



**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
CARR LAKE PROJECT
2020**

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

Big Sur Land Trust 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. Founded in 1978, Big Sur Land Trust’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. Big Sur Land Trust’s 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 five years we have built partnerships with youth-serving organizations in the Salinas Valley, such as CHISPA, Girls’ Health in Girls’ Hands, the Epicenter, Youth Orchestra of Salinas (YOSAL), and Castroville Teen Leadership Council. More than 1000 teenagers in Monterey County have experienced Big Sur Land Trust’s outdoor camps at our Glen Deven Ranch property in Big Sur and at Marks Ranch. Big Sur Land Trust has also partnered with the City of Salinas and Salinas community organizations to host “Take It Outside, Salinas!” at Natividad Creek Park. This annual event, held in May provides family-friendly outdoor activities including art, theater, music, and group exercise.

2. What is Carr Lake?

Carr Lake is an approximately 480-acre seasonally dry lakebed entirely surrounded by the City of Salinas. Historically, these lands were home to indigenous tribes of California. Since the 1920s and ‘30s Carr Lake has been owned and farmed by three families. In January 2017 the Ikeda family sold its 73-acre property to Big Sur Land Trust. The Hibino and Higashi families continue to own and farm their Carr Lake properties.

3. Why is Carr Lake significant?

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 to drain 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. With development surrounding the Carr Lake basin on all sides, these creeks and the Reclamation Ditch no longer have sufficient capacity to convey runoff from large storm events and there is a history of flooding in the project's vicinity.

4. What is Big Sur Land Trust's Carr Lake project?

Big Sur Land Trust believes that converting the former Ikeda property into a multi-benefit green space will be transformative for the city and its residents. Carr Lake is in the heart of the city and offers a central, easily accessible location for a new park. Since the 1970s, city leaders and community members have called for Carr Lake to serve as the "central park" for Salinas. In the city of Salinas, only 283 acres of the land is dedicated to small, neighborhood and community parks. There are just 1.7 acres of parkland per 1,000 people – far below the median of 4.65 acres per 1000 people for urban communities with similar population density. The national average is about 10 acres per 1000 people.

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. Big Sur Land Trust's acquisition of this property at Carr Lake is the first step towards that aspiration.

As part of a well-designed park project, transformation of Big Sur Land Trust's Carr Lake 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 also be designed to improve the quality of the water flow downstream through Carr Lake.

5. What is Big Sur Land Trust doing with the property in the short term? How does Big Sur Land Trust plan to pay for maintaining the property during this time?

Big Sur Land Trust is implementing an interim stewardship plan for the property that includes continued agricultural use, residential leases and building maintenance. We are currently engaging 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, Big Sur Land Trust is required to establish a dedicated stewardship fund. We will gladly accept donations!

6. What process will be used to ensure community engagement? Who will participate?

Big Sur Land Trust 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. Big Sur Land Trust also believes this approach better ensures a sense of collective ownership and success for shared outdoor spaces especially in an urban environment.

Big Sur Land Trust and our community partners have established a Carr Lake Partners Group to help guide the community engagement process. Organizations involved include Building Healthy Communities, the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA), CSUMB's Return of the Natives, Monterey County Health Department, Community Housing Improvement and Planning Systems Association (CHISPA), the Urban Arts Collaborative, Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement (MILPA), Local Urban Gardeners, the Epicenter, BAKTUN 12, Alisal Center for the Fine Arts, the Alisal Community Arts Network, the Action Council of Monterey County, and City of Salinas (Parks and Recreation, Community Development and Public Works).

Big Sur Land Trust has also partnered with CCA to help directly engage residents through door-to-door campaigns, educating families and gathering their ideas for our Carr Lake site.

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

The ways in which the property will be used will ultimately be determined by the community engagement process, the requirements associated with the acquisition funding and the features of the land and waters that flow through the site.

The funding Big Sur Land Trust received for the acquisition of the 73-acre property requires conservation outcomes such as public parkland and open space, habitat restoration, trails, flood management, and water quality improvements. Big Sur Land Trust has gathered information, facilitated studies and hosted a robust community engagement process to inform the park design. The property will offer a range of park amenities and we are exploring 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 lake. However, historically Carr Lake fluctuated between being a shallow lake and swampy wetlands. Because water management will be a key objective for the Big Sur Land Trust site, restoration will likely result in scenic and functional water features like wetlands and small ponds as 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?

At this time, while farming is underway on our property we are providing managed public access only through Big Sur Land Trust-hosted events or CCA resident-engagement activities. One of these resident-engagement activities will include guided tours of the Carr Lake property. To take part in one of these tours, ask Big Sur Land Trust or CCA staff for more information.

Big Sur Land Trust has partnered with Return of the Natives and other organizations to implement a restoration demonstration site/native plant garden in an easily-accessible area of the property. We have held several Community Planting Days at the site and engaged school groups in planting activities, and we plan to continue these efforts in 2020.

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

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

10. If I have an idea for Big Sur Land Trust'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 or go to Big Sur Land Trust's website at <https://bigsurlandtrust.org/carr-lake-salinas/> to share your ideas.