

The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

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DUMP PAINT – GO TO JAIL: It took two years and 8 months, but justice was finally served when two employees of a paint company responsible for dumping 42 gallons of paint in Glen Echo Creek pleaded “no contest” to violating state Fish and Game code 5650. Caught in the act when alert neighbors called the fire department, the police department and lots of other agencies, the perpetrators had little choice; they had been caught. As creek life struggled to survive the ruination of their environment, photos of the incident appeared on the neighborhood web site, people were interviewed and evidence was gathered. Because Alameda County has an environmental crimes unit, Oakland turned the case over to them. Prosecution took a while, but it was worth it. Each were sentence to:



- Three years probation
- 45 days in jail
- \$1,120 in fees and penalties

Since the day that they were caught, the Institute has recorded far fewer incidents of paint in the creek.

Thanks to all the folks that would not let this issue get lost in the system, and especially to Lizz Milota (to whom the Institute gave a \$100 reward)!

Lessons:

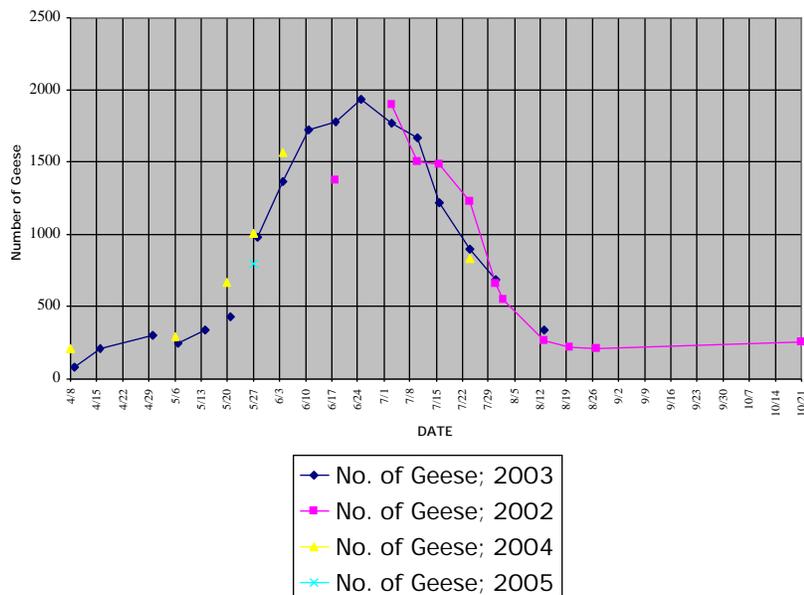
- For would be dumpers; be careful, you may end up in jail.
- For citizens; if you see illegal dumping, call 238-6544 or 911 if it may be a hazardous material.
- Take photographs, record license plate numbers and *be sure to take a water sample.*

Who knows, you could be the winner of our next reward.

LAKE MERRITT FEATURED IN EAST BAY BUSINESS TIMES: Lake Merritt, Lakekeeper Dick Bailey, the Bandstand Fountain and especially the pilot aeration project were prominently featured on page one of the May 20th *East Bay Business Times*. Accompanied by a great graphic showing how an aeration mixing system can solve our oxygen problems, the article blended Lake ambience with economic values and water quality with Irish coffees. Interviewees included professor emeritus Alex Horne, City Environmental Services specialist Leslie Estes and Essex condominium marketing associate Tony Conte. Kudos to reporter Eric Lai.

MOLT BEGINS – GEESE RETURN: By now you may have seen the feathers lying around in Lakeside Park. They are goose feathers and their former owners have come here to molt (shed last years feathers and grow new ones). And come here they do. As shown in the graph below, we have been counting geese around the park for about four years, and the numbers are remarkably consistent.

GEESE USING LAKE MERRITT AND LAKESIDE PARK



*Winter population:
About 250.*

*Summer population:
Almost 2,000.*

For more goose details, refer to our July, 2003 newsletter, available at www.lakemerrittinstitute.org.

