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STORMWATER – GO GREEN OR GO GRAY?

By Richard Bailey, Executive Director, Lake Merritt
Institute

Dateline Portland, Oregon; May 2009. Over 170 people gathered here for three days recently to talk about stormwater and how to tell folks about it. They came from all over the United States, from Minnesota, Florida, Kansas, California (including the Lake Merritt Institute), Hawaii and points in between. Sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Agriculture, the 5th National Conference for Nonpoint Source and Stormwater Outreach provided a forum for learning about what everyone else is doing and how they are doing it.

The results were illuminating and in many ways provided a model of how to better manage that resource called rain that falls on us from the sky. For example, engineers in Portland, when confronted with an undersized storm drain, analyzed utilization of both gray and green stormwater management methods to solve the problem.

Gray means the typical “dig up the street and install a bigger pipe from top to bottom.” Green means adding sustainable stormwater management systems to reduce runoff volume and improve water quality. For the 2.3 square mile Brooklyn Creek Basin Program, gray costs were 144 million dollars; green costs were 84 million dollars.

What are these green watershed improvements that can save so much money?

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They include vegetated curb extensions and street-side planters (500 of them!) that collect runoff and let it soak into the ground, planting street trees (4,000 of them in this watershed), restoring natural areas, and working with private owners to construct facilities to manage roof and parking lot runoff.

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A ten-year project, the design also includes 81,000 feet of pipe and manholes as necessary. But mainly, project components direct rainfall into the earth where it supports gardens, is filtered and becomes part of the natural groundwater.

Oakland will soon have an example of this technology when the swale now being constructed at 1520 Lakeside Drive is finished. The swale will filter parking lot runoff before it reaches Lake Merritt. For more details on such projects, please visit: epa.gov/nps; epa.gov/owow/nps/urbanmm; epa.gov/owm/onsite; lowimpactdevelopment.org; stormwatercenter.net; nrdc.org/water/pollution/storm/stoinx.ap.s.



This beautiful garden at the Boating Center was created and has been maintained by volunteers of the Oakland Women's Rowing Club for many years. Their volunteer work makes Oakland a better place and inspires us all.

Advertising Space

Advertise in Tidings! Ad space is available each month at a cost of \$75 for a 3.5" x 2.25" ad. Please email Dr. Bailey at Imi@netwiz.net for additional information or if you would like to place an ad.

Contributors Wanted

Are you interested in writing and/or contributing articles to Tidings? If so, please send an e-mail and suggested topic ideas to Dr. Bailey at the Lake Merritt Institute: Imi@netwiz.net

Lake Merritt History Facts

- 1929 High bacteria levels were measured in the Lake and people were advised not to swim due to unsanitary conditions.
- 1930 First Sailing Club activity.
- 1931 First National. Championship for outboard racing ever held west of the Mississippi was run on the Lake. This event was held under the auspices of the Northern California Outboard Association with the sanction of the American Power Boat Association and the National Outboard Association.
- 1935 Large quantities of striped bass came into the Lake during a high tide. Bass were so plentiful they were being taken by pitchforks.
- 1937 Sailing Club formally organized.
- 1938 Industrial waste and municipal sewage were reported grossly polluting the Lake.
- 1939 Massive fish kills were reported. Over 3 tons of fish (mostly striped bass) were hauled out of the Lake. Insufficient oxygen was thought to be the cause.
- 1948 A fishing derby for smelt was inaugurated. It was so popular that it became an annual "Mayor's Smelt Derby."

CANADA GEESE SUMMER AT LAKE MERRITT

By Sarah Arvidson

During the summer months, visitors to Lake Merritt can expect to find a significant increase in number of Canada geese in and around the Lake. Throughout most of the year, Lake Merritt is home to approximately 200 to 400 resident Canada geese. Beginning in June and lasting until September, the number of geese around the Lake can soar to nearly 2,000 birds.

Canada geese seek out locations to molt during the summer months. Molting is the loss and regrowth of feathers during which time the goose also loses the ability to fly. For that reason, they typically look for safety from predators, and Lake Merritt provides the perfect spot. Geese typically flock to Lake Merritt from other areas of the Bay.

The increased goose population can create conflicts between goose and human use of the Lake. Their waste is found in places that are used by human visitors and can often be difficult to manage.

There has been debate within the Oakland community about how to manage the increase of birds during the summer months.

The City has asked for public input and has considered different management strategies for balancing the needs of the visitors to Lake Merritt with the needs of the geese who summer at the Lake. Some strategies include population monitoring to provide a baseline for creating future management strategies, discouraging feeding of the birds, creating goose exclusion areas and waste collection.

Since Lake Merritt is considered a wildlife refuge, many strategies must be considered. The City currently uses NatureSweep, which is a 4-foot-by-4-foot trailer that is towed behind a small lawn tractor.



NatureSweep picks up not only the goose droppings but also other unwanted items like cigarette butts and small waste. For more information about Canada geese at Lake Merritt, see the goose management study at www.oaklandnet.com/measuredd.



Dean Galloway served on the Board of Directors, provided valuable membership services to the Lake Merritt Institute for many years and continues to serve today. The Institute would not be what it is without volunteers such as Dean.

Tidings

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To contribute to the Lake
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us at
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Learn More!

If you're interested in learning more about how Lake Merritt changes through the seasons, take a moment to look at *Lake Merritt through the Seasons* at www.lakemerrittinstitute.org.

Donations Needed

The Lake Merritt Institute is seeking donations, which help us to maintain the quality of the Lake. It's worth a tax write-off!

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.lakemerrittinstitute.org

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