

Living With Great Salt Lake

Place Attachment Among Neighbors of Great Salt Lake and Its Environs

Report on Research Funded by the Doyle Stephens Memorial Scholarship for 2005

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All photos by: Carla Koons Trentelman

For my research, funded by the Doyle Stephens Memorial Scholarship, I conducted two focus groups to explore how residents who live close to Great Salt Lake (GSL)¹ in Weber and Davis counties feel about the lake, specifically how connected or attached they feel to GSL. The discussion included how focus group members feel about living close to the lake, why they chose to live there (including whether the lake played a role in the decision), and what they see as the positive and negative aspects of living close to GSL. The focus groups were part of a qualitative study of these issues, which also included interviews with a number of other residents living within one mile of the lake and its environs, county commissioners in Davis, Weber and Box Elder counties, and a number of resource managers and rangers from the refuges, preserves and state parks that are part of the lake system.² This report includes findings from this broader qualitative study. The findings here cannot be taken as representing those who live closest to the lake in general, but do provide a glimpse of how some of these lake neighbors feel about Great Salt Lake.

Positive and negative aspects of living near the lake.

Residents brought up a number of positive aspects of living close to Great Salt Lake. For example, when asked for the first word that came to mind when thinking about living near GSL, a number of focus group participants said “sunsets.” The sunsets over the lake were brought up by nearly everyone who was interviewed about the lake as well.

“How many times do you come home and someone will say, ‘Did you see the sunset tonight?’ And what do you do? You haul your lawn chair to some certain spot and you look at the sunset.”

[One Davis focus group member to the other participants] “Do you ever see us run out on our front lawn? That’s a sunset sighting. When you start seeing everybody run...”

“There’s two times a year the sun sets on the water—when it comes off the tail of that Fremont Island and when the sun hits that water, the sun hits and the light just shoots across the water...it’s pretty neat. I like seeing that. It only lasts for a few days, maybe a week or so.”

--All from Davis focus group members

“There’s no sunset like a Utah sunset over that lake. It is just unbelievably beautiful.”

--A Weber County resident

A number of residents talked about the night sky.

¹ The study area for my research includes residences within 1 mile of the high water line—the lake’s high point during the historic high water years of 1986-1987. A moratorium of sorts has been imposed on development lower than this elevation (about 4,215 feet above sea level, with some variation in county planning ordinances), with some limited differences between the counties in how it is described and maintained.

² There were 10 participants in the Davis County focus group and 6 in the Weber County focus group. A total of 17 interviews were conducted, including 8 interviews of residents (individuals and couples) in Davis, Weber and Box Elder County. The other 8 interviews were of professionals, including 1 county commissioner each from Davis, Weber and Box Elder counties, and 6 resource managers of lake-related waterfowl management areas or preserves, and rangers of lake-related state parks. 3 of these resource managers and rangers lived on-site, these people were interviewed both for their professional perspectives as well as their perspectives as residents.

“...The moon is really pretty too. ...it’s so dark, sometimes we get the pretty effect of the moon kind of glowing off the lake. I mean sometimes it seems like it’s not even dark out here.”

--Weber County resident

“... over the lake, it’s still quite dark and you can see the stars out there very nicely... it’s great for looking at the stars.”

“That’s what I love, is looking up and seeing the stars so bright.”

-- Both from Davis focus group participants

Another benefit of living near GSL that came up a good deal was the closeness to wildlife. This included many avian references, including shorebirds, geese, ducks, swans, pelicans, cranes, and others, as well as fond mentions of the large number of bald eagles in the winter. Residents also spoke of bighorn sheep, buffalo, deer, elk, coyotes, turtles, foxes, and others, found on the shores, in the basins where the rivers meet the lake, and on the islands.

“...this time of year I can hear the different migratory birds coming in, so in the mornings I like to just lay in bed listening to the different calls...”

--A GSL resource manager who lives onsite

“I think probably the neatest thing about living this close to the lake is the variety of birds that live out here.”

--A Weber County resident

“...we are so lucky, I think we are...to be able to sit in your backyard and watch the geese and the ducks and hear them geese and hear the ducks and all the other birds and I mean we live right out in a waterfowl area. It’s wonderful to me. I was watching the cranes today and it’s just so much fun...but I’ve always loved birds, so I really appreciate it when I can go out on my balcony and watch them birds. That’s really a positive to me. Not only that but they have deer now. Deer and elk...”

