

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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

VOLUME XIX

"TIDINGS" – NOVEMBER, 2014

ISSUE XI

"Tidings" is an editorial newsletter. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the City of Oakland.

ESTIMATED OVERALL TRASH REDUCTION: In May of 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency formally declared that the designated uses of Lake Merritt are impaired by high levels of trash and low levels of oxygen. Since then, city staff, government agencies, the Lake Merritt Institute, volunteers etc. have been working to reduce the amount of trash in the Lake, most of which is carried in via storm drains from the 7 square mile watershed. Progress was enhanced when the San Francisco Bay Water Quality Control Board finally required Oakland, as part of the city's Municipal Regional Permit, to reduce trash entering the storm drains and waterways by 40% by 2014. Other requirements of the permit include a 70% reduction by 2017 and a 100% reduction by 2022.

Boosted by the historic three year drought and numerous structural and institutional controls (see below), the city has met (based on these numbers) the 40% reduction in trash as measured since 2009. Estimated reductions are: Single Use Bag Ban, 4%; Styrofoam container ban, 4%; Full Capture Devices (storm drain filters (see photo below) swales etc.), 8%; Business District Trash Removal, 6.1%; Street Sweeping 3x per week in some areas, 12.5%; Street Sweeping 1x per week (or more) in some areas, 6.3%. Total: 41%

City wide details on these programs include a 70% increase in registered volunteers and an increase in "Adopted Sites" from 119 to 372. In addition, over 300 school children per year have been educated about litter reduction, an illegal dumping program has been implemented to prevent and/or clean up trash (including appliances, mattresses etc.), approximately 10 homeless encampments (see article below specific to Lake Merritt) have been cleaned up per month, and park litter container capacity has been increased (see article below specific to Lake Merritt).

The Institute is proud to have been an early responder to these city wide efforts, which enhance all of Oakland.



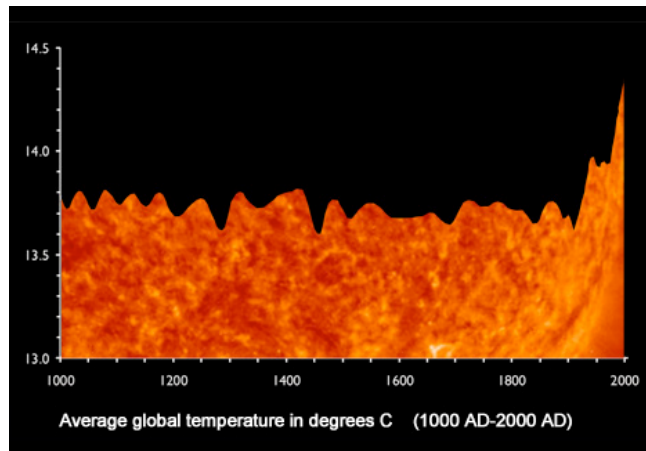
City staff inspect - clean a storm drain filter near the Lake

But remember, when the rains come, there will be trash in the Lake, and more work to be done. We must continue to educate, legislate, build, clean up and volunteer. The next 30% reduction (by 2017) will be even more difficult. Are you up to it? Lake Merritt volunteer clean up days are Tuesdays at 10:30 and Saturdays at 10 am. Meet in front of the Nature Center, 666 Bellevue Avenue. Try it and you'll like it. Go to our website; www.lakemerrittinstitute.org for details.

CLIMATE CORNER: The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway. The following is a review by the Columbia University Press.

The year is 2393, and the world is almost unrecognizable. Clear warnings of climate catastrophe went ignored for decades, leading to soaring temperatures, rising sea levels, widespread drought and—finally—the disaster now known as the Great Collapse of 2093, when the disintegration of the West Antarctica Ice Sheet led to mass migration and a complete reshuffling of the global order. Writing from the Second People's Republic of China on the 300th anniversary of the Great Collapse, a senior scholar presents a gripping and deeply disturbing account of how the children of the Enlightenment—the political and economic elites of the so-called advanced industrial societies—failed to act, and so brought about the collapse of Western civilization.

In this haunting, provocative work of science-based fiction, Naomi Oreskes and Eric M. Conway imagine a world devastated by climate change. Dramatizing the science in ways traditional nonfiction cannot, the book reasserts the importance of scientists and the work they do and reveals the self-serving interests of the so called “carbon combustion complex” that have turned the practice of science into political fodder. Based on sound scholarship and yet unafraid to speak boldly, this book provides a welcome moment of clarity amid the cacophony of climate change literature.



If you don't believe that collapse could happen, consider the current average global temperature increase that has already happened.



Perhaps the effects of drought as shown here are why people go to war.



Perhaps deniers in the U.S, Canada and Australia should not do this.



YES THE BOATING CENTER (and the Institute office) IS REALLY CLOSED: And it is going to stay closed until about April, 2015. The parking lot is closed too. But you can stay in touch via email, and volunteers will meet in front of the Nature Center before dispersing to the “U-Clean-It” stations.

