



Press Release

For immediate release

January 25, 2017

Contacts:

Carla Zilliox, Big Sur Land Trust
Communications, Manager
831.625.5523 x108
czilliox@bigsurlandtrust.org

Rachel Saunders, Big Sur Land Trust
Director of Conservation
831.625.5523 x109
rsaunders@bigsurlandtrust.org

Big Sur Land Trust Acquires 73 Acres in Salinas' Carr Lake Basin

Beginning our long-term commitment to work with the community on their vision of a long-awaited "central park"

(Salinas, CA) Big Sur Land Trust has acquired a 73-acre property within the area known as Carr Lake in Salinas, California. The Carr Lake Basin is an approximately 480-acre seasonally dry lakebed in the heart of the city. For decades, the community has envisioned transforming Carr Lake into a "central park."

"With our first acquisition in an urban landscape, we are celebrating a significant moment in the Land Trust's 39-year history of providing and caring for places where people and nature thrive," said Jeannette Tuitele-Lewis, Big Sur Land Trust's President/CEO. "Today we've taken the initial step towards transforming this property into an asset for the community that will help address the lack of parks and open space. We are especially excited to begin working with residents, community groups and city leaders to co-create a multi-benefit central park that reflects the heart and soul of Salinas."

In addition to addressing community needs for open space and parklands, the Land Trust's Carr Lake project will seek to provide multiple environmental benefits including ecological restoration, water quality improvement and flood control. Big Sur Land Trust does not intend to be the long-term property owner and will work with the City of Salinas and community to create a mechanism for eventual public ownership.

"Big Sur Land Trust is taking a big step towards the vision we all share for our city," said Salinas Mayor Joe Gunter. "It's a project that will be good for people, the environment, and our economy. I'm delighted to see the community's vision coming much closer to fruition."

"Big Sur Land Trust is committed to engaging community members in a participatory land use planning process that assures the voices of Salinas residents are central to determining a vision and establishing priorities for long-term development of parkland on the property," added Jeannette Tuitele-Lewis. As an initial step, a core planning group has been convened. Representatives from the City of Salinas, Building Healthy Communities, the County Department of Health, California State University Monterey Bay's Watershed Institute, and CHISPA, a non-profit community housing developer, have been meeting with Big

Sur Land Trust board members and staff. With the guidance of this core group the Land Trust will be reaching out to additional Salinas-based organizations and residents to design the community engagement process.

“As a member of their Board of Trustees, I am proud that Big Sur Land Trust has taken this powerful step towards ensuring more access to open space in Salinas,” said Alfred Diaz-Infante. “As President/CEO of CHISPA, I am inspired that the Land Trust is demonstrating their serious commitment to the residents of Salinas in this way.”

Before Carr Lake became farmland, it was the largest of seven lakes that captured water from an upper watershed beginning at Fremont Peak, the summit of central California’s Gabilan mountain range. Water then flowed for more than 10 miles throughout a magnificent network of creeks and wetlands to Monterey Bay. In the early 1900s Carr Lake was drained to create farmland. Eventually, three separate families took ownership of Carr Lake – two of those families continue to farm their properties.

Big Sur Land Trust purchased the parcel from the Ikeda Farms Partnership for \$3.95 million with funding provided by California State Coastal Conservancy; the California Natural Resources Agency River Parkways Program; David and Lucile Packard Foundation; Monterey Peninsula Foundation and Bernet Segal Charitable Trust.

“It has been a pleasure working with the Big Sur Land Trust on the sale of our Carr Lake family farm over these past several months,” said Don Ikeda, Ikeda Farms Partner. “Although it was bittersweet to sell our family farm and leave the Salinas Valley, we’ve been able to reminisce with family and friends about our family’s 80-plus year history on this land while we’ve been preparing to move. Purchased by our family in the late-1920’s, four generations of Ikedas have seen Salinas grow and surround our family farm. We wish Big Sur Land Trust success in transforming the agricultural fields into public space for Salinas’ future generations.”

Additional funding to help support participatory land use planning has been provided by California Wellness Foundation; S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation; and Laural Foundation.

Big Sur Land Trust is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire love of land and conservation of our treasured landscapes. Founded in 1978, our legacy includes conserving over 40,000 acres. We work in coastal, inland, remote and urban open spaces – increasing access to public parklands and ensuring the long-term viability of working landscapes and significant habitats throughout Monterey County.

For more information on Big Sur Land Trust visit www.bigsurlandtrust.org. Follow us on Facebook and on Twitter and Instagram @BigSurLandTrust.

###