

Jan. 3, 2013

# LCRA BOARD TO HOLD SPECIAL MEETING JAN. 8 IN AUSTIN

*Board will consider asking for additional emergency drought relief*

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***Note to editors: A copy of the resolution the Board will consider is attached.***

With severe drought conditions continuing across most of the lower Colorado River basin, the LCRA Board of Directors will hold a special meeting on Jan. 8 to consider further restricting releases from the Highland Lakes for downstream irrigation in 2013.

The Board will consider revising its request for emergency drought relief to further protect municipal and industrial customers in the event drought conditions do not improve in 2013. If approved, the modified request would go to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

LCRA Board Chair Timothy Timmerman said that with combined storage in lakes Travis and Buchanan at 41 percent and a dry forecast ahead, it is appropriate for the Board to consider significantly curtailing or cutting back releases of Highland Lakes water for downstream farmers in 2013.

“As this historic drought continues, it becomes more and more apparent that we must do whatever it takes to protect the firm water supplies for the City of Austin and other municipalities,” Timmerman said.

At the meeting, the Board will consider a staff recommendation to provide interruptible stored water for a first crop in 2013 based on the combined storage of lakes Buchanan and Travis at 11:59 p.m. on March 1, 2013, as follows:

- Provide no interruptible stored water to farmers in Gulf Coast and Lakeside irrigation divisions if the combined storage is below 850,000 acre-feet.
- Provide up to 121,500 acre-feet of interruptible stored water for irrigation if the combined storage is between 850,000 acre-feet and 920,000 acre-feet on March 1.
- Provide interruptible stored water in accordance with the Water Management Plan if the combined storage is at or above 920,000 acre-feet on March 1.

If water is provided for first crop, staff recommendation is to provide a limited amount of stored water for second crop only if storage on July 1 is at or above 950,000 acre-feet.

In November, the Board asked TCEQ to allow LCRA to provide less water to downstream farmers in 2013 than called for in its Water Management Plan. The Board asked to limit downstream farmers to 121,500 acre-feet of Highland Lakes water in the spring and early summer of 2013, if combined storage in lakes Travis and Buchanan is between 775,000 and 920,000 acre-feet on Jan. 1 or March 1. That request was submitted to TCEQ on Nov. 21.

But after a historically dry November and extremely low inflows to the lakes in December, LCRA General Manager Becky Motal asked TCEQ to delay ruling on LCRA's November request for emergency drought relief until after the Board decides how to proceed at the Jan. 8 meeting.

"We're in the middle of what may be the worst drought in history," Motal said. "It would be confusing for TCEQ to rule on one request from LCRA and then turn around and possibly be faced with another request. If the Board modifies its request, there would still be plenty of time for TCEQ to rule on it because the first agricultural releases, if there are any, would not occur until mid-March.

"This is clearly a difficult situation, and we are continuing to manage our water supply in the most responsible way possible," she said.

Because of the historic drought, most downstream rice farmers did not receive water from the Highland Lakes in 2012.

The Jan. 8 meeting will be at LCRA headquarters, 3700 Lake Austin Blvd., in Austin at 1 p.m.

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#### **About LCRA**

LCRA is a nonprofit conservation and reclamation district that provides energy, water and community services to Texans. Created by the Texas Legislature in 1934, LCRA has no taxing authority and operates solely on utility revenues and service fees. LCRA supplies electricity to more than 1.1 million Texans through more than 40 wholesale customers. LCRA also provides many other services to the region. These services include managing floods, protecting the quality of the lower Colorado River and its tributaries, providing parks and recreational facilities, offering economic development assistance, operating water and wastewater utilities, and providing soil, energy and water conservation programs.