“On a real positive note, something that we really enjoy and it’s directly related because of the lake and the habitat that we have there, is in the winter time, the amount of bald eagles that frequent the area. This last year, on Sunday afternoon, we’d take our grandkids for a walk out on the [Ogden Bay] Bird Refuge and this one day we counted about 75 bald eagles. You know, right within about 10 trees. And that’s something that just you don’t see, and that’s directly because of the lake and the environment on it there during the winter.”

--both from Weber focus group participants

“The connection of being this close to a large metropolitan area, yet being woken up by chukars and coyotes howling, that connection with nature and being totally away from the city, yet being that close is a definite positive experience for us.”

-- A GSL resource manager who lives onsite

A number of other benefits of living close to lake were raised.

“I get an enjoyment out of watching the news and seeing what the prediction is, then watching the fronts move in on the lake... So that, to me, has been a great joy for me to just kind of watch that, to watch the weather conditions off the lake, see how they work.”

“One of the positives that I enjoy is... the weather. It’s really nice that you don’t have to get your snow shovel out more than a couple of times a year. And yet if you want the snow it’s only a few miles away. And that’s a real nice factor not only for shoveling the snow, but for the openness for the fields and such...you don’t have to fight the snow usually to take care of your animals.”

--Both from Weber focus group participants

“People come out here and say “All you can hear out here is birds!” “It’s so quiet and nice. I haven’t gotten any negatives, I’m trying to think of some negatives.”

-- *A GSL resource manager who lives onsite*

Most residents did talk about the negative aspects of living close to Great Salt Lake. Many brought up issues with “bugs,” including mosquitoes, gnats, horseflies, midges and brine flies.

“...it’s possible to drive across the causeway and get to the other side and not be able to see out of your windshield at all.” -- *A GSL resource manager who lives onsite*

“...‘bugs,’ even though you know the bugs don’t really bother me but I hear a lot of outside people talking about the bugs. ...we kind of get used to ‘em, or I have, growing up out there—they don’t bother me like they do when our friends from town come out then they all talk about the bugs.”

--*Weber focus group participant*

Other residents stated they were not bothered by the bugs since they were what brought the birds to the area to feed, or that they had gotten used to them.

“...the bugs were at the most to me just a small inconvenience. And I had gotten quite used to them, they don’t bother me.” --*Weber focus group participant*

Everyone brought up the smell, including a number who said it was not problematic for them. It seemed the issue of smell was so connected to the lake that people felt they had to comment on it, even if it was to say it did not affect them. However, many did see it as problematic. In fact, when asked for the first word that came to mind when thinking about living near GSL, half of the focus group participants said “the smell.”

“...it stinks... it’s kind of a rotten eggy smell to me.”

“Everybody that comes to my house will say, ‘How can you stand it out here?’”

--*from Davis focus group participants*

“...it stinks. And it seems like when there’s a breeze, when it comes from the west or a wind that you smell it more than other times.”

“...the Lake does stink, and I observe it but it doesn’t bother me either, like it does outsiders, you know, you just get used to it.” --*both from Weber focus group members*

“...that long, sweeping, stinking, slimy, brine shrimp-infested, rotten... it stinks!”

--*a Weber County study area resident, speaking of the shoreline in Davis County*

Other residents who lived in the same area as those complaining said it really was not a problem most of the time, in fact three who had grown up playing in the marshes said they liked it, and one resident said it just smelt like home.

“We don’t get the smell of the lake that much, but when we do, it brings back a lot of good memories for me—I used to go hunting along the lake with my Dad...”

--*a Davis focus group participant*

“I kind of like it, actually. I’d rather smell it than smog!” --*a Weber resident*

“During my years in the Navy, I was always...right there by the ocean, where a sailor is... When I get a certain smell from the lake ...that particular smell does give you that sense of being by the ocean again. And it’s one of those that brings back a lot of memories.”

--a Weber focus group participant

Other concerns besides insects and the lake smell surfaced as well.

“...there’s not only the flooding but there’s also the ground water level that gets really high out there.”

