



The object of this girl's curiosity is the culvert under East Cliff Drive through which the sea pours into Moran Lake—when it isn't clogged with sand.

Cleaning Moran Lake is expensive task

LIVE OAK

A costly program to restore Moran Lake to a nearly natural state was explained to a slightly apprehensive Park, Open Space and Cultural Services (POSCS) Commission Monday night. The commission members were apprehensive for a couple of reasons:

— They had never been formally informed by the board of supervisors it was to become involved in the project.

— They were worried about where the money — nearly \$200,000 — would come from and how spending it in this way would affect their other projects.

The presentation was made by Steve Singer of the county's Watershed Management department. He felt a little uneasy, too. Although he had been working with the POSCS staff on plans for a joint application for federal funds, the park staff hadn't told the commission about it.

"I feel very awkward here tonight," he told commissioners at their meeting in the parks office in the governmental center. "I was told to work with the parks staff. We did. I didn't realize they hadn't talked to the commission. They should be here tonight telling you what we did, not me."

But the commissioners took the protocol oversight in stride, evincing interest in the plans but wanting to know more about where the money would come from.

The county bought eight acres at Moran Lake in 1975 with money from a federal Land and Water Conservation Act grant.

The lake — which is actually a lagoon — is the drainage basin for a watershed which extends from Soquel Drive southward, with 41st Ave. as approximately the center line. Through a drainage ditch which runs the length of the watershed, the lake is the recipient of all the runoff — and all the pollutants — from that area.

In the winter, the lake also gets sea water that breaks down a sand barrier between the lake and the bay, thus periodically

flushing the lake. At the south end of the lake, there is a culvert under East Lake Drive which serves as the only inlet-outlet for the sea water. During the summer this culvert fills with sand, preventing any water exchange. Only in the winter does the runoff in the lake and the sea-water clear out the sand and allow the flushing.

In his presentation to the commission, and to a half-dozen Moran Lake area residents who came to the meeting, Singer outlined the history of the project.

In July, his department was asked by the county environmental review committee to study the lake to see what the impact the construction in the Live Oak area has had on it. The watershed manager proposed a one-year study be made of the small body of water, but the board of supervisors narrowed that down to six weeks. He presented the restoration program to the board in August, and the price tag on it was nearly \$200,000.

The board approved that program, and told the watershed department, along with POSCS and public works department to find funding for it.

That funding source, Singer explained, would be the same Land and Water Conservation Act, but that the water conservation project would have to be wedded to a park development project at Moran Lake to qualify.

Under the act, the grant would cover half the cost — later estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$185,000. The rest would have to be raised by the county. The county's share of the lake restoration — about \$70,000, could come from Zone 4 special district tax revenues "or some other source," it was stated. It was assumed the parks department would find sources for its half of the park development money — over \$25,000. It was this which worried the park commissioners, because if they participate, it might drain money away from other projects. What the watershed manager

recommended to the board was the dredging and re-shaping of Moran Lake. This would cost about \$80,000.

It also recommended that the culvert under East Cliff Drive be replaced with a bridge or similar structure, at a cost of about \$60,000.

Further, it is recommended that the street sweeping program on county-maintained streets in the Moran Lake watershed area be stepped up to a once-a-week basis for all streets with curbs and gutters, at a cost of \$10,000. (It was later stated that this cost might be cut to \$3,000.)

Another part of the program would call for bulldozing the sand "bar" which builds up between the bay and the lake, preventing sea water getting into the lake. This would be broken down a couple of times during the summer to allow the flushing action to take place.

The lake would be monitored after the work is done to see if it is responding to the tender, loving care.

Singer said that a study of the lake has shown it to be heavily polluted with oil, grease, heavy minerals and other pollutants which wash into the lake with the rain water. On the bottom of the three-foot-deep lake is an 18-inch layer of black ooze, a mixture of all these things. All this would be dredged out.

Residents present at the meeting confirmed that all the wild life that was once associated with the lake is now gone.

If the above measures don't restore the lake to better health, then the county could consider modifying the catch basin at 38th and Brommer St. to filter out some of the pollutants before they get to the lake. This would cost about \$250,000, Singer judged.

If that doesn't work, it might be necessary to construct a treatment plant of some kind, the cost of which he wouldn't speculate on.

He said, however, it was felt that the "Phase II" — dredging

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