

Yard Waste Collection Center

The Clear Lake Yard Waste Collection Center is located in the 1400 block of 4th Ave South. The hours of operation are Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please take advantage of this convenient way of disposing of your unwanted yard waste.

Please contact the CLEAR Project at 357-2532 with any comments or questions.

Association Offers Convenient Clean-up for Pet Owners



This spring during the Earth Day cleanup volunteers watched as people walking their dog along City Beach allowed their pet to use the beach as a toilet and then simply cover the waste with a small amount of sand and walk away. This act of carelessness was in direct contrast with what the many volunteers were spending their Saturday doing: cleaning up Clear Lake.

The effects of this negligent act are many. Dog waste not only contributes to phosphorus levels in Clear Lake, but also poses a health risk due to the bacteria and other pathogens found in the waste that can be easily washed into the lake when it rains. There is also a health risk for anyone who comes in contact with the waste on dry ground as well.

The Earth Day example, unfortunately, is not an isolated case as anyone

who regularly walks along the sea wall can attest. Despite a city ordinance making it unlawful to dispose of pet waste on any public property or private property that you do not own, the ordinance is violated very often. This area of downtown is heavily used by both visitors and residents who may not be aware that the ordinance exists.

However, due to actions taken by the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake in conjunction with the Clear Lake Park and Recreation Department, visitors and residents alike will no longer have any excuses for not cleaning up after their pets.

The Association has installed two pet waste bag dispensers. One is located along the sea wall by the Lady of the Lake and the other is located in the City Park. The bags are free for pet owners to utilize for picking up the waste and disposing of it in a nearby receptacle. Currently, the two bag dispenser systems will be used on a trial basis to determine how much use they receive. If the results are favorable, residents can expect more of these dispensers in public areas so they will be readily available to all pet owners.

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Ventura Marsh and Eagle Lake Sampling

View an aerial photo of Eagle Lake and Ventura Marsh and it is easy to see the difference between the two large wetlands. On paper, Eagle Lake and Ventura Marsh appear to be quite similar. Both are shallow (less than 4 ft), have large areas (over 700 acres), and drain a large number of farmland (over 2000 acres). But anyone who has seen the two wetlands can notice one striking difference: Eagle Lake is heavily vegetated and Ventura Marsh is not. What can't easily be seen is the reason for the lack of vegetation in Ventura Marsh: rough fish like carp and bullhead.

These fish live on the bottom of water bodies. They stir up bottom sediments which suspends trapped nutrients back into the water column. The stirred sediments make the water too cloudy for light to penetrate to the bottom, where rooted vegetation grows. The stirred sediments also contain nutrients like phosphorus which feed algae. The combination of not enough light penetration and a continuous supply of available nutrients leads to heavy algae growth and no vegetation.

So why is vegetation so important? Vegetation helps hold sediment where it belongs, on the bottom of the marsh. This also keeps nutrients trapped in the sediment, not allowing them to escape into the water. Lastly, vegetation itself uses nutrients to grow and acts as a temporary storage place for those nutrients. The result

is a well functioning wetland that is able to filter sediments and nutrients from the water that enters it, resulting in cleaner, clearer water exiting the marsh.

The effects of vegetation and low rough fish populations can easily be seen in water samples collected from the inflow and outflow points of the two marshes. Total phosphorus (P) and total suspended solids (TSS) concentrations found during monitoring by Ventura FFA students are shown below. The data clearly shows that if Clear Lake is going to improve, Ventura Marsh must regain its ability to store sediments and phosphorus rather than input them into the lake.

Currently the Iowa DNR is working with the Corps of Engineers to determine the most feasible restoration options for the marsh. Federal funds initiated by Congressman Latham are expected to fund 65% of the restoration costs. If federal funds continue to be awarded, restoration could begin as soon as 2005 or 2006.

| | Total P Inflow | Total P Outflow | TSS Inflow | TSS Outflow |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|
| Eagle Lake | 468 ppm | 168 ppm | 35 ppb | 19 ppb |
| Ventura Marsh | 380 ppm | 588 ppm | 18 ppb | 122 ppb |

Time of Transfer Law Would Allow for Inspection of Septic Systems

While a properly functioning septic system has little impact on water quality, a malfunctioning system can cause great harm. A failing septic system can allow excess nutrients to reach Clear Lake, promoting algae growth. Bacteria and pathogens can also leave a failing system and reach the lake. Unfortunately, a malfunctioning septic system is not usually identified until a major problem has already occurred. This is due to the fact that no routine inspection of septic systems in Cerro Gordo County is required.

There are roughly 100 septic systems in the Clear Lake watershed and most go uninspected. Some systems likely do not meet current county codes. A Cerro Gordo county ordinance and state law mandates that all septic systems must have both primary and secondary treatment. Secondary treatment is typically in the form of a leach field. However, some older systems may not have a leach field at all. It was common practice at one time to hook up septic systems to agricultural drainage tiles. Although illegal, these systems often continue to operate until a visible problem is identified and reported.

Seeing the need for more inspection of septic systems in the county, Cerro Gordo County is discussing a new ordinance that would allow for the inspection of septic systems whenever the ownership of the property changes. This ordinance termed "Time of Transfer" would allow County Health officials to inspect systems on a much more frequent basis and require that those not meeting current codes be updated.

The Board of Directors for the Association endorses the adoption of this Time of Transfer ordinance. Since resistance to the adoption of this ordinance is anticipated, it is important that members of the Association show their support by contacting the Cerro Gordo County Supervisors. Septic systems need to be routinely maintained and inspected to ensure they are working properly. A failing septic system is not only a detriment to water quality, but poses a public health risk. Please contact the CLEAR Project at 357-2532 if you have questions about or would like to see copies of this proposed ordinance.