

CARTER LAKE – GATEWAY TO THE METRO AREA

Carter Lake is a rare, urban recreational resource for the Omaha metro area. Located directly west of Eppley airport and two miles north of the Qwest Convention Center and Omaha's downtown area, Carter Lake is the first view visitors see when they arrive in Omaha and start to explore the metro area.

Residents of Carter Lake proudly call it their lifetime home and then there are those who come and visit for short spells of relaxation and recreation, finding a little slice of paradise on a Missouri River oxbow lake that lies within two states, Nebraska and Iowa.

No matter what, Carter Lake is a place of beauty providing visitors and residents an abundance of recreational and leisure activities including boating, fishing, waterskiing, jetskiing, and swimming. Carter Lake welcomes visitors to a small town haven within the shadows of Omaha's beautiful skyline.



CARTER LAKE — PAST & PRESENT

What makes Carter Lake unique?

Carter Lake is the only city in Iowa located west of the Missouri River. The Nebraska-Iowa border was originally placed midchannel in the Missouri River. In March of 1877, a flood occurred and the meandering loop that curved around the city of Carter Lake, Iowa was cut off by the river thus leaving the town surrounded by Nebraska. The remnants of the old river course became an oxbow-shaped lake, originally named Cut-Off Lake. The three mile long, 320 acre lake is now known as Carter Lake, same as the city it holds within it's arch.

After extensive litigation between Iowa and Nebraska, in 1892 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the city of Carter Lake belonged to Iowa and in 1930, Carter Lake became an officially incorporated city in the State of Iowa. Today, the state boundary line still follows the former channel placing this Iowa enclave clearly within Nebraska and the lake juxtapositioned on the borders of two states.

Why is the lake in trouble now?

The Midwest is experiencing a drought period which is directly impacting the current water levels of Carter Lake, compounding problems with the quality of the water in the lake. As of 2006, the lake is significantly below the optimal water level. Carter Lake is a closed system which does not receive any additional water from streams or rivers thus causing rainfall to be the major driver of the lake level at any given point of time.

The Carter Lake Preservation Society has been formed to address the current lake impairments in order to ensure future generations can enjoy the many benefits of Carter Lake for many years to come.



CARTER LAKE FACTS

Elevation: 980 feet

Lake size: 320 acres

Shoreline: 6.7 miles

Length: 3 miles

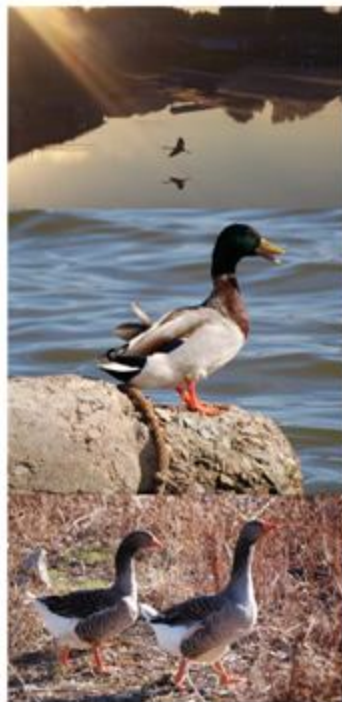
% of lake water in Nebraska: 80%

% of lake water in Iowa: 20%

Maximum past depth: 28 feet

Current average depth: 3 feet

Feathered Friends and More...



Visitors leaving Omaha's Eppley Airport will find a plethora of thriving wildlife nestled along the roadside at Carter Lake.

The awesome grace of America's majestic bald eagles can be found in great numbers at Carter Lake in late winter. Springtime brings other visitors — Blue Herons, Peregrine Falcons, Herring Gulls, Geese, Ducks, Killdeer and multiple other birds find Carter Lake a pleasant stop along their migratory path.

Fisherman can find fun in their quest for a catch with carp, blue gill, channel catfish, crappie and large mouth bass being the major fish species residing in Carter Lake, along with pike and walleyes.

