

LCRA Customer Drought Update February 28, 2009

Summary:

Several key points related to the drought conditions include:

- Much of Central Texas and the Hill Country continue to be designated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as exceptional drought conditions, the worst of the four categories of drought.
- Weather trends and long-range weather forecasts indicate drier than normal weather will likely persist at least into May.
- Lake levels for lakes Buchanan and Travis will begin to drop as LCRA began releasing water for irrigation customers in March.
- LCRA's firm water customers may be asked to implement mandatory water use restrictions later this summer under their drought contingency plans if the combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan reach or fall below 900,000 acre-feet of water. Current combined storage is above 1.2 MAF.
- If drought conditions persist through the end of 2009, staff projects that water supply for irrigation customers will be cut back (or curtailed) in 2010, consistent with LCRA's state-approved Water Management Plan.
- The March issue of LCRA's Marina Bulletin will contain projected lake levels through the summer if drought conditions persist.
- LCRA is seeking public input on its water conservation and drought contingency plans prior to the submission of any updates to the TCEQ by the May 1, 2009, deadline established under TCEQ rules.

Overview

Our region continues to experience very serious drought conditions that will potentially cause significant impