

# The Lake Merritt Institute

A COMMUNITY BASED, NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

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**VOLUME XIX**

**"TIDINGS" – OCTOBER, 2014**

**ISSUE X**

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

**STRIPERS, NOT SALMON:** Big fish hanging around by the channel entrance have been identified as striped bass, not salmon as was speculated in our September newsletter. At least four were seen at one time, but only one pedestrian was aware of them. Hundreds more strolled merrily by, oblivious to the 2 – 3 foot long denizens in the water below them. How long they will stay around is known only unto them, but we do know that several of them end up dead in the Lake each winter (see April, 2006 and February, 2008 issues of "Tidings" for examples). Several were found dead this year, most likely due to the very low oxygen levels that our Lake frequently experiences. They are living / dying proof of why Lake Merritt is federally listed as impaired due to low oxygen levels (see oxygen paper at our website).



*A striped bass, about 30 – 36 inches long swims by the channel entrance.*

**CLIMATE CORNER:** By now the huge climate marches in New York City, Oakland and 158 countries around the world are over. We need these events to inspire us, convert non-believers and stir action amongst hesitant policy makers. We need tens of thousands of people so that some members of congress will look out the window and say, "some of them must be Republicans." But beyond marches, we need action.

But what should that action be? We can all agree on jobs, climate justice and the need to reduce carbon emissions. That's the easy part. But the sheer enormity of carbon reductions needed to even slow down the rate at which ice caps are melting, is almost impossible to imagine. How will we ever do it?

Will everyone stop driving cars? Imagine Al Pacino (as in *The Devil's Advocate*) saying this: *I don't think so!* Will you, or I, stop driving cars? *I don't think so!* Will the United States shut down all its coal plants in five years or will we all stop heating and cooling our houses? *I don't think so!* Are we so much to blame

that will we shame each other into zero carbon growth by 2020 or even 2030? You know the answer.

Needed is “I have a dream” not I have a nightmare. We need to realize that the boy who is crying wolf is right, and that the wolf is going to eat all of us (the poor now, the wealthy later). Needed is a positive response by everyone; an action which will benefit everyone; one which solves the problem; and one which simultaneously allows each of us to make our own choices.

What if there could be a solution that appealed to conservatives and liberals alike? One which did not grow government, but which became stronger each year: One that made all carbon emissions (not just on new electric power plants) more costly *at the source* (the mine, the well or port of entry) *not at every cash register*. What if a single piece of legislation could accomplish this?

It can. It is called a *REVENUE NEUTRAL CARBON FEE, WITH A DIVIDEND*. Why is it called a fee and not a tax? Because taxes go to governments (you know that) and a fee does not go to governments, George Schulz (Republican former Secretary of the Treasury) said that. The fee, collected on carbon emission content of ALL fossil fuels (fracked, welled, imported or mined) is imposed only at the source, on companies such as Exxon, Peabody Coal, Shell Oil, etc. One hundred percent of the fee is then returned to every household (you, me and Uncle Fred) in a monthly check sent out by the Treasury Department (they are well equipped to do this and send out checks all the time).

The fee, starting at \$10/ton and rising \$10 each year would, in a mere 20 years:

- Reduce CO2 emissions 50 percent below 1990 levels (move over EPA regulations, you're 2<sup>nd</sup> place)
- Add 2.8 million jobs to the American economy.

Source: <http://citizensclimatelobby.org/remi-report/>

And, by 2025, a family of four would receive a monthly dividend of \$288 per month. Would gasoline prices rise? You betcha, about 10 cents a gallon in the first year. But don't they yo-yo up and down that much several times a year anyway? Would electricity prices go up? Yep, but only until about 2026, after which they start to decrease because power generation without carbon emissions costs less, and would be favored by the “let the most efficient fuel win” competition. Fees on high emission coal would render it non-competitive by 2025. All in all, the dividend for 80% of us would more than cover the price increases. There would be a little jingle in your pocket, the air would be cleaner and your kids would be promised a better life.

