

THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

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

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VOLUNTEER LETTER

JUNE TRASH TALK: June is the best month at Lake Merritt, and this June has been even better. Persistent work by the harvester boat (aided by cool, cloudy weather) has kept the widgeon grass from reaching the surface and has kept algae under control. Also, because these seaweeds apparently use up available nitrogen, plankton growth is diminished and voila, the water is clear.

In addition, rain and runoff have quit so trash levels are low: As of late June we had removed only about 1400 pounds. Groups cleaning the Lake came from: The Lighthouse Charter School, Lincoln Elementary School, St. Paul's School, the Street Academy and the National Charity League. Much of the trash was *feathers* from the more than 1700 molting geese that we counted. Unusual items removed included empty horse food buckets, perhaps from the police stables.

Kudos to the independent volunteers at the Embarcadero. Working alone, sometimes on Sundays, they have kept the columns area of the Lake looking good.



COME ON IN; THE WATER'S FINE: Swimmers recently completed their skill tests in Lake Merritt as part of the application process for summer employment.

Bacterial monitoring (funded by the Alameda County Clean Water Program) has shown that fecal coliform levels at the Sailboat House were only 30, 23, 23 and 130 MPN /100 ml.

These are safe levels for body contact with the water.

The Institute is comparing weekly goose numbers with bacterial levels to determine if there is a correlation.

CITY TO REMOVE WATER QUALITY MONITORS? Due to lack of funds to continue maintenance of the water quality monitors, the Public Works Agency is currently planning to put them in storage. Installed last year, the monitors have been recording oxygen, salinity and temperature every 15 minutes, providing valuable information on the health of Lake Merritt. They are part of Oakland's planning efforts directed at getting the Lake removed from EPA's list of impaired bodies of water. Lake Merritt is impaired due to low oxygen and trash.

Institute Proposes to Take Over Maintenance at No Additional Cost: Since our contract with the City includes "Provide technical assistance on water quality" the Institute has offered to take over weekly maintenance of the monitors. We are not asking for any additional funds to continue the monitoring, which takes about a half hour per week. The Institute will also seek to find UC Berkeley students interested in analyzing the water quality data, and will continue its own analysis of the data. Hopefully the City will see the wisdom in continuing the monitoring, which could show how much planned improvements (increased tidal flow and storm drain filters) enhance the Lake.