CLEAN LAKE SERVICES CONTRACT: On May 17th the Oakland City Council awarded a new, two year, \$150,000 per year contract to the Lake Merritt Institute. Sharing it with us will be the Peralta Services Corporation (a division of the Unity Council) and Geomatrix consultants. Peralta folks will assist in Lake clean-ups and Geomatrix will assist in water quality monitoring. Yet to be completed is the contracting paperwork, which will take several weeks.

In the next two years we hope to obtain grants for interns to create a geographic information system model of the Glen Echo Creek watershed, and obtain a recording creek flow monitor. Knowing the volume of runoff, percent impervious surface in the watershed and details on land use will enable us to focus on measures to improve urban runoff at the source, rather than at the bottom of the pipe.

ENGINEERS FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD STUDY THE WATERSHED: About a year ago, the Institute joined hands with “Engineers For A Sustainable World” at UC Berkeley to begin investigate a possible source of nitrate fertilizer at Lake Merritt. Their abstract is as follows:

“High-quality golf courses and cemetery landscapes require substantial pesticide and fertilizer applications, leading to concerns about their environmental impacts. Anthropogenic sources on nitrogen coming from highly fertilized lawns of the Claremont Country Club (golf course) and the Mountain View Cemetery, both located in the upper urban watersheds of Oakland, California, were hypothesized to be the major contributors of the nitrogen loading. A study

was conducted to locate the origin of nitrogen loading into Lake Merritt from its contributing waterways. Runoff from the Claremont Country Club and the Mountain Cemetery flows into Glen Echo Creek, the adjacent waterway that drains into Lake Merritt. This study includes monitoring nitrate levels above and below these sites in order to evaluate and locate the source of the nutrient load further downstream and in Lake Merritt. The golf course and cemetery management practices did not appear to be the main contributors of nutrient loading into Lake Merritt. High upstream concentrations of nitrate in Glen Echo Creek indicated contamination above these locations. However, monthly sampling also revealed increases in downstream nutrient concentration below these sites. Therefore, fertilizer applications and management practices at the Claremont Country Club and the Meadow Wood Cemetery appear to contribute some N loading, but much of the N loading above these two sites appear to contribute more to long-term stream and lake nutrient enrichment. Further research above the locations is needed to conclusively identify the major nutrient contributor to Lake Merritt.

RETURN OF THE HARVESTER: Its back. That big gray machine that prowls the Lake picking up algae and widgeon grass has returned. Built by Aquarius Systems in Wisconsin and operated by the City of Oakland, the boat is an underwater lawn mower designed to cut and harvest seaweed like that which has clogged the Lake in past years. It can reach down as much as 6 feet, but not all the way to the bottom, which is good to know if you are considering installation of a bottom aeration system.

But No Widgeon Grass (Yet?): A detailed bottom survey of 16 locations in the Lake found absolutely no widgeon grass. That is surprising because by late May, it is normally several inches long. Whether this is due to the normal vagrancies of this species or due to this year's above average rainfall is unknown. If it is not here by mid-June, it will be a short season for the harvester and there will be less natural food for the geese and ducks.

TRASH PICKER LITTERS THE PARK: Where does the trash we pick up originate? Well, some of it comes from this guy who is often seen rummaging through trash cans, and then leaving much of it on the ground (as shown in this photo). Park rangers are familiar with him, having arrested him several times. Although some homeless folks are neat, some are not; and the solutions are not at all easy.



MORE ABOUT TRASH: *Estuary*, a bimonthly newsletter sponsored by Friends of the San Francisco Estuary and the Estuary Project, enlightened us on the bay area wide scope of the trash problem (see, its not just in Lake Merritt). The April issue featured a profile of Lakekeeper Dick Bailey as well as mention of a warning by the Regional Water Quality Control Board that a TMDL for trash might be the next thing to come down the pipe if the problem doesn't get better. In 2002, the Board added urban creeks and the Bay shoreline to its internal watchlist. Hmmm, how would a TMDL deal with our trash tosser pictured above? Storm drain filters anyone?

To contribute to the Lake Merritt Institute, contact us at 510-238-2290 or 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.

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