We need to do more than yell “jobs and justice.” We need to get more specific. We need to address all carbon emissions via putting a price on carbon and letting the economy go to work for us. WE CAN DO THIS. If you like this idea, promote it. Join the Citizens' Climate Lobby, and tell everyone.

**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.

**FOR FUTURE EVENTS AT THE LAKE:** Be sure to keep up with [www.lakemerritt.org](http://www.lakemerritt.org) and thank John Kirkmire for this great website.

**CORMORANT DIE OFF:** We are not finding as many dead cormorants lately; it seems the worst is over. But why were a few dozen found dead in the Lake? It may well be related to changing ocean temperatures, which have led to less plankton, which have led to fewer fish (like anchovies) that are a main source of food for these birds. Bay wide, there are reports that pelican (another bird that like fish) numbers are down too.

Meanwhile, back at the Lake, thousands of other migratory birds are getting solar cues from the shorter days and will soon be winging their way to your little Lake. Watch for them.

**CREEK TO BAY DAY NETS SHOPPING CARTS:** Trash from a homeless camp along the east side of the channel was attacked on Creek to Bay Day (Coastal Clean Up Day) by volunteers on September 20<sup>th</sup>. Three shopping carts, a bench, clothing, sleeping accoutrements, etc. was loaded up and hauled off. Special thanks to Joe for wading in and getting the carts. We also distributed a few outdoor ash trays to cigarette butt hot spots in the Lake Merritt watershed, painted a cleaning station and removed trash from several parts of the shoreline.



**FIRST FLUSH HITS HARD:** It was only about a half inch as measured in the Institute rain gauge, but the first rain of the season was enough to flush much of the trash that had been accumulating in our 7 *square mile watershed* all summer.

As usual, it was mostly plastic: Candy wrappers, plastic bags, chip bags, cellophane wrappers, cigarette filters and so forth.

Thousands of these items were flushed in via *our 62 storm drain outlets*, accumulating both behind the outlet barriers and along the shoreline of the Lake. Those cleaning it up noticed that more kept drifting in from offshore. Clean one spot, move, and then notice that your clean spot had trash in it again.

St. Paul's students got some on Thursday, subcontractors and staff got some on Friday, as did staff on Saturday. The Tuesday crew will continue the clean up, but we could use more volunteers at our Saturday events.

Remember, it really is your Lake; so come on out and keep it clean.

**BIRD COLUMN: LAKE MERRITT SURPRISE;** Golden Gate Audubon's 4<sup>th</sup>-Wednesday walk began fairly normally except for the construction noise from the Boat House parking lot. Double-crested Cormorants filled the floats, some with their wings spread to dry. There were more than a dozen White Pelicans on one of the islands and on shore near the Nature Center. A female Belted Kingfisher foraged successfully and whacked the fish unconscious before devouring it.

Several dozen Pied-billed Grebes foraged near the islands and a few Eared Grebes have arrived. The Eared Grebes dove continuously, making it hard to point out the "dirty" necks that distinguish them from the similar Horned Grebes.

We found three Great Blue Herons, a Great Egret and a couple of Snowy Egrets which are white and smaller than the Great Egrets; they have black bills and golden feet.

The Western Bluebirds are still in the park. Today we found them hawking insects on the lawn under the trees leading to Children's Fairyland. The breasts on the young ones have turned chestnut now.

At Children's Fairyland we found our Bird of the Day: the first ever Acorn Woodpecker seen on our Wednesday morning Lake Merritt walks. We have heard that Acorn Woodpeckers are ranging widely this month, probably in search of acorns.

Along the fence west of Children's Fairyland we found a Bewick's Wren with its bold white eye stripe and delicately barred undertail out in full view. But it was amazing how it blended in with the leaf litter, making it still a challenge to spot.

Across the street in the garden we found a decent number of White-crowned Sparrows on the ground under the rose bushes. As usual, it was a beautiful morning at the Lake.

## RECENT SCENES FROM THE LAKE



*Someone has been dumping logs, tree limbs and branches in the Lake. They seem to be coming from the east side of the channel, just south of the new bridge. Volunteers remove as many as they can, but some are much too large to pick up and remain out there, a hazard to rowers and boaters.*

*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, 568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.*