



**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
CARR LAKE PROJECT
January 25, 2017**

1. Why is Big Sur Land Trust involved in Salinas?

Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire love of land and conservation of our treasured landscapes. Founded in 1978, BSLT's legacy includes conserving over 40,000 acres in Monterey County. Over the last decade we have recognized the need to expand our geographic focus to serve the county's diverse communities and provide places where both people and nature can thrive. BSLT first "community-based conservation" project in the Salinas area was Marks Ranch. The Land Trust acquired Marks Ranch in 2007 and transferred a large portion of the property to Monterey County Parks to expand Toro County Park. Over the past four years we have built partnerships with youth-serving organizations in the Salinas Valley, engaging more than 300 teenagers in BSLT's outdoor camps at our Glen Deven Ranch property in Big Sur and at Marks Ranch. Last May BSLT partnered with the City of Salinas and eight organizations to launch "Take it Outside, Salinas!" at Natividad Creek Park. Hundreds of Salinas families enjoyed outdoor activities as well as art, theater and music during this day-long event. Planning is now underway for this year's event on May 7, 2017.

BSLT believes that converting the former Ikeda property into a multi-benefit green space will be transformative for the city and its residents. BSLT is at the forefront of the land trust community conservation movement, the heart of which is reconnecting people to the land and engaging diverse communities.

2. What is Carr Lake and why is it significant?

Today Carr Lake is an approximately 480-acre seasonally dry lakebed entirely surrounded by the City of Salinas. Since the 1920s and 30s Carr Lake has been owned and farmed by three families. The Ikeda family has now sold its property to BSLT. The Hibino and Higashi families continue to own and farm their Carr Lake properties.

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 through a magnificent network of creeks and wetlands to Monterey Bay.

Historically, Carr Lake fluctuated between being a shallow lake and swampy wetlands. Three major creeks – Gabilan Creek, Natividad Creek, and Alisal Creek – naturally flowed through Carr Lake.

A Reclamation Ditch was built between 1917 and 1920 for the purpose of draining the series of lakes and marshy areas to make the land viable for agriculture. Jesse D. Carr was one of the landowners at the time reclamation efforts began. He ultimately sold his land to farmers.

The three creeks that once flowed through Carr Lake were converted into drainage ditches with outflow from the lake conveyed by the Reclamation Ditch. Because of that, Carr Lake functions as an important component of a regional flood control system. Water is conveyed by the Reclamation Ditch into Tembladero Slough which drains through the Old Salinas River Channel into Moss Landing Harbor and ultimately the Monterey Bay Marine National Sanctuary. Over the years, continued development upstream and downstream has increased water flow into the lakebed. The creeks/drainage ditches and Reclamation Ditch no longer have sufficient capacity to convey runoff from large storm events. When inadequate culverts restrict high flows, the Carr Lake Basin can be significantly impacted by large, long-duration storm events or a series of storm events, resulting in flooding of some of the agricultural operations in the lakebed and nearby neighborhoods. Furthermore, runoff from surrounding urban and agricultural lands causes Carr Lake's network of creeks/drainage ditches and the Reclamation Ditch to carry some of the region's most impaired waters into the marine sanctuary.

As part of a well-designed park project, transformation of the Ikeda property will include a restoration strategy featuring wetlands and a more natural system for flood management. Since wetlands slow, infiltrate and absorb water while filtering and absorbing excess nutrients, this restoration approach would be designed to improve the quality of the water flow downstream through Carr Lake.

The location of Carr Lake in the heart of the city also offers a central and easily accessible location for a new park. Since 1970s, city leaders and community members have called for Carr Lake to serve as the "central park" for Salinas. The city's ratio of parkland to its 160,000+ inhabitants is far below other densely populated cities. Salinas has only 2.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, whereas cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco have 9.3 and 6.8 acres per 1,000 residents, respectively. The national average is about 10 acres.

In 2003 the City of Salinas commissioned the creation of a broad Vision Plan for a multi-benefit Carr Lake Regional Park to address the vast need for parklands, as well as flood management and water quality improvements. Acquisition of this property is the first step towards that dream.

3. Why is this so called "long-awaited dream" of acquiring some or all of Carr Lake just happening now?

Big Sur Land Trust only works with willing sellers. The Ikeda family is the first willing seller at Carr Lake.

BSLT had first negotiated with the family in 2009 for the purchase of their property. BSLT was days away from executing a Letter of Intent with the Ikedas when the matriarch of the family suddenly passed away and family members needed time to regroup.

In November 2014, a real estate agent representing the Ikeda Farms Partnership contacted BSLT to announce that the property was being listed for sale and gauge the Land Trust's interest.

