

The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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GOOD NEWS! TRASH AMENDMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL: Under development for several years, state regulations that will control how trash is kept out of public waters are now being finalized for submittal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These trash amendments will address all water bodies in the state currently listed as ‘impaired’ due to the presence of trash (including our Lake Merritt). The documents will:

- Establish a narrative water quality objective for trash,
- Establish a prohibition on the discharge of trash,
- Provide implementation requirements for permitted storm water and other dischargers,
- Set a time schedule for compliance, and
- Provide a framework for monitoring and reporting requirements.

What does this mean for Lake Merritt? There are two alternative compliance tracks the permitted agencies (Alameda County and the City of Oakland) can choose. Under Track 1, permittees could elect to install a network of systems to capture trash in the storm drains located in priority land use areas for municipal systems (such as the filters and swales that now protect a few of our 62 storm drain outfalls). Under Track 2, permittees could use any combination of controls (structural and/or institutional anywhere in their jurisdiction as long as they can demonstrate that their system performs as well as Track 1. This demonstration is called full capture system equivalency. Either way, trash (anything larger than about ¼ inch) is to be fully captured.



What may happen: Complete structural control “in priority land use areas” using filters, swales, in-channel nets (shot down by the county for Glen Echo Creek) and curb filters would be difficult due to expense, and the inability to install them where there are underground utilities or inadequate elevations above high tide. So, cities are likely to use Track 2, including education, more street sweeping, targeted watershed clean ups, source control et cetera.

The preceding has been copied from the Water Boards Fact Sheet, updated April 8, 2015. For more details, go to: www.waterboards.ca.gov/trash

The regulations say: Trash – be gone! You can help by not littering.

MASSIVE NUMBERS OF FISH: Perhaps it was the early algae bloom, or the warm winter, or both, but for whatever reason, by April 23rd there were truly massive numbers of young fish in the shallows of old Merritt's Lagoon. You might miss them while walking along Harrison Street between 21st and Grand Avenue, but if you stop by a patch of algae and wave your hand, thousands of them move en masse to avoid your potential threat. Dozens of these huge schools could be seen, those with larger individuals further offshore in deeper water, and those with the tiniest fish in the extreme shallows. There may be a shortage of food offshore for seals, but at Lake Merritt, it will be easy pickings for fish eating birds when they grow up.



Dark mass of straight lines shown here are dozens of young fish.

ALGAE - GOOD OR BAD: Normally the harvester boat doesn't visit Lake Merritt until June, when it summarily removes nuisance levels algae growing along the shoreline. But this year the "winter" algae (dark green, genus *Ulva*) and the lighter green (genera *Enteromorpha* and *Cladophora*) have been growing in April due to what some in the Bay Area have called our year without a winter.



Only when it reaches "nuisance" levels should the algae be removed.

As shown above, this natural, spring bloom provides food and habitat for fish and other forms of life, and is essential to a healthy wildlife refuge, and as you know, Lake Merritt is a state wildlife refuge. So while the harvester boat may be needed earlier than June, let's allow the critters their time first, and wait until summer's heat causes the algae to become a nuisance.

BIRD COLUMN: Grebes on Parade at Lake Merritt

The April Golden Gate Audubon walkers - including several from the new Meet-Up announcement - were treated to a spectacular display of Eared Grebes and Horned Grebes in near or full breeding plumage (both looking like jeweler's work in copper and black silver and gold, with ruby eyes; you tell them apart by the gold fans beside the eyes of the former and the gold ram's-horn stripes on the latter) fishing and preening and chasing each other about near the islands. See them soon; they'll be off to the nesting grounds by May!

The trees on the islands continue full of nesting Double-crested Cormorants, many still displaying their bunny-ear crests, though the bronze youngsters are starting to edge along the branches and think about chasing fish of their very own. We also saw several Forster's Terns after the same fish, knifing into the water on pale wings or standing on the floats and showing off their natty black caps and red beaks and feet. And the resident Canada Geese had a couple of parties of egg-sized babies swimming and grazing along with them - half a dozen in one group and two or three in another - in an overflow of cuteness. (Come June and July, when the lawns fill up with geese, do not attribute it to reproductive success at the lake; if any of these babies survive it'll be a surprise, but lots and lots and lots of their distant cousins and uncles and aunties will come to visit anyway because the lake is the safest place around when you have to replace all your flight feathers.)

Given how low the scaup population was all winter, the numbers remaining on the lake were surprising - both Greater and Lesser Scaup (black and white males and brown females; the differences between species being important only to other scaup and to birders who don't need the description) were out in substantial numbers, vigorously chowing down on the weeds and whatever else looked like providing calories for the impending trip north.

Over in Lakeside Park, the big treat was a catalpa tree full of black-masked Cedar Waxwings, closely followed by an unusually placid Bewick's Wren hopping along the garden fence top and showing off its bright white eyebrow for all to see. But of course, this barely scratches the surface of the delights of yet another cloudy-but-lovely day at Lake Merritt, where every day has delights to share....

BOATING CENTER CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION DELAYED: First it was supposed to be done by about the end of February, then the end of March, then April 24 (but not open to the public until June 1st). Now there are "No Parking - Construction" signs up that say until June 15th (but don't count on it?). Work starts early but the gates are locked up by about 3:30 and if it rains, nobody is there. Progress is evident, but as of late April, the water is not turned on and the boat hoists are not operational. The Institute however, will be moved back there in to our old office by May 1 (we have to be because the lease is up on the current office). Maybe we can use the outhouse.

HOW THE FOUNTAINS MAY LOOK: Because the boat hoists, which are needed to remove the aeration fountains from the water, have been unavailable since September, we have not been able to maintain the aerators. So when we take them out in (May? June?...) they are likely to look something like this, covered with marine life.



Tunicates (sea squirts) cover the motor housing of an aeration fountain.

It will take several weeks to clean them, perhaps obtain new motors from the factory, and get them up and running again, so please be patient.

CLIMATE CORNER:



© Clay Bennett.

<http://www.skepticalscience.com/pics/2015Toon17.jpg>

Hat tip to **I Heart Climate Scientists**

Unfortunately, this cartoon speaks the truth; too many people think climate disruption is not real, or that it is not caused by human activities. Why is this so? Watch the video “UQx DENIAL101x From the Experts: Attack on Science” to find out. Then sign up for the free, on-line course from the University of Queensland.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeSNhayqGcl>

RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



*Why be a predator when you can be a pilferer?
Note: The morsel appears to have been a flatfish.*



Photos by Lee Aurich

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