

March 9, 2023

The Honorable Barbara Lee
United States House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: EBMUD support for City of Oakland's Community Project Funding Request for the Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project

Dear Representative Lee:

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) supports the City of Oakland's community project funding request of \$2.236 million for the Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project in Oakland, California.

The need for this project became clear in August 2022, when a red tide harmful algal bloom (HAB) covering the San Francisco Bay and dissolved oxygen levels caused a massive fish kill. Though the City of Oakland and partners have been strong stewards of Lake Merritt and worked to incrementally address environmental management issues, this summer's HAB demonstrates the need for increased and improved environmental management of Lake Merritt, Oakland's jewel, and the nation's oldest wildlife refuge. A more robust project is needed to make systemic improvements and prevent future fish kills and other serious environmental impacts.

The City of Oakland's Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project (Plan and Project) is a three-pronged approach to plan, monitor, and adaptively manage Lake Merritt for effective results. The Plan and Project include water quality monitoring, testing eelgrass and other seagrass beds as an algal limiter and habitat enhancement, evaluation of dredging options, development of a three-dimensional hydrodynamic and water quality model of the lake, and new oxygenation systems and safe controls of HABs.

Success at Lake Merritt will also inform approaches at other water bodies facing similar threats, threats becoming more common with climate change. It will help address excessive algae growth that contributed to the HAB and low dissolved oxygen levels that caused massive fish kills in Lake Merritt last August and have contributed to Lake Merritt's federal listing as a 303d impaired water body.

The Honorable Barbara Lee

March 9, 2023

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We respectfully request favorable consideration of the City of Oakland's community project funding request in order to improve environmental management of Lake Merritt.

Sincerely,



Clifford C. Chan
General Manager

cc: Mike Perlmutter, Watershed Program Specialist, Oakland Public Works
Kathryn C. Viatella, Manager of Legislative Affairs, East Bay Municipal Utility District
Amit K. Mutsuddy, Director of Wastewater, East Bay Municipal Utility District

CCC:KCV:DM/JW

THE LAKE MERRITT INSTITUTE

A community based, non-profit corporation, established 1995

IRS Code 501C (3): EIN 94-3214160

568 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-5026

510-238-2290 Imi@netwiz.net lakemerrittinstitute.org

The Honorable Barbara Lee
United States House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
March 9, 2023

Re: Request to allocate \$2,236,000 Congressionally Directed Spending to Lake Merritt Water Quality protection in Oakland, California

Dear Honorable Barbara Lee:

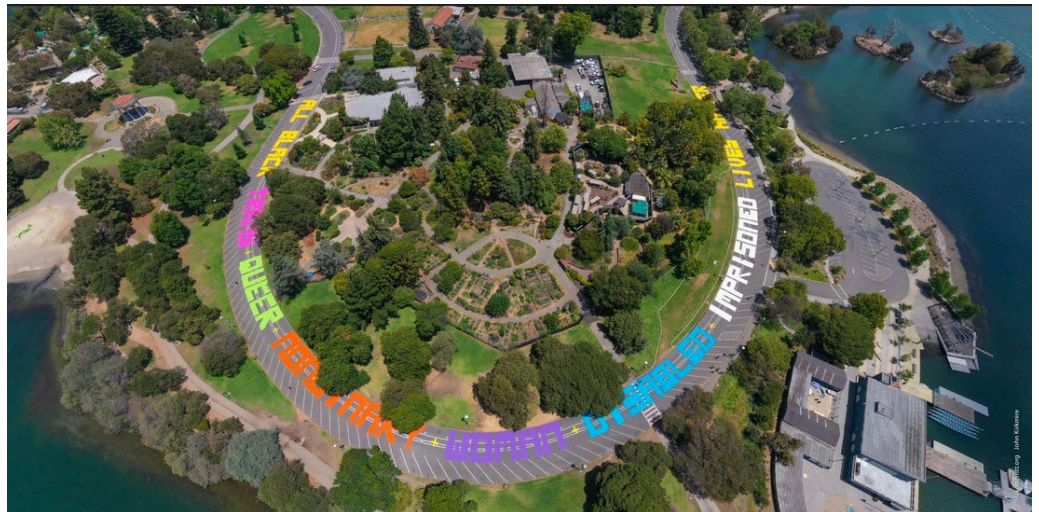
The Lake Merritt Institute strongly urges \$2,236,000 of your Congressionally Directed Spending to be awarded to the Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project in Oakland, California.

The Lake Merritt Institute provides water quality monitoring, volunteer cleanups, Lake management assistance, and public education about the Lake. The Institute recently leased a water quality monitoring buoy from LakeTech, and is now sponsoring a Gofundme campaign for surface aerators, equipment, a utility quad vehicle, and staff time, though this is but a mere fraction of what is needed.

