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## **LCRA to revise Highland Lakes Water Management Plan**

By Aden Holasek Wednesday, 14 July 2010

LAKE TRAVIS – The Lower Colorado River Authority has formed a new advisory committee to help update and revise the Water Management Plan for lakes Travis and Buchanan, which supply drinking water to 1.1 million people in Central Texas.

The current plan, though only approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality this past January, was originally submitted in 2003, and thus based on research data nearly a decade old.

"The process [of updating the plan] can take several years and [starting on the revision now] will give LCRA an opportunity to incorporate information from new studies on projected water demands, environmental flow needs and other important issues," said James Kowis, LCRA water supply strategist.

### **How this affects Central Texans**

The state-approved Water Management Plan governs LCRA's operation of the Highland Lakes by balancing competing interests and determines how water is allocated to customers during drought and other water supply shortages. Major LCRA customers include the City of Austin and other Central Texas communities; municipal utility districts and water supply corporations; and industry and power plants.

"As the recent drought illustrated, the water in the Highland Lakes is a limited and precious resource," said LCRA General Manager Tom Mason. "The Water Management Plan helps ensure that this resource is used responsibly to serve the diverse interests in the basin."

The potential actions outlined in the Water Management Plan include reducing releases for environmental needs, cutting backwater for agricultural customers, and working with wholesale municipal and industrial customers to implement mandatory water-use restrictions.

LCRA executed actions outlined in the Water Management Plan during the drought in 2009 when the combined storage of lakes Buchanan and Travis dropped to 900,000 acre-feet (considered full at 2.01 million acre-feet). This prompted LCRA to request its wholesale water customers implement mandatory restrictions on water use, such as limiting car washing, pool filling and lawn watering on certain days and limiting the use of ornamental fountains. LCRA also reduced water for the



downstream bays and estuaries because of the drought and would have significantly reduced water to the farmers in 2010 had timely rains not come.

### **About the advisory committee**

The 16-member advisory committee will spend the next year working with LCRA to provide input on how to improve water management strategies that address needs in the basin. The revised plan will then be submitted to TCEQ in late 2012.

The advisory committee members each represent a stakeholder group that depends on the Highland Lakes: industry, environment, agriculture, municipalities and lake interests.

"Each of these people has committed a significant amount of time to this project," said Emlea Chanslor, LCRA spokesperson. "We hope the interaction between the different kinds of customers will create lots of discussion and understanding between our customers."

### **Committee members**

- Ralph Savino, Garwood Irrigation Division
- Robby Cook, Lakeside Irrigation Division
- Haskell Simon, Gulf Coast Irrigation Division
- Laurance Armour, Pierce Ranch
- Myron Hess, National Wildlife Federation
- Cindy Loeffler, Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Jennifer Walker, Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter
- Greg Meszaros, Austin Water Utility
- David Vaughn, City of Burnet
- Earl Foster, Kingsland Water Supply Corporation
- Rick Gangluff, South Texas Nuclear Project
- Ken Gorzycki, Horseshoe Bay Resort
- Kerry Spradley, Windermere Oaks
- Janet Caylor, Lakeway and Riviera Marinas
- Jo Karr Tedder, Council Creek Property Owners Association
- Rusty Brandon, Hi-Line Lake Resort

For more information on the Water Management Plan, including updates on the advisory committee's work, visit [www.lcra.org/watermanagementplan](http://www.lcra.org/watermanagementplan).