Muskrats and other wildlife find their habitat home alongside the lake as well.



Majestic Dreams

Last night, once again, I had a dream
About an eagle in the blue,
And just like all the other dreams,
Right above my head it flew.
In every dream of it I had,
It landed somewhere close by,
And each time, I was so excited
For the beauty that caught my eye.

Our national emblem gracing the sky
For so long I yearned to see,
And envied those fortunate enough
To see him on the wing, being free.
When I awoke from the glorious dreams,
Some disappointment I did feel.
But then I overcame with happiness,
For the dreams had seemed so real.

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Carter Lake Preservation Society Mission— *To preserve and to improve the lake and its watershed for continued use and enjoyment for future generations.*



The Carter Lake Preservation Society, Inc. (CLPS) is an Iowa non-profit corporation formed in November, 2005, as a result of community action and commitment to improving the Carter Lake watershed. The lake is shared by two different communities in two different counties in two different states and, until now, has never had a single, shared voice of advocacy. CLPS formed to fill this gap and work with passion, energy and commitment to find solutions to the impairments that affect Carter Lake.

2006-2007 Goals

- Install rain gardens along Abbott Drive and in the city of Carter Lake.
- Work with Nebraska DEQ and Omaha City Parks to secure funding.
- Fund and build the lake recharge system to improve the recreational value of the lake—Estimated cost is \$1.5 to \$2.5 million.
- Assist the EPA in completing the TMDL study for 2006
- Facilitate development of the Watershed Planning Board
- Assist in implementing recommendations from the TMDL study.
- Develop the comprehensive long term development plan for the lake.
- Armor all shorelines. Estimated cost \$1 million for 18,000 linear feet.
- Assist the City of Carter Lake in their multiple lake shore development plans.
- Continue education and information outreach for watershed improvement and protection.
- Continue gathering stakeholder input.

2007-2008 Goals

- Fill the Lake by 2008.
- Develop sustainable fish habitat.
- Dredge the lake, if required.
- Refurbish the picnic area in Levi Carter Park.



OUR LAKE IS SICK

Since the 1950's, a series of dams and levees have been constructed on the Missouri river to control seasonal flooding which had contributed to the fluctuation of the water level of Carter Lake. The lake, no longer subject to an almost annual exchange of water to and from the Missouri river, has advanced into a hyper-eutrophic state, reducing it's utility as a recreational lake and acting as the terminal end for contaminants received in industrial, urban, suburban and agricultural storm water runoff. Water quality has degraded and fluctuations in water quantity exacerbate the problem.

The states of Iowa and Nebraska have monitored and measured the lake and found it has the following health problems:

Turbidity: Caused by suspended solids and re-suspension of sediment and nutrients due to shallowness, wind and waves, fish, and speed boat traffic stirring up the bottom.

Algae: Warnings were issued in 2004, 2005 and 2006 because of high levels of blue green algae.

Bacteria: Excess nutrients in the lake from lawn fertilizers and chemicals.

E. coli: or fecal coliform bacteria, which comes from excrements from mammals such as humans, dogs, and other animals that hang around the lake. Deposits of E. coli are made directly into the water or washed in.

PCBs: PCBs are found in industrial and household waste like hydraulic fluids, plasticizers, adhesives, fire retardants, pesticide extenders, inks, lubricants, and cutting oils. The problem with PCBs (industrial waste) is that they don't go away and do not leave the lake. So any contaminants received from storm water from industrial and urban runoff stays in the lake.

These health problems are also called impairments in governmental terms. Carter Lake is on the EPA Section 303d List of Impaired Waters in both Iowa and Nebraska as a result of these impairments.

In 2006, the EPA will be conducting a Total Mean Daily Load (TMDL) study and will make recommendations on how to reduce or eliminate these impairments.