In addition to an obvious need to address the oxygen impairment and recent massive fish kill, there are many other reasons to improve water quality at Lake Merritt. Lake Merritt and surrounding Lakeside Park are closely associated with a vibrant, BIPOC community of rich and poor, young and old, homeless or not, people of many religions and races, nonprofits, businesses, and pretty much everything else.

Lake Merritt is a community center.

www.lakemerritt.org has ongoing updates for the many organizations and activities around the Lake. Lakeside Park and Lake Merritt is to Oakland as Central Park is to New York. Lake Merritt dramatically increases real estate values, moderates climate, and provides an aesthetic refuge for everyone, regardless of income.



The Diversity Road Project in Lakeside Park

Shown below are just a few examples of how people relate to Lake Merritt, and why its water quality is vital.

Lake Merritt is home to the Lake Merritt Rowing Club, which provides opportunities for youth, novice, recreational and competitive rowing. Indeed, preliminary races leading up to the Olympics have been held at Lake Merritt. They are out there at 5 am when bioluminescence is visible, and they never want to see another fish kill. (<https://www.lakemerrittrowingclub.org/>).



The Youth Rowing Program



The Women's Rowing Club

The Oakland Women's Rowing Club, also known as the 'Ladies of the Lake' is the oldest women's rowing club in the United States. Founded in 1916, the club rows in four whale boats every Wednesday morning on Oakland's Lake Merritt and is comprised of women between 60 and 80 years old. It is so popular that there is a two year waiting list to join. They want a clean lake.



The weekly bird count

Lake Merritt is the oldest wildlife refuge in North America, having been established in 1870. Thousands of migratory birds, countless crabs, shrimp, fish and worms, and a few raccoons call Lakeside Park their home. Endangered least terns have visited the waters as have river otters, and once a deer was seen swimming around in the Lake. Bird counts are made weekly, and detailed records kept. All this in the shadows of high-rise buildings!

All this does not even begin to mention the Garden Center, the LM Breakfast Club, the historical Cameron Stanford House, Children's Fairyland (the inspiration for Disneyland) the Rotary Nature Center, the lawn bowling club, art projects, and the sailboat center, all of which depend in part on having a clean lake.

The Lake Chalet Restaurant: Serving hundreds of people every day, the Chalet includes outdoor seating on docks over the same waters where the fish kill occurred. Obviously, bad water quality is bad for business, but the popularity of the Lake continues to bring people together to share food and enjoy the scenic beauty. A gondola service is located next to the docks.



The Lake Chalet

In Summary: If you were a member of the Lake Merritt community, how would you feel about the possibility of another fish kill this coming summer? The community does not want it, and has coalesced around the recommendations of prominent water quality experts to establish water quality monitoring, analysis, and a pilot aeration / oxygenation project leading to a hoped for lake-wide system that will be automatically activated when oxygen levels drop too low, and that will improve the overall health of the Lake. The costs will be high; the benefits will be incalculably higher.



Volunteers cleaning the Lake

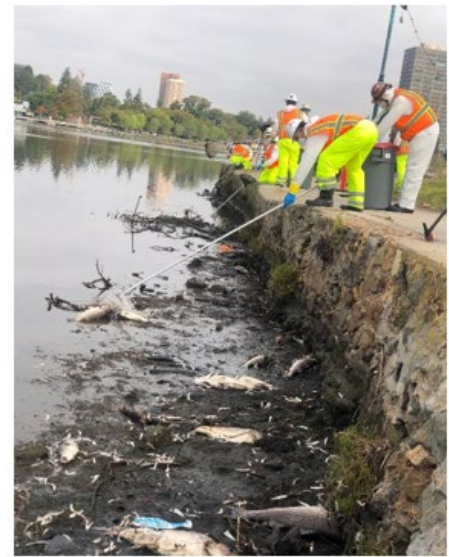
Fish gasping for air



Map of Lake Merritt



Removing dead fish



I sincerely hope that major funding for a lake-wide aeration / oxygenation system can be provided.

This is a chance to truly make a difference.

On behalf of Lake Merritt,

Richard L. Bailey

Dr. Richard Bailey, Founder
The Lake Merritt Institute



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PARKS AND RECREATION
FOUNDATION

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The Honorable Barbara Lee

United States House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2023

Re: Request to allocate \$2,236,000 Congressionally Directed Spending to Lake Merritt Water Quality protection in Oakland, California

Dear Honorable Barbara Lee,

Oakland Parks & Recreation Foundation (OPRF) strongly urges \$2,236,000 of your Congressionally Directed Spending to be awarded to the Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project in Oakland, California.