Constructions begins: Included will be a new bulkhead wall, a swale to capture parking lot runoff and a new driveway entrance to the Boating Center.

HOMELESS CAMP TRASH: Some (but we don't know how much) trash in the lake comes from homeless people. If you have ever wondered where the homeless that used to live under the 12 Street bridge went, look no further than the east side of the channel, just south of the new Merritt Blvd. bridge. There, along a dirt path that is not included in any measure DD project, lies a squalid area between 12th and 10th Streets. It was so bad that city park maintenance crews had to use a bobcat (small bulldozer) to clear the path and wear masks to avoid the stench of excrement. It is better now, but this is a no mans land. As to the crazy guy who wears mirror sunglasses and sat on the old bridge every day for years, he has taken up residence nearest to his old haunt, by the new rest rooms: Says he is an undercover FBI agent.

POST OFFICE DELIVERS INSTITUTE MAIL TO CASTROVILLE! For six weeks the Institute has been wondering where our mail went. Despite an August 31st change of address confirmed by the Post Office, bills, checks, membership renewals and who knows what else disappeared except for a few, sporadic pieces. Several items went to the correct, new address. A few went to the Boating Center's new address. Some also apparently went to the Garden Center. These multiple address deliveries indicate that it is not a machine reader problem because a machine would be consistent. Personal pleas to three post office supervisors in three post offices were to no avail. One supervisor even declared that it takes 21 – 28 days for mail to be forwarded!!! But even she did not know, and apparently could not find out, where our mail was going. Maybe is it like the old Lily Tomlin skit: “We don't care and we don't have to.”

Warning - Beware of submitting a Change of Address: Now the mystery is solved. Because other groups receiving mail at 568 Bellevue also submitted change of address forms, some of our mail went to them, and our mail has been going to Castroville! It seems the people in blue are getting all the change of addresses mixed up. Maybe they just can't read. If you have any spare reading glasses, drop them off at the post office. To make matters worse, the recipient turned around and gave some of the mis-delivered mail back to the post office! So, it is still missing. Most recently, the post office suggested canceling the change of addresses and renting a P.O. box at the office on Lake Park Avenue! So it seems they admit they cannot read the change of address forms, cannot deliver the mail as intended, and want everyone involved to make a special trip to the post office. As for membership renewals and donations, we strongly encourage you to use Paypal (it is quick, easy and safe). If you must use the post office, send mail to our temporary address: 660 Plum St., Novato, CA 94945.

SUCCESS BREEDS... As anyone who frequents the lake on a weekend knows, the renovation has sparked a torment of use including people who picnic, salesmen, bike repair tents, music, barbeques, entertainers and you name it. Folks are coming from other cities, including San Francisco, Richmond etc. *Numbers have been estimated at several thousand people on a weekend.* This has led to an embarrassment of trash (not to mention bare spots in the new grass) and complaints. City maintenance crews have responded as well as

they could with increased Saturday and Sunday trash collection, but seasonal staff cuts are coming (ten fewer employees) and they will not be able to continue the enhanced pick up schedules.

To help combat the trash, solar powered trash compactor-collection devices will be installed, as well as (where the ground water is not too high) 8 foot deep trash containers that hold a lot more trash and do not need to be emptied as often. In addition, increased enforcement and new signs have been requested.

BIRD COLUMN: Now You See It...

And now you don't. The winter season is definitely starting at Lake Merritt; the 4th-Wednesday Golden Gate Audubon walkers saw several of the expected migrants - Ruddy Ducks (the little stiff-tails that are not ruddy at all at this season), Scaup (brown females and gray-winged black males, all with the smooth round heads of the Greater species - not a bad-hair day among them), Eared Grebes with their spindly gray necks and beady little red eyes, even a couple of long-necked Western Grebes. *Right: A ruddy duck.*



Yellow-rumped Warblers (see name) were out in force in the park, along with Dark-eyed Juncos (black head, gray body, white feathers on either side of the tail), both White Crowned and Golden Crowned Sparrows, and even a lone lorn shining Brewer's Blackbird down near El Embarcadero where we'd never seen one before. Plus a Cooper's Hawk in the garden, another hawk that flew past too quickly to recognize, a whole lot of the usually scarce Scrub Jays, and a brilliant goldfinch high in a tree.

But no Robins. No House Finches. No House Sparrows, either. The 35 species on view amounted to barely more species than the summer run, despite all the newcomers filling out the crowd. But the weather was lovely and so were the views, and all in all we racked up another good day at Lake Merritt, where, of course, every day is a good day....

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



Spray paint cans, a foam pad, Styrofoam etc. washed in from the first rain flush of the season.



The streets and hills above the Lake remind us that seven square miles of watershed drain down to here, trash included. If the watershed is clean, the Lake will be clean.

This edition of "Tidings" was published entirely with private funding donated to the Lake Merritt Institute, and not with funds from the City of Oakland. To contribute to the Institute, use PayPal at our website or send a check to: The Lake Merritt Institute, 660 Plum Street, Novato, CA 94945 (a temporary address during construction).