

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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ISSUE X

WITHER THE COUNTY – PART II

In the June issue of “Tidings” we reported on the status of trash capture nets that are proposed for installation at the mouth of Glen Echo Creek, near Grand & Harrison streets. At this location, such nets would remove all trash as small as a cigarette butt from about 2,000 acres of our watershed, resulting in a distinctly cleaner Lake Merritt. The proposal was submitted to the City of Oakland in June, 2010 and we are happy to report that the Alameda County Flood Control District has now agreed that, hey, this is a really good idea! The District is working with the net company to run a hydrograph model using local data to be sure that the nets do not back up water enough to cause a problem upstream, something the company claims is highly unlikely because high water trips an overflow device.

This project would be a major milestone in meeting the Regional Water Quality Control Board’s requirement to remove 40% of the trash in urban runoff by 2014. The trash will have to be gone, and this appears to be the best way to do it for the Glen Echo creek watershed. Why? Because there are no utilities (underground pipes, wires etc.) at this site; only one installation would be needed (not umpteen filters upstream) and it is a proven, accepted technology (vs. convincing people to stop littering or street cleaning – which cannot be done 24/7).



This trash at the mouth of Glen Echo Creek could be captured before it gets to Lake Merritt. Nets were proposed over a year ago, but the County and City are arguing about who will maintain them.

But we are unhappy to report the apparent impasse between the County and the City over who will change the nets when they are full of trash. This involves nothing more than backing up a

truck with a small boom, lifting the nets out, installing new ones and taking the full nets to the landfill, which is not rocket science. Now, considering that city residents are taxed as part of their flood control district, and that this money goes to the County, and the County owns the channel in which the nets would be installed, you would think it would be the County that should be responsible. But here we are with both sides pointing at each other. Meanwhile, the trash continues to flow in from Glen Echo Creek. Come on guys, get it together.

CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING: www.estuaries.gov = lesson plans for graphing water quality data on salinity, depth and tidal flows, AND www.creekwatch.org = free iphone app to download photos of your favorite creek or Lake.

WATERSHED MARKERS

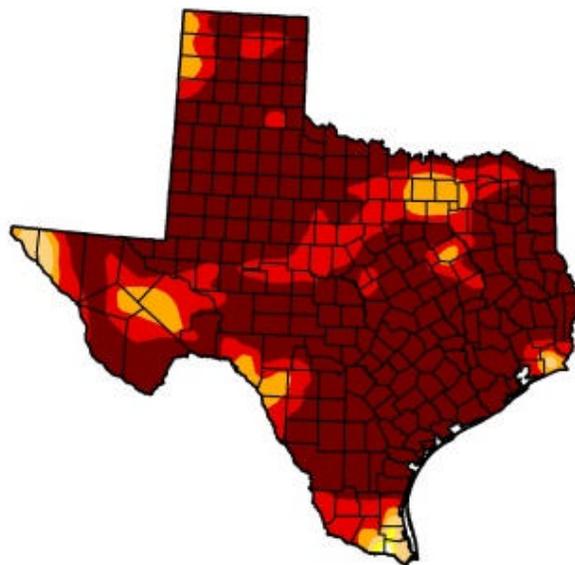
A dragonfly. A fish. A frog. On the sidewalk in front of a coffee shop? Yes: Permanently imbedded in bronze to remind you that a creek once ran here, and still does beneath your feet. Part of Oakland's Public Art Project, such markers have been placed at five locations, including Lakeshore Avenue. They look like stepping stones, the kind you would have used to cross the flowing water a few hundred years ago. Somewhere below them, entombed on concrete, the water still flows. Hats off to the creek lovers that installed these markers, which remind future generations to take better care of what is left.

CLIMATE CORNER

How hot and dry is it in Texas? Almost the entire state is in the "exceptional" drought category (darkest red shown below) with only small areas classified as "extreme" or "severe" (red or orange). Austin recently experienced 112 degrees, hotter than it has ever been since thermometers started recording there 150 years ago. Helicopters are hosing dust off of power lines. Crop and livestock losses have been \$5.2 billion and are still climbing. Horses are being given away or sold for \$20. Inflows to major water supply reservoirs were less than 10% of average. The last 11 months have been the driest on record and the whole state is drying up.

Portions of Oklahoma, Louisiana and New Mexico are also being impacted and the current La Nina event is expected to extend the drought into 2012. Because weather "experts" tell us that single events cannot be blamed on climate change, no one is calling it that. But as the Mexican desert moves inexorably north, climate model predictions are being validated.