NEXT STEPS

The Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors has taken action to improve the condition of Carter Lake. The board voted to contribute \$163,000 to a series of projects to restore the lakeshore, with additional funding from the Iowa DNR and the city of Carter Lake. Carter Lake mayor, Russ Kramer, presented the five lake projects to the city of Carter Lake which are planned for completion in 2006. The projects are as follows:

- 1.) Carter Lake Club Park: Armoring the shoreline and additional landscaping along with four rain gardens in the park.
- 2.) Mabrey Park improvements: The lagoon beside the park is so shallow that it is now dry so the city plans to dig out the lagoon.
- 3.) Wave Crest Park improvements: Armoring the shoreline, extending the fishing jetty and adding a beach area.
- 4.) Additional lake access at 8th and R Street in Carter Lake: Building up of the shoreline and armoring will be done and there will be additional parking for people to use this area for lake access.
- 5.) Mabrey Park Fishing Jetty: A 100' x 40' fishing jetty will be constructed using the concrete from the sidewalk removed from the Carter Lake Club Park.



\$50,00 for Carter Lake

Congressman Paul Shomshor, Iowa State House of Representatives, has included Carter Lake in the Iowa Quality Improvement Funds portion of the Infrastructure Appropriations Bill, House File 2780. \$50,000 is a line item identified for a "Lake Improvement feasibility study and restoration project, partnering with Nebraska, Omaha and the City of Carter Lake"



Carter Lake
Preservation
— Society —

OUR MISSION:

- To improve the environmental quality of the lake through cooperation with city, county, state and federal agencies as well as educational institutions, foundations and other private resources.
- To ensure the fishery and wildlife habitats continue to thrive.
- To showcase the lake as a metropolitan recreational area for everyone to enjoy.

For more information on Carter Lake and The Carter Lake Preservation Society please contact us:

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Visitor's Viewpoint.... Moments matter.

There are certain events that for some reason stand out. They trigger memory, reflection, emotions, ideas, and actions. Ironically, it is always the simple things that change and impact our lives. And these things never happen when you are looking for them to happen. That is what happened to me on a lake, which was once a river surrounded on three sides by a city in another state.



Apart from Christmas, the Fourth of July has always been my favorite holiday. My memories of the Fourth of July have been formed by family, good friends, fireworks, barbeque, parades, baseball, and ice cream. But, I had never experienced the magic of fireworks on a lake with your closest friends.

We all have moments when we open our eyes and see things that we can't believe are real and force ourselves to close our eyes again to make sure we really are awake and not dreaming. Watching fireworks with friends on Carter Lake was one of those moments.

Being on a boat in the middle of a tranquil lake at night has always made me forget about the buzz and confusion of the world on shore, but this was different. I was completely immersed in a strange combination of sights and sounds. The tranquility of the lake was interrupted by the loud pop of firecrackers and display shells bursting in air. Brilliant light and vivid color dazzled as it split from the night sky in all directions, but magic happened when the light hit the water.

Each brilliant color appeared to dance off the surface of the lake. Soon my eyes were focused on what was happening on the lake instead of the shells exploding in the sky above. As each shell exploded, new colors illuminated and tickled off the water. Some formed images that looked as if you could touch them, like palpable currents of colored lights moving back and forth, as if they were brilliant dragon flies hovering just out of reach. It was magical.

I have only recently discovered that Carter Lake was originally called Cut-Off Lake. That night I splendidly felt cut-off from the rest of the world. My friends had invited me to a special place at a very special time. I wondered if the residents of Carter Lake, Iowa knew and appreciated how special their little corner of the world is and the magic that happens here.

George Orwell said, "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle." I think he is right. A moment that triggers something lasting and special for one person can be taken for granted by those who are most familiar. Some communities are defined not by neighborhoods and geographical boundaries, but by common experiences. Sometimes we experience moments that define who we are and what community we belong to when we would never expect. Thanks to one July Fourth, part of me belongs to Carter Lake.

—By Scot Caldwell