

The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

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RED TIDES HIT LAKE MERRITT: Warm weather in early July brought patches of red tide to our tidal lagoon, as well as other blooms of microscopic phytoplankton (tiny plants that drift). Ephemeral, sporadic and a bit mysterious, these discolorations in the water are sometimes mistaken for paint. You are most likely to see them near shore, in the shallow, and therefore warmer water. At Lake Merritt and elsewhere they occur mainly in the summer, typically late summer. The water appears reddish-brown and murky, but only in patches. Come back the next day or even a few hours later and it may be gone.

Red tides are caused by the rapid growth of microscopic organisms and some are known to be poisonous. Shellfish which filter out large numbers of them can become unfit to eat and some sea creatures also fall victim to the poison. But only some red tides are poisonous and there are no known cases of problems associated with them in Lake Merritt. The early July bloom may have been triggered by keeping the tidal gates closed to maintain water levels for the rowing event. Deprived of normal tidal flushing, water temperatures can rise and circulation can become static. Regardless, we are likely to see more of them as the summer season progresses, a reminder that our lagoon is part of the marine system, and not a true Lake.

AN ODE TO GLEN ECHO CREEK (based on "Sailing Up my Dirty Stream" by Pete Seeger).

*She starts high in the foothills to the north,
Crystal clear and cool it trickles forth,
With just a few floating wrappers of chewing gum,
Dropped by some children to warn of things to come.*

*At the Claremont Club a dozen honest hands,
Tend the acres of green, grassy plants,
Washing off the fertilizer every day,
Why should we do it any other way?*

*At Rockridge duckweed covers the pond,
As if created by a giant magic wand,
But after even the smallest little rain,
On Lake Merritt it becomes a stain.*

*Further down the storm drains take their toll,
As into the creek their contents now do flow,
And each litterbug says "Who me?
Do you think that storm drain filters are free?"*

*Out in the ocean they say the water's clear,
But I live right at Lake Merritt here,
Half way between the hills and the sea,
Tacking to and for this thought returns to me.*

*Walking along my dirty stream,
Still I love it and I'll keep the dream,
That one day, though maybe not this year
My Glen Echo may once again run clear.*

Editor's note: Glen Echo creek is part of the Lake Merritt watershed, and contributes significant quantities of litter, duckweed and nutrients to our sailing lagoon.

AERATION UPDATE: The compressor keeps compressing, the diffusers keep bubbling and the water keeps mixing. Oakland's pilot aeration project – one small 120 volt compressor and several different diffuser heads – continues to perk along. The study is designed to see if encrusting marine growth will clog the diffuser. So far there has been growth on the heads, but not enough to stop the air flow. In a few weeks we will open the air valve to diffusers that have been turned off since the start of the project and see if they still work.

According to Dr.'s Horne and O'Hara, a system of about 140 such diffusers would be adequate to mix the often stratified salt and fresh water layers of our shallow lagoon, thus bringing oxygen down to the bottom and smiles to state water quality regulators. If approved by the City's Water Quality Committee, the project would be funded by Measure DD, which allocated several million dollars for "storm drain filters, trash barriers, wildlife waste clean-up facilities and aeration fountains."



Summer sailing season in full swing:

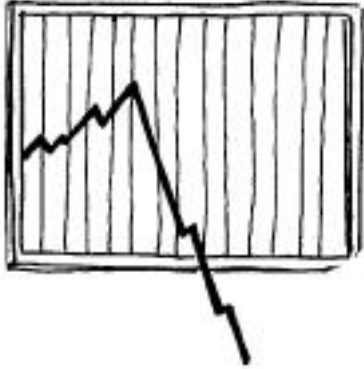
Lake Merritt - What a great place for children to learn how to sail.

Classes are available for adults too!

Call 238-2196 for details.

FOUNTAIN UPDATE: Bravo. After 15 months without electrical power, 204 volts have finally been restored to the fountain control box at El Embarcadero. This means that the Institute can return our "Tornado", the 3 horsepower, aeration mixing fountain to this location. Its where the big columns

are - by the Lakeview Library, and a very popular spot for wedding photographs, saxophone players, waterfowl and urban runoff. As it has for several years, the fountain will once again please members of these first three categories, and ameliorate the bad effects of the last one. In other words, people and birds like it and it improves water quality in an area that needs it the most. We hope to have the unit out of storage, up and running by the end of the month.



However, to keep the fountains running, additional funds are needed. *There will be less money for fountain maintenance in our new contract, which began in June.* Such maintenance includes keeping the screens clean, replacing zinc anodes, periodic tear down and internal cleaning, replacement of parts and troubleshooting electrical problems.

Your Help Is Needed: Once again we must ask our “Friends of the Fountains” to contribute. Please give what you can for fountain maintenance. Tax deductible donations may be sent to the Institute at 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.

Andrew (K.C) Wong’s Offer: When a few city employees complained that operation of Lake Merritt’s fountains cost Oakland too much in electricity (estimated to be several thousand dollars per year per fountain) Mr. And Mrs. Andrew Wong stepped up to the plate. To keep the fountains running, he has generously offered to pay 50% of the cost of electricity, up to \$10,000 per year, for five years. Un-used funds from one year may be rolled over to the next, and the agreement could be renewed for a second five years if agreed upon by both parties.

His offer is conditional upon the following:

- Installation of the new Measure DD fountain at Grand & Harrison Streets (approved by Council in July, 2004). This will replace the original fountain donated to the City by the Institute on October 19, 1994.
- Repair of the electrical cable at El Embarcadero (this has already been done – see above).
- Agreement to keep the bronze plaque honoring the fountains in Lakeside Park. This is the only known plaque in Oakland that is written in both English and Chinese.
- Establishment of a trust account to receive payments.
- Agreeing on a method to determine actual or calculated electricity costs to run the fountains.
- A Council resolution accepting the donation and establishing that it is City policy to support the fountains in Lake Merritt.

Will the City accept Mr. Wong’s offer? The Institute will be in contact with Audree Jones-Taylor, Director of the Office of Parks and Recreation, to implement the conditions and Mr. Wong’s offer.

It is the involvement of dedicated citizens like Mr. Wong who love Lake Merritt that will keep the fountains running. Please join him in helping to fund these aesthetic and environmental enhancements to our Lake.

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.