Since 1981, OPRF has engaged in Lake Merritt water health by supporting park stewards, volunteers and advocates through public input, organized clean ups, education and community outreach. We are encouraged by these collaborative efforts and support the city's leadership to implement additional protections.

The Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project will address excessive algae growth and low dissolved oxygen levels that have contributed to Lake Merritt's federal listing as a 303d impaired water body.

Though the City of Oakland and partners have steadily been stewarding Lake Merritt and incrementally addressing environmental management issues, a more robust project is needed to make systemic improvements and prevent future fish kills and other serious environmental impacts.

The need for this project became clear in August, 2022, when algae and dissolved oxygen levels caused a massive fish kill. The sight and stench of tens of thousands of dead fish littering the shoreline was a wakeup call for increased and improved environmental management of Lake Merritt, Oakland's jewel, and the nation's oldest wildlife refuge.

The Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project is a three-pronged approach to plan, monitor, and adaptively manage the Lake for effective results. The Plan and Project is practical, results oriented, scientifically sound, and sorely needed. Success at Lake Merritt will also inform approaches at other water bodies facing similar threats, threats becoming more common with climate change.

The Plan and Project include water quality monitoring; contribution to an East Bay Municipal Utility District project to test eelgrass beds as an algal limiter and habitat enhancement; evaluation of dredging options; development of a three dimensional hydrodynamic and water quality model of the Lake; and new oxygenation systems and safe controls of harmful algal blooms.

On behalf of Lake Merritt, the thousands of people who visit each year, the scores of birds, fish, and other wildlife that live in the Lake and depend on us to speak for them, please heed Mother Nature's cry for help, and help fund the needed fix.

Sincerely,



Mandolin Kadera-Redmond

Executive Director

Email: mandolin@oaklandparks.org



OAKLAND
PARKS AND RECREATION
FOUNDATION

www.oaklandparks.org



SAN FRANCISCO ESTUARY INSTITUTE

4911 Central Avenue, Richmond, CA 94804 • p 510-746-7334 • f 510-746-7300 www.sfei.org

The Honorable Barbara Lee
United States House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2023

Re: Request to allocate \$2,236,000 Congressionally Directed Spending to Lake Merritt Water Quality protection in Oakland, California

Dear Honorable Barbara Lee,

The San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) strongly urges \$2,236,000 of your Congressionally Directed Spending to be awarded to the Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project in Oakland, California.

SFEI is a non-profit science institute that works closely with regulators, resource managers, and stakeholders to identify priority science needs to inform management decisions, and conducts applied science studies to address those needs. SFEI also serves as the technical lead for the San Francisco Bay Nutrient Management Strategy, a regulatory-mandated science and monitoring program targeting the impacts of excess nutrients in the Bay (excessive algae, harmful algae, low dissolved oxygen). The proposed Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project addresses a critical regional need.

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The Plan and Project include water quality monitoring; contribution to an East Bay Municipal Utility District project to test eelgrass beds as an algal limiter and habitat enhancement; evaluation of dredging options; development of a three dimensional hydrodynamic and water quality model of the Lake; and new oxygenation systems and safe controls of harmful algal blooms.

On behalf of Lake Merritt, the thousands of people who visit each year, the scores of birds, fish, and other wildlife that live in the Lake and depend on us to speak for them, please heed Mother Nature's cry for help, and help fund the needed fix.

Sincerely,

David Senn, PhD
Lead Scientist, San Francisco Bay Nutrient Management Strategy
davids@sfei.org



Oakland Measure DD Trust for Clean Water and Safe Parks Community Coalition

The Honorable Barbara Lee

United States House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Request to allocate \$2,236,000 Congressionally Directed Spending to Lake Merritt
Water Quality protection in Oakland, California**

Dear Honorable Barbara Lee,

The Measure DD Community Coalition strongly urges \$2,236,000 of your Congressionally Directed Spending to be awarded to the Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project in Oakland, California.

The Measure DD Community Coalition, an open alliance of Oakland residents and organizations with broad community-wide interests, was sanctioned in 2003 by the Oakland City Council to monitor the projects and expenditures of the \$198 million 2002 "Measure DD -- Clean Water & Safe Parks" Bond Election. The Coalition coordinates with City staff on status updates, monitoring, and reviewing of the 56 Measure DD projects specified in the Bond Measure.

The Lake Merritt Water Quality Management Plan and Project will address excessive algae growth and low dissolved oxygen levels that have contributed to Lake Merritt's federal listing as a 303d impaired water body.

