

The Lake Merritt Institute

LAKE TRASH REMOVAL, FOUNTAINS, EDUCATION, LAKE MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE

568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610; 510/238-2290; lmi@netwiz.net; www.lakemerrittinstitute.org

VOLUME X

"TIDINGS" - SEPTEMBER, 2005

ISSUE IX

CONFERENCES FOCUS ON URBAN RUNOFF: Two gatherings of people this fall will shed light on what is now the biggest source of water pollution in areas where most people live. "Plastic Debris – Rivers to the Sea" will focus on the land-based sources of marine debris in Redondo Beach, CA from September 7 – 9. Sponsored by the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, the California Coastal Commission, the Heinz Center, the California Regional Water Boards and the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration, the event will include presentations on the sources, impacts and solutions for plastic debris.

Those of you who have cleaned Lake Merritt know how much plastic makes its way into the marine environment. Compelling topics to be discussed include: "Zero trash TMDLs – how can municipalities prepare or pre-empt?" There will also be a dialogue on future monitoring and research needs.

Non-point Source and Stormwater Pollution Education Programs, the 4th Annual Conference, will convene in Chicago from October 17th to 20th. Workshops will include: Fostering Sustainable Behavior: Beyond Brochures; Conducting Effective Stormwater/NPS Outreach Campaigns; Engaging Communities Through Social Mapping; and A "How To" for New Stormwater and NPS Education Managers. The People's Choice Awards will spotlight exceptional video public service announcements, educational outreach segments, slogans and logos for peer review and viewing pleasure. The Institute intends to submit a few entries.

Papers will be presented on the "Adopt-A-Waterway" program, The Neighborhood Water Steward Program, U.S. EPA's NPS Outreach Toolbox: Your One-Stop Shop, and Using Social Marketing to Influence Public Behavior.



Pilot aeration project a success. After several months at the bottom of the lake, the aerators were still bubbling away. Even the diffusers left off for several months worked fine when turned on. A decision will now be made regarding a lake-wide system to solve the oxygen problem.

David holds up a preferred air diffuser head attached to two support pipes. The round surface is flexible, thus discouraging attachment of encrusting organisms which have colonized the pipes. Sponges, hydroids, mussels and clams were found on the air hoses and frames.

Holy Names University Students Clean Lake Merritt; learn about Oakland.

Members of the incoming class volunteered their time last month to remove trash from Lake Merritt. The Holy Names campus was formerly located on the shores of Lake Merritt, where the Kaiser building now stands.



NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION DAMAGES CHESAPEAKE BAY: You might want to pick up the latest copy of *National Geographic* magazine and peruse articles on the Chesapeake Bay, a resource much larger, but in many ways similar to Lake Merritt. Like our lagoon, the Bay is an estuary, a mix of salt and fresh water. It supports multitudes of waterfowl & extensive aquatic life, a thriving recreational industry and vistas of scenic beauty. Also like our lagoon, the Bay has a dead zone at the bottom where oxygen levels are often too low to support life. About 20% of the Chesapeake Bay is a deepwater dead zone. Its problems are similar to ours; too much pollution from too much fertilizer and too many toxins washed in from street pollution.

To quote the article “The bay today has become the ecological equivalent of a morbidly obese person, force-fed nitrogen and phosphorus.” Another scary quote: “Toxic runoff is so rife in Washington, D.C.’s Anacostia River that nearly half of its brown bullhead catfish have liver cancer.”

As here and elsewhere, concerned citizens are fighting to save the bay, but the extent of the problem may overwhelm them. In Maryland, storm water thirsty median strips filter pollutants from roadways before they get to public waters, but only in small areas. On experimental farms, nutrient pollution was cut by 25%, but it is estimated that a 40% reduction will be required to improve water quality to that of the 1950’s. A law was passed to allocate a billion dollars to improve sewage treatment, but sewage contributes only about 60 million of the estimated 275 million pounds of nitrogen entering the bay every year. “A lack of both political will and enforcement has slowed progress in tackling the other big pollution sources – agriculture, cars, power plants and urban storm water.” Perhaps if storm drain signs said *No Dumping - \$200 fine* instead of *No Dumping, Drains to Bay*, the message would be taken more seriously.

What’s the answer? Scott Phillips, Chesapeake Bay coordinator for the U.S. Geological Survey says “It’s going from science to social science. You’re going to have to change people’s values to improve this ecosystem.”

MOVING UP INTO THE WATERSHED: The Institute plans to expand its focus into the Glen Echo Creek watershed, working to develop a “model watershed” by creating a Geographic Information System of the land use, measuring creek flows, conducting more education about storm drains and perhaps even estimating the costs of reducing impervious surfaces and runoff.

This edition of “Tidings” was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute. To contribute to the Lake Merritt Institute, contact us at 510-238-2290 or 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.