After negotiating through much of 2015, in January 2016 BSLT executed a purchase agreement with the Ikeda Farms Partnership for \$3.95 million (based on a fair market appraised value) for the acquisition of their 73-acre property. It took about a year to find the public and private funding necessary to purchase the property. BSLT took ownership on January 25, 2017.

The Ikeda Farms Partnership includes descendants of Yeizo and Satsu Ikeda who owned and farmed the property beginning the late 1920s. Yeizo and Satsu Ikeda had four sons: Don, Kunio, Hiroshi, and Sam Ikeda, and one daughter: Atsuko. Yeizo and Satsu and most of their children were involved in the family's farming business.

4. What will BSLT be doing with the property in the short term? How does BSLT plan to pay for maintaining the property during this time?

BSLT will be implementing an interim stewardship plan for the property that will include continued agricultural use, residential leases and building maintenance. We anticipate this interim plan being in place for four to five years until a long-term plan for the property is determined. During this time, we will engage with the City of Salinas, community partners and residents to define the ultimate use of the land. Scientific and engineering studies will also determine the floodplain and habitat improvements that can ultimately be made, and how the public can safely use the land.

As a nationally accredited land trust, BSLT is required to establish a dedicated stewardship fund to manage the property. We have already identified and secured key resources that will be necessary and have a plan in place to raise the additional funds needed to ensure appropriate management of the property. Donations will gladly be accepted!

5. What process will be used to ensure community engagement? Who will be part of the process?

BSLT is committed to engaging community members in a 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. BSLT also believes this approach better ensures a sense of collective ownership and success for shared outdoor spaces especially in an urban environment. Representatives from the City of Salinas, Building Healthy Communities, the County Department of Health, the Watershed Institute at California State University Monterey Bay, 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, BSLT will be reaching out early in 2017 to additional Salinas-based organizations and residents to design and initiate the community engagement process.

6. How does BSLT's planned community engagement effort relate to other city initiatives?

We recognize there are a number of exciting and important planning efforts already underway within the City of Salinas (e.g., the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, Chinatown Revitalization Plan, and Parks, Recreation and Libraries Master Plan). We are working closely with city staff to make sure these planning efforts are well coordinated and strengthen one another. Our core planning team

(which includes city staff) and community stakeholders will help us determine how best to engage residents who are involved in these multiple planning efforts.

7. What types of facilities/activities could potentially be included in the final plan for BSLT's Carr Lake property? Will the property be turned into a lake?

The community engagement process, the requirements associated with the acquisition funding and the features of the land will ultimately determine how the property will be used.

The funding we have received requires conservation outcomes such as public parkland and open space, habitat restoration, trails, flood management, and water quality improvements. BSLT will be gathering information and facilitating studies that will help inform the community engagement process and provide for a better understanding of the range of potential park amenities that are feasible, including how some of the buildings on the site may be repurposed.

We recognize that many people, when they think of Carr Lake, may have a vision of a large, recreational type lake. However, historically Carr Lake fluctuated between being a shallow lake and swampy wetlands. Because water management will be a key objective for the BSLT property, restoration will likely result in scenic and functional water features like areas of marshland and habitat for wildlife. Features that would support water sports (e.g., boating and fishing) are probably not feasible.

8. Will the public have access to the property before the final plan is completed?

BSLT intends on repurposing one or more of the large storage buildings for facilitated public planning sessions and design workshops to begin later this year.

In addition, within two years, we will be constructing an observation deck on the property. Through managed access, members of the public will enjoy far-reaching vistas from this viewing platform. Visitors will learn about Carr Lake through bilingual interpretative signage that will highlight key landmarks – the three urban creeks, the surrounding mountain ranges, city landmarks and the critical role of Carr Lake in the transport and management of water.

BSLT will also be working with partners to implement a restoration demonstration site in an easily-accessible area of the property that is open to the public. This demonstration site will help inform the larger restoration of the Ikeda property. The demonstration site will include a walking path for the public to observe the cultivation of native grasses, shrubs and tree species appropriate for Carr Lake. The site will also support the collection of baseline information to inform guidelines for the expanded restoration, such as plant recruitment, control of invasive species, irrigation, ground water usage, and water quality.

BSLT staff will also work with community partners and volunteers to provide educational tours on the property. We will also be exploring the opportunity to utilize the site as a field lab for students within the city with a focus on experiential learning and on gathering additional baseline information that may contribute to the site design process.

9. Who will ultimately name the property?

The eventual name of the property will be determined through the community engagement process.

10. Who is going to own the property long-term?

BSLT will work with the City of Salinas and community members to create a mechanism for public ownership and management of the property over the long term. BSLT does not intend on being the long-term property owner.

11. If I have an idea for BSLT's Carr Lake property, want more information or wish to be notified of community meetings, who do I tell?

Please send an email to: info@bigsurlandtrust.org.