Lake Merritt and surrounding Lakeside Park are closely associated with a vibrant, BIPOC community of rich and poor, young and old, homeless or housed, people of many religions and races, nonprofits, businesses, and pretty much everything else.

Though the City of Oakland and partners have steadily been stewarding Lake Merritt and incrementally addressing environmental management issues, a more robust project is needed to make systemic improvements and prevent future fish kills and other serious environmental impacts.

The need for this project became clear in August, 2022, when algae and dissolved oxygen levels caused a massive fish kill. The sight and stench of tens of thousands of dead fish littering the shoreline was a wakeup call for increased and improved environmental management of Lake Merritt, Oakland's jewel, and the nation's oldest wildlife refuge.

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The Plan and Project include water quality monitoring; contribution to an East Bay Municipal Utility District project to test eelgrass beds as an algal limiter and habitat enhancement; evaluation of dredging options; development of a three dimensional hydrodynamic and water quality model of the Lake; and new oxygenation systems and safe controls of harmful algal blooms.

Lake Merritt, a tidal estuary in the heart of Oakland, is vital for the community. So many organizations count on the Lake and surrounding park that a separate website (<https://www.lakemerritt.org/>) has been created and is updated weekly. Lakeside Park with Lake Merritt is to Oakland as Central Park is to New York. It increases real estate values, moderates the climate, and provides an aesthetic refuge for everyone.

On behalf of Lake Merritt, the thousands of people who visit each year, the scores of birds, fish, and other wildlife that live in the Lake and depend on us to speak for them, please heed Mother Nature's cry for help, and help fund the needed fix.

Sincerely,

The Measure DD Community Coalition
Adrian Cotter, Agenda Committee Chair
John Bowers, Agenda Committee
Myra Redman, Agenda Committee

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/measure-dd-community-coalition>



ROTARY NATURE CENTER FRIENDS

An educational charitable 501(c)3 non-profit, established 2021

IRS Code 501C (3): EIN 87-1643851

609 Kains Avenue, Albany, CA 94706

510-684-4157 ktnoon@aol.com

<https://sites.google.com/view/rotary-nature-center-friends/home>

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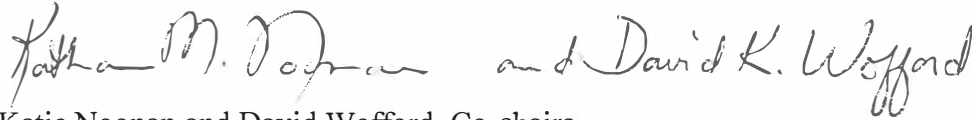
[Rotary Nature Center Friends](#) strongly supports the City of Oakland's request to allocate federal funds to water quality protection in Lake Merritt. We are an environmental education charitable nonprofit (501c3) based at Lake Merritt in Oakland and a [critical partner organization](#) of The Lake Merritt Institute. Our 12-member governing board includes professional scientists and environmental educators as well as local educators at the university through K12 levels. We work collaboratively with other mission-aligned local nonprofits.

Lake Merritt is a priceless asset to both the science and education communities. The catastrophic fish kill of August 2022 brought into focus the need to understand existing processes degrading coastal water quality and conditions that are likely to recur as a result of climate change both in Oakland and regionally and that could lead to a fish kill. The requested funds would address those needs by providing water quality monitoring, analysis, and a pilot aeration / oxygenation project leading to a hoped for lake-wide system that will be automatically activated when oxygen levels drop too low, and that will improve the overall health of the Lake. It would further environmental justice and equity by immediately improving the quality of life for the diverse urban population that depends on the lake and surrounding parkland for recreation, education, economic activity and even food. Over 600 people per hour walk around the lake on a sunny day. The resources would lead to hands-on stewardship activities for youth and adults such as planting and installing eelgrass beds in the Lake Merritt Channel to possibly limit harmful algal growth.

Since 1997, our staff members have involved local youth and educational institutions in science and stewardship activities focused on the estuary ecosystem and environmental justice in the heart of Oakland's urban area. We contributed 25 years of community water quality monitoring data now uploaded to the San Francisco Estuary Institute's CEDEN database. Our student interns were the first to document anoxic conditions triggering the fish kill in Lake Merritt in August. The experience of hands-on science and stewardship builds community engagement and resilience and

will provide the community-representative science and policy experts of the future. We have seen many young people in our programs go on to professional careers in conservation science, environmental education and policy.

On behalf of Rotary Nature Center Friends Co-Chairs and Board of Directors,

Handwritten signatures of Katie Noonan and David Wofford in cursive script, separated by the word "and".

Katie Noonan and David Wofford, Co-chairs
Rotary Nature Center Friends