



**For immediate release
Press Release**

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Big Sur Land Trust Acquires 83.5-Acre Patriarch Ridge Property in Carmel Valley

Important historical travel corridor for Esselen and Rumsen tribes is now conserved in perpetuity

Big Sur Land Trust is pleased to announce that we have acquired and conserved 83.5 acres of old growth mixed evergreen woodland, chaparral and grassland habitat adjacent to the Land Trust's Mitteldorf Preserve in Carmel Valley. Al and Anne Washburn of Monterey sold the stunning, undeveloped property located at the top of Patriarch Ridge to Big Sur Land Trust. The Washburns purchased the land in the early 1970s and recently worked with the Land Trust to protect this magnificent and biologically diverse open space. Al and Anne said, "Our family has enjoyed the spring wildflowers on this property for over four decades. We are happy that more people can now enjoy them." The roadway along Patriarch Ridge winds across the ridgetop portion of the property and connects Big Sur Land Trust's Mitteldorf Preserve with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Joshua Creek Ecological Reserve.

Jeannette Tuitele-Lewis, president and CEO of Big Sur Land Trust, adds, "We are so grateful to have worked with the Washburns to conserve this spectacular landscape and sacred tribal land – especially during this challenging time. In these past few weeks, as we shelter in place, people yearn for the solace that nature can provide. Beautiful conserved open spaces like Patriarch Ridge can provide all of us with a unique and powerful connection to the land. We are also grateful to our generous donors whose continuing support means that Big Sur Land Trust can still be delivering on our vision for healthy lands, healthy people and healthy communities."

Patriarch Ridge is a very important part of the Esselen Tribe's sacred lands and includes the upper watershed divide between Williams Canyon and the Garzas Creek drainage. Tom Little Bear Nason, Esselen tribal leader, commented, "We are so honored that Big Sur Land Trust is preserving this special and sacred land for future generations of the Indigenous and other peoples, and also for the wildlife who still use this ancient corridor. This place holds many traditional areas that our tribe has a deep connection with. It has been used for countless generations of Esselen and Rumsen people for ceremonies and as a travel route and corridor for bringing in important food sources from the coast on the northern end of Big Sur at the villages of Sarhentaruc and Ixchenta. Our ancestors would travel from the coast to the inland villages of Echilat and Soccoranda in Carmel Valley and would use the ridge as a resting spot where they would stay overnight. They also used it for gathering medicinal plants and vision quests. You can still find traces of the campsites and grinding rocks used for making dinner. The Esselen name for Patriarch Ridge was 'Tebitylat' – meaning 'resting spot'."

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The property will provide an extension beyond an existing trail through Mitteldorf Preserve. Hikers will definitely need a resting spot after gaining approximately 1800 vertical feet over a very strenuous 5-mile one-way trip from the main parking lot. The flat .4-mile section of trail added along the ridge goes through a majestic stand of old growth madrone and canyon live oak trees, many of which survived the 2016 Soberanes Fire. The dense canopy of these stately trees creates an open, park-like understory, with adjacent woodlands, grassy slopes and chaparral-covered hillslopes that drop steeply into shaded redwood canyons. Springtime wildflowers include wood rein-orchids in shaded habitats, yellow and magenta harlequin lupine, sky lupine and owl's clover scattered across hillside meadows. Hardy hikers should plan a full day to enjoy this unique experience and can sign up for solo hikes beginning on April 9th at bigsurlandtrust.org/hike-request/. Numbers of guests are limited, and all must practice social distancing and other safety precautions required by the shelter-in-place protocol.

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Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire love of land across generations, conservation of our unique Monterey County landscapes, and access to outdoor experiences for all. We see a future where natural landscapes, working lands, urban open spaces and healthy communities are cared for by people who share a love of nature and a deep appreciation for the richness of their diverse cultures.

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