--Weber focus group participant

“...the other negative is that we are so close to the lake that we really get the inversion. And so we’ll have tremendously foggy days and I get real depressed. So people who live even a little higher up... you’re up out of it.”

--Davis County resident

“...the salt etching from the stormy breezes that come—and now, like my grill on my patio that is stainless steel...[is marred]”

“The soil grows the garden really good, the thing that’s bad is if it’s a drought year and the lake’s down and there’s a big wind and it blows the salt onto your plants...you better wash it off! ‘Cause they’ll croak—they don’t like it.”

--both from Davis focus group members

“...with the lake being down the last several years, there’s been a lot of exposed lake bed. ...when the wind blows, especially when you get a big, heavy south wind, the area on the mainland has been picking up a lot of lake dust, which has been a bit of a problem. We’ve heard a lot of complaints—actually had people call us and tell us we needed to water it down so it wouldn’t do that anymore.”

-- A GSL resource manager

Some of these nearest neighbors of GSL have been there during both low and high lake levels.

“...the lake was in our yard. That’s how high it was. It seems to me that it was in the mid-80s, like ’84 or ’85. It washed out all the dikes, it was right at the edge of the yard. The neighbors came and helped us build a sand barrier, but it took out all the plants that we had. And it was here for a long time, I mean that was the thing, I think it was here like 2 years and it was very stressful.”

--Davis County resident

“When that Lake came up, that was quite a shock to our community—we never realized we lived that close and was that vulnerable. It forced carp right up into our lawns and our yards. They came up the drainages to try and get away from the salt water. We could sit or stand out on our decks and see the Lake, right there, and it inundated some farm land and we found out that the Lake can be a treacherous thing as well as a beautiful thing to see. And it was quite a shock to us when that happened.”

“...that’s when the lake stink was the worst ‘cause it came up and killed all that marsh. It killed 21,000 acres of marsh out there in Ogden Bay, killed every bit of it. And the salt came clear back the river, clear to the river bridge... it killed all the vegetation along the edge of the river. You know, so we got that rotten vegetation smell really bad in those years when it was killing all that vegetation. That had a real effect when the Lake was coming up and down.”

--both from Weber focus group participants

“With the lake so low now, you don’t see it much. But you used to be able to when it was close.”

--Davis County resident

The south shore of Great Salt Lake with the lake level considerably below average.

For others, the threat of high water made them nervous about moving into the area.

“I’ll tell you that the reason we moved there is because my husband has lived in Davis County his whole life and we wanted to build a house, and I mean, he knows the County very, very well and so he drove around and that’s where he wanted to live. And I was worried about living by the Lake. I said, “I do not want to live by the Lake—don’t you remember in the 80’s when it rose?” He said, “If it gets high enough to get our house it’s going to get more than that.” He said it’s never going to come that high, don’t worry about it.”
--Davis focus group participant

In addition to some of these negatives neighbors of the lake experience, there is also the perception from people who do not live near the lake that it is a difficult place to live. Some focus group members talked about being discouraged from moving into the area.

“...some people said, “oh, well, what about the smell, what about the mosquitoes...”

“And everybody in our Ward was making fun of us, “oh no, not the sewer, down by that lake... I mean, how far is that? I mean three miles—probably about three miles west but to them that was, like, whoa, really, really far. And I remember [people] telling me that for the longest time living there...the people that lived up on the Bluff thought that you were clear down in the boondocks...”

“I hear, ‘you poor people that have to live in the most miserable place in Syracuse.’”
--Davis County focus group members

View from Goose Egg Island looking west to Antelope Island. Farmington Bay WMA doesn’t appear to be connected to Great Salt Lake during these low elevation years. During the 1980s this area was all covered by Great Salt Lake.

Why Do They Choose to Live Close to Great Salt Lake?

So why do people chose to live close to lake? There are a number of reasons.

A good number of residents were drawn to the area close to Great Salt Lake by its rural nature. Several of these became attached to the lake once they arrived, and for a number of people, the lake and the ruralness of the place go hand in hand.

“We wanted to get out of the city and we had friends out here already, and we saw the property open up. We just wanted to get out of the city. Our kids could have horses out here.”
--Weber County resident

“I loved it when we first moved out there... it was so dark you couldn’t see your hand in front of your face on a moonless night.”

