passed the Litter Pollution Act. Included are a provision for "on the spot" fines of 125 Euro (about \$150); the prohibition of placing advertising leaflets on car windscreens; a requirement for removal of pet waste from public areas; and prohibition of disposal of household refuse in street litter bins. The law also states that where litter has accumulated for whatever reason and is visible from a public place, the local authority can issue a notice to the owner or occupier requiring the prompt removal of the litter. If a property owner or occupier fails or refuses to do everything that has been requested, the local authority has the power to do whatever is necessary itself and require the owner or occupier to pay all of the costs involved. (From the Environmental Information Service, Dublin, Ireland [info@enfo.ie](mailto:info@enfo.ie) or [www.enfo.ir](http://www.enfo.ir)).

**PRELIMINARY DATA:** Prior to their temporary deployment in June, six water quality monitors were tested in Lake Merritt during May by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The results revealed a mid-layer of water that was lower in oxygen (and even somewhat below 5 parts per million) than the surface and bottom waters. This unusual result was probably caused by oxygen producing widgeon grass at the bottom, and oxygen producing algae and/or plankton at the surface. Apparently, oxygen was not dispersing into the mid-depths. Or perhaps there were lots of zooplankton in that layer, using oxygen for respiration. So come on out to the Lake and see this phenomenon; and while you're here, pick up a little bit of trash.

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