More than 11,000 wildfires have burned more than 1.4 million acres. It isn't the first fire to threaten a home. In 2008, an arson fire forced the governor out of his mansion. But in 2011, he doesn't seem to have gotten the message.





THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Hundreds of hours a month are spent removing trash from Lake Merritt, and most of it is done by volunteers. During the school year, the Institute sponsors clean up events five days a week. And on Creek to Bay Day (aka Coastal Clean Up Day) and on Earth Day, more than 100 people often show up to help out.

Volunteers clean a storm drain barrier

In addition to the 1,210 volunteers participating in Creek to Bay Day throughout the City this year, hundreds more gathered along the shoreline at cleanup sites managed by the East Bay Regional Parks District and the Port of Oakland. In total, 1,708 volunteers came out to City of Oakland, East Bay Regional Parks District and Port of Oakland sites to improve the condition of Oakland's waterways and their surroundings. Over 9,000 pounds of trash were collected from Oakland's creeks, the estuary and Lake Merritt; 213 pounds of recyclables picked up; and 340 cubic yards of green waste removed to make way for native plants to flourish. Check out the neat photos of this year's event at the city website:

[www. http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/PWA/o/FE/s/ID/OAK024743](http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/PWA/o/FE/s/ID/OAK024743)

Meanwhile, back at the Lake, regular events are held every Tuesday from 10:30 am to about 1 pm and every Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm. Just come to the second floor of the Boating Center in Lakeside Park (568 Bellevue Avenue). For those wishing to work independently, our four "U-Clean-It" stations are strategically located around the Lake and can be opened by the lock combination of 1-3-1-4.

BIRD COLUMN

Two Firsts for Lake Merritt: Firsts for the lake as far as any of us on the September 4th-Wednesday bird walk were concerned, anyway. Fossicking around outside the globe cage was a female Band-tailed Pigeon (smooth gray with a yellow beak and a white rim on her tail - looking more or less like a super-sized dove rather than your regular park pigeon) - and in among the birds in the fresh-water paddock was a young Heerman's Gull (also more or less smooth gray, a bit more streamlined than other gulls, and with a rusty red beak. (Normally, Band-tailed Pigeons hang out in the wooded hills, and Heerman's Gulls stick to the coastline.) That got the first 15 minutes off to a good start - even before a flotilla of White Pelicans swam around the islands.

The sun was blazing off the lake like a flame-thrower, so we headed into the garden, which was buzzing with Anna's Hummingbirds (the year-round green residents) and a couple of different kinds of goldfinches. On the way in, we got a beautiful view of a Bewick's Wren (also buzzing; large for a wren with a long, curved beak and a long white line over the eye). More Bewick's Wrens in the garden, plus some of the little crested gray Titmice and California Towhees (all dust-brown with a bit of orange and a lot of attitude). Then we looped around the back of Children's Fairyland - disappointingly unbirdy except for a tree full of Bushtits (think flying

mice) and elusive other winged creatures - and saw a female Hooded Oriole (yellow and olive and streamlined) around by the front. We saw lots of crows and robins - usual for the lake - and a couple of Scrub Jays (blue and buff and gray), which ought to be common there but rarely put in an appearance.

As we returned to the lake, a male Downy Woodpecker (with the white patch on his back) flew to the nearest island. The Double-crested Cormorants were still hanging around in fair numbers, but only a few were still paying attention to their nests in the trees. The first of the long-distance migrants had showed up: three Ruddy Ducks (the ones with tails sticking up like handles) had joined the black American Coots and the buffy Pied-billed Grebes, and a couple of Eared Grebes - still in remnants of their gold and copper breeding plumage - were up toward the boathouse.

A Great Blue Heron flew in while we watched, and the islands were encouragingly crowded with Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets. Coupled with this year's bumper crop of baby Black-Crowned Night-Herons, that makes it look like the renovation of the islands is really working. Good news indeed, on a good day at Lake Merritt, where every day is a good day....

18TH STREET AERATION FOUNTAIN

The circuit breaker keeps tripping and it appears that the seal on this unit has failed, so as this is being written, the motor is on a truck bound for it's factory home in Illinois. Since our spare motor is also out of commission and being evaluated, there will be no splashing waters at 18th and Lakeshore for several weeks. However, the other three fountains are merrily spritzing away, adding oxygen to the immediate area around them and adding to the Lake's appeal. The Bandstand unit will soon be removed to replace worn parts and evaluate problems with the lights.

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



Volunteers are now required by the City to wear vests similar to this one while working on city projects.



Bye bye 12th St. Dam: Hello expanded park. Part of Measure DD's magic.

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