“I like to take a walk out on the causeway...it’s like the favorite part of my day. I go out there and there’s wild geese... I grew up in a small town in Wyoming and it makes me feel like I’m still in the country.”
--Both from Davis focus group members

Some people choose to buy land as far west as can be developed, or right next to protected wetlands, because they know the land next to them will remain open space, that they can maintain unobstructed views and at least some rural feel to their land.

“I think you should advertise how ‘horrible’ it is so nobody else will want to live out there. We don’t want people to come out there now and we’re afraid they’re going to.”
-- Weber focus group member

Several people reported that most folks in the area lived there because they had inherited property, much of which had been in the family for generations. In some cases, the family connection had been there since the earliest European settlement, typically the Mormon settlement.

“Family. My family’s right here. My husband’s family... we came back to take care of my Mother-in-Law and inadvertently we inherited the house.” --*Davis focus group member*

“...we came down here as a family, in the old homestead that my grandfather owned... Before I got married I made my wife sign a contract that that’s where we were going to live. She’d like to break that contract sometimes, but I’d said if you marry me, we’re going to live out there next to the lake. That’s where I was born and raised, rode my horses bareback for years... So that’s why I’m there. ...I’ve already bought a burial plot in the local cemetery, that’s where my remains will probably go as well.” --*Weber focus group member*

One Davis resident’s father built the family home in 1915, and other than three years of living a few miles east, the resident has lived in that home his entire 78 years. “I still sleep in the same bedroom I was born in...” Other residents also reported they were there because of connections they had since childhood.

“I grew up there and, you know, I just loved it. I really don’t understand what other kids did for a childhood, because we just played out in the fields and rode horses and every day we was on our horses bareback and went down in the swimming hole, swimming, and then hunting. It just was the childhood that we had, and it was fun.” -- *Weber focus group member*

Other residents reported they had chosen to purchase land in the area because it was affordable, another indication of the land closest to GSL not being typical lakefront property.

“We bought out there because it was a low priced piece of land and it was big one-acre lots...At the time...for me it was expensive, but it was the best we could afford and now I love it out there, I’ve loved it out there ever since I moved out.”

--*Davis focus group member*

“The price of the property. We got a good deal on the land. I guess that was the biggest reason, plus we wanted to get away, we wanted to be secluded.”

--*Weber County resident*

Still others indicated they had moved to the area because it was a “good place to raise the kids.” Some of these parents talked primarily about the benefits of children living in a rural area, but a number talked about feeling positive about raising them so close to the lake or the bays.

“...they roamed all over out there...it was just a good place for children to grow up.”

--*Davis focus group member*

“...it was a place where a child had to learn to use their imagination, to live out here and have fun, and call it home without having a bus or stores right there.”

--*Weber County resident*

Some residents were specifically attracted by the lake and the bays, especially by the idea of being close to the wildlife there.

“Well, we’re birdwatchers. And we were living in Salt Lake, but we found this [Farmington Bay WMA]... And so my husband would come up here... He started noticing that they were building this house—and we were saying, ‘wow, neat!’ And he came home one day, and said, ‘Aahh!! That house, that house is for sale!!’ And we bought it within one week... On the day we moved in, there

were eagles... We had eagles here and in the back yard when we moved in.”

--*Davis County resident*

Some residents who leave the area for one reason or another later return, often bringing a spouse with them.

“I lived, moved away for eight years it took me to convince my husband to take me back home.” [“So you’re back by choice?”] “Yes, definitely. Back on family ground, yes. I couldn’t stay away, I just wanted, that’s where I wanted to be. [Because of the family connection] and just the environment. There’s no better place to live. I just really felt that and I always just wanted to live there.” [“What was it that drew you back specifically?”] “You know, I couldn’t nail it down to just one thing, you know, the people, the community, the land, the wildlife, I mean, it’s just the whole picture. I mean, it really, it was a little heaven on earth. It really is, that’s the only place I wanted to live.”

--*Weber focus group participant*

There are a number of aspects of the lake that appear to impair attachment for even those who live closest to GSL. The lack of access to the lake for most residents is one limit to residents being able to feel attached.

“Well, it’s hard to get there.”

--*Davis County resident*

“We don’t get to the lake, that’s for sure. I mean it’s—we know it’s there, we know, I know, but on this end isn’t the lake per se...”

--*Weber County resident*

“...I’ve got more connections with West Yellowstone than with the lake...[You might be able to feel more connected to the lake] if you had access to it. That’s just it, we don’t have the access to it, that makes a big difference... I can’t see where anyone could be connected to it that didn’t have actual access to it.”

--*Weber County resident*

Many residents just do not think about the lake.

“The lake’s irrelevant... The lake’s just there... Never thought about the lake much, actually.”

--*Weber County resident*

This has lead to many people not *ever* going to the lake, even though they live nearby.

Feelings of attachment and connection to the lake

Despite these things that serve as limiting factors, there is a good deal of attachment to the lake among the residents in my study. When asked if there were things that made them feel connected, or not connected, to the lake, several mentioned how well known the lake is as something that was special and unique.

“It’s really easy to find the Lake on a map, even on a globe. ‘See that little point there? That’s where we are.’ Not many people can say that.”

--*Davis focus group member*

“That’s our name to fame. If someone says, ‘where do you live?’ and I say, ‘Have you heard of the Great Salt Lake,’ I don’t care if I’m in Nebraska, or where I’m at, ‘Have you ever heard of the Great Salt Lake?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘I live about three miles from the Great Salt Lake.’ They know where you’re at.”

--*Weber focus group participant*

“...it’s a famous lake, it’s the biggest lake west of the Mississippi. It’s the only salt lake in the nation. It’s a famous lake, if you say, ‘I live by the Great Salt Lake’ someone knows where you’re at..., it’s the only lake in Utah that’s really on the map... It’s just something important.”

--*Weber County resident*

When asked how they feel about living close to GSL, some residents expressed a great deal of attachment.

“It’s a privilege, it’s a tremendous privilege.” --*Davis County resident*

“I can’t imagine being without it... I can’t visualize living out here and not having this beauty.”
--*Weber County resident*

“I think, for myself, I’m connected because it is my whole life. I mean, I’ve been there my whole life. It’s always been a part of—it was a part of me growing up, and it’s a part of me being an adult now.”
--*Davis County resident*

“I told my husband I want to be buried in West Point, right there on the top where you can look down on the lake...there’s a big enough connection that I want to end up there... Yeah, that’s pretty connected, isn’t it? If you’re gonna put your bones there. [He’s] puttin’ his in Wyoming though so...it’s a race to see who goes first.” -- *Davis focus group member*

“...how I’m connected I think is because I have lived here in the bulk of raising my five children as they’re growing up, their childhood and all those good years of raisin’ those kids and just enjoyin’ that and the times that they’ve had there and all of that nature, before all those homes came about.”
--*Davis focus group member*

“...I feel connected to it when I hear—like we can hear Sandhill Cranes. And especially in March, I love March because they’ll be circling overhead, but they also, they’re nesting and calling. And we go for walks and see them. Anytime there are birds—pelicans or geese—that just reminds me of the whole thing. Plus the sunsets and the sunrises and the moon—anything that draws my attention to the bigger environment is part of it...”
--*Davis County resident*

“That’s probably because, why a lot of us are as close as we are, is, because of the memories and the nostalgia that comes with the land and being close to the lake, enjoying the benefits that the lake actually offered us.”

“...at one time, when I had to leave to go to the Navy, the mountains were my thing. I missed those mountains terribly. I was homesick for the mountains. If I had to leave now, I’d be homesick for *that*, because I’ve come to really enjoy the lake out there.”
--*both from Weber focus group participants*

There are also residents who express complex feelings about the lake.

“...I’ve learned to have a real love-hate relationship with the Great Salt Lake. You know, it’s a beautiful place—you can go out there a lot of times and the Lake will be so clear you can see six or eight feet deep and see the bottom, just like Bear Lake, it’s beautiful. And the sunsets are just phenomenal out there on Fremont Island ‘cause there’s no civilization if you look west as the sun sets, and they’re just gorgeous. But I’ve also found out that the Lake, the Great Salt Lake is one of the most dangerous bodies of water in the world—that and the Dead Sea—because of the density. And we’ve experienced that in our boats, you know you have to be so careful with the density, the white caps and also the fog out there, so. And then, my real love is animals. I have a degree of zoology and I, I’ve learned a lot about birds and I love to go out there and look at all the birds on the Lake.”

--*Weber focus group member*

Children, “Old-Timers” and Concerns for the Lake:

Both focus group members and those interviewed were asked about their children’s interaction with Great Salt Lake. Those who grew up living close to the lake were also asked to talk about their interaction with the lake while they were growing up.

"I think my kids, most of their experience with the Great Salt Lake would have been from Antelope Island where they was actually able to go out and bob like a cork in the water, we're not that far away from Antelope Island. ...because the lake has receded so far out where we live, they can't really go out and swim in the lake. But Antelope Island's probably one of the greatest things to happen to the State of Utah. 'Course, we know how many visitors visit that a year, but it really gives our children—the schools go out there and they have a chance to really see it's one of the wonders of the world. ...that's a fascinating thing, for them to be able to see that. People travel for thousands of miles to see what we have in our backyard."

"I know my kids all did field trips out to [Great Salt Lake Mineral], which was good for them to see that, what's coming off the Lake and that was very—I mean, it's in our backyard, so that was interesting for them."

"I'm traveling away from our neck of the woods and the lake, but look at the history that's on the south end of the lake with the old Pony Express route...growin' up we used to, even before I was living by the lake, we'd take trips out there...experienced that south end of the lake and it's some of the things that our kids really enjoyed growing up is that we would go out there and spend a whole weekend out there or three or four days... That's a different area of the Lake but yet it's still part of the whole lake atmosphere."

--all from Weber focus group participants

"...we've seen pelicans close to the house and that's been awesome because my oldest daughter likes birds so we're always out, seeing what birds we can find."

"I remember going out on the school field trips with the kids and they'd all bring their little jars so that they could go catch the sea monkeys, and... that was fun."

"[My kids] had a canoeing activity just recently with scouts. They went out and rode around Egg Island and saw the nesting going on out there—they thought that was just something."

"...we swam there, I think probably everybody, as kids... we all swam, we all floated. I took my kids out there probably just last year... You know you walk through leg-deep sand and you walk through the bugs and they thought that was pretty cool, they'd run—and so they did basically what we did as kids ...so it was kind of letting kids know this was where we kind of hung out as kids."

"My three boys have loved, I mean they're older now—you know twenty is the youngest one—but they loved living there. And they'd go over and explore in the water..."

"I think my kids all feel a connection. You know, I wasn't raised here—we've been here about 10 years. And, but, this has been their growing-up years and they love it. I've heard my kids say they'd love to have a spot along the lake shore."

--all from Davis focus group members

"[My daughter's] friends come out here, which is really cool, because she takes them and shows them [the park]. Which is really cool, too, because most of them haven't been out here before. So for her to bring them out, she feels in heaven, being able to show them around and knowing all this stuff." -- *A GSL resource manager*

"...my thought goes back to when I was a child and we used to take the horses up on the salt flats and we could ride forever. Had a good time." --*Davis focus group member*

"I always liked the lake, and I always loved being around it, and the wetlands and things associated with it... I still remember the day, to this day, that I decided this is what I wanted to do. I was down along the edge of the lake and I watched an airboat go by, with some fish and game guys on it. And I was 12 or 13 years old, and I watched this boat go by and I thought, wow, that looks fun,

that looks neat, and I wish I was on that boat, going with them to see what they're going to see or do, and that's the day when I decided "I want to do that." And that's what I did. And from that point on, on the day I started college and on, I knew that's what I wanted to do. And fortunately I was able to be out here and do it, but that, for me, that was the day that did it. And I liked the area and I loved the lake, but then you know, I saw people out here doing something that worked on the lake and said, "Oh, you can work out here!" So that's when it clicked for me."

-- A GSL resource manager

Some of the strongest attachment was expressed by people who grew up near lake and got to explore in the marshes, hunt, or just play around in the area. In fact there was some concern that others who had not had that experience would likely feel very differently about Great Salt Lake:

"...maybe we have to learn, maybe you have to learn to appreciate and grow up with those experiences because I don't think there's very many people that hadn't lived out here and could express those same feelings. You get visitors out there, they'd don't like anything about it. It's a dead lake to them, it stinks, there's bugs. So maybe you have to learn, you know, by living there and experiencing some of those things, to appreciate it."

"I think the new people have no idea of the history...I didn't and I've been here 12 years. I had no idea of the things that you could even still do out there."

"Yeah, I think a lot of it is there's an age differential. You talk to the oldtimers, I mean they all have connections, really deep roots. But the new move-in people, I don't think they have any connection with the lake or the environment too much yet. They probably will as they appreciate things and learn to get past the bugs and the smell..."

--Weber focus group participants

There are also some concerns that some of the feelings of connection and attachment to Great Salt Lake will disappear after the older generation is gone.

"I think that once our generation is gone, I don't think the kinship to that area is going to be as strong... We're there because of our ancestors and the heritage that we have there... there's a lot of history there...there's a lot of nostalgia with us that still remember those things. But that's going to fade and it'll just be property in a few years, then it won't be anything other than just the fact that they want to come out where they can build. I met a lady in my office yesterday, and they're building right down next to the [Ogden Bay] Bird Refuge and they're there because they can get land, and they want to have horses and a few things. Otherwise... they're not drawn by anything other than the fact that it's a place you can still get open land...and build."

"Well, these people who grew up, when they're gone if we don't do something, it will be gone too and nobody will even care—there'll be so many people who knew as little about it as I did that we'll have no—we won't realize that it could be done away with..."

--Weber focus group participants

Some raised other concerns for the lake as well.

"You know what I wonder? Is what is the effect on the lake of all the people moving in, 'cause the water gets treated and dumped into the lake. What happens to the lake when all these people move here?"

"Personally I'd like to see the islands stay the way they are. I heard talk of like a nature preserve out on Antelope Island, that sounds great to me, but I'd sure hate to see a lot of commercial development happen on the island—or anywhere else around the lake shore proper."

--Both from Davis focus group participants

However, there were also other points of view.

“The best use they could have for the Island is to put the freeway, put another highway from Tremonton right to Nephi, down Promontory Point and cross the islands. That would do away with this Legacy Highway, cause all that truck traffic is clear from Canada to Mexico.”

--Another Davis focus group member

The Stories They Told.

Focus group members were able to share their stories about living close to Great Salt Lake with each other. Even though all the group members in each group were neighbors and knew each other well, most had not heard each others' stories about the lake before the focus group.

“One of my sons in the autumn time, while my sons were out exploring the drainage ditches and ponds and various things around the lake ...they came across a goose that had been shot and wounded and couldn't fly, and my one son was very proud when he brought this live goose home that he'd caught—wrapped up in his winter coat, and the goose had shredded the coat. But he was excited, and he wanted to fix “his” bird, its wing was basically shot off, totally... We doctored it and it was able to live somewhat of a normal life even though it couldn't fly. Those are experiences that I don't think they would have had if they would have been away from the Lake...” --

Weber County Resident

“Probably the thing that I remember most about the lake was when I was a young teenager, we used to take old cars and pickups and drive out on the flats—that's when the lake was way out. And we drove out one time and we didn't realize there's soft spots out there and we dropped out of sight, clear out there. We'd drive as far as we could and then we'd walk out and go swimming. We spent all day trying to get that, it was a big ol', I think it was a Buick that we went in out there and we finally had to go and get a tractor and come out and pull it out... It was always a mysterious place to go. It was like going to the ocean. It was a fun place to go. I like the lake and of course, being a hunter, the lake furnished us a lot of opportunities to hunt waterfowl. I can remember many stories that my father and my grandfather used to tell about hunting on the entrance to the lake where the water, the rivers, empty into it.” --

Weber County resident

“...I remember when I was a little boy going out with my parents and relatives and they would build little houses out of wire and they'd put them in the lake and then they'd bring in these little crystal houses. In fact, I dropped one of my cowboy hats in the lake about a month ago and I hurried and fished it out and by the time we got back to Promontory, my hat was just white. So I'm just going to take an old hat out there and making it a crystal hat—the lake crystallizes everything, makes a really beautiful thing.” --*Weber County resident*

“I courted my wife trapping muskrats. I was outta high school, I couldn't get a job. So, I trapped muskrats. I would travel three or four miles a day, set trap lines out, and all my buddies, they were penniless but I always had a few dollars.”

“Well, we all taught our kids to do that. My boys trapped muskrat for a few extra bucks for Christmas, and we taught ‘em all how to trap ‘rats ‘cause they could get some pretty good money out of them, ...and it all comes back to the lake and the drainages going out to it...”

--Two Weber focus group members

“During the depression we fixed up a wagon with large tires and we'd go out there with horses and load up a ton [of salt] every day. Just west of my farm here. The wagon was really light, and instead of a bed we had what we called dumplegs—2x12's across the bottom and one up the side and we could put about a ton of salt on it—every afternoon we'd go out and get a load of salt—that was

pretty good money for depression years. Truckers from Montana and Wyoming would come down and buy it, to sell to the ranchers I guess.”

--Davis County resident

What Focus Group Members Thought was Most Important.

At the end of each focus group, participants were asked what they each thought was the most important thing that had been discussed that evening. Here are the responses from the Davis County focus group:

“Access. Having access to the island and to the shore and the water.”

“Having it stay the same. The lake, not to change the lake and the islands. Can’t do much about people trying to build around us, where we can build, but the lake and the islands ought to stay [the same]...”

“I think for me maybe it’d be a safe and good environment for kids to live in. Which we could lose.”

“Well I’d like to see it—I’m a little different on this island-stay-the-same. I’d like to see the emphasis go off of the buffalo and go on to the people and I’d like to see them open that road back up to Salt Lake and have people all along the Wasatch Front be able to use that island. Have facilities for them to use it. I’d like to see them put some trees out there, with campgrounds, and more roads out there and more recreation for the kids. I’d like to see them, rather than people drive fifty miles to recreate I think they can just get off of Exit 111 in Salt Lake and just go right on to the island, and we can go out this way, and the whole Wasatch Front can enjoy that island. And they should have bought that Fremont Island and utilized that, too.”

“We need more recreation. More recreational opportunities.”

“And more open space...before we get to the island.”

“I think we’ve got the perfect spot: Lake on this side and the mountains there. You’re not on the mountain, but you get to see the mountain.”

Here are the responses from the Weber County focus group:

“I want to learn more about it and share what is there with my children and grandchildren that I’m sure don’t know. And probably write down some of the stories of [my husband’s] family that have lived out there.”

“I would like to see them just really be able to preserve the wildlife. To me that’s really important... we’re in a flyway right through the Great Salt Lake. It’s amazing, most people don’t understand all the shore birds that live in the Great Salt Lake that, I mean, if it wasn’t for the Great Salt Lake, they would not be able to migrate to where they go, so it’s not just the waterfowl that we like to shoot, it’s all the other fauna that’s out there along the shore.”

“...in the winter time when we get the inversions, I think ... the sensitivity of the lake and how the inversions, with all the pollution and everything and all the industry that are growing on the lake on the Wasatch Front, the potential of further development out in our area, I would like to see that addressed because I think that can be quite a damaging thing to your wildlife and so forth.”

“I think that the most important to me personally is...the overcrowding and just the population growth. There’s nothing more amazing to me than being able to go out, outside at night time and because we don’t have all the light pollution, you can look up and see constellations and stars that people in town don’t even know exist. And that’s just one of the things that, you know, we talked

about sound pollution, and environmental pollution, and the light pollution is another factor that comes with population growth. Everybody's got to have a streetlight."

"I would say that the one thing that I learned tonight is that I really take the Great Salt Lake for granted. I never realized that it's one of the special things in my life that probably I've overlooked, and didn't realize it, how it has affected our community as well as my personal life... You live around it. You were a part of it, it was a part of your life and all of a sudden you're saying, "wow, yeah, it really was," and it's still there and what's gonna become of it? Because there's gonna be some changes with the Great Salt Lake. We know there's dams being formed, or being ready, and it's going to recede... we're gonna lose a lot of what goes into the Great Salt Lake."

[Response from another participant] "We have to fight for that so that doesn't happen."

--all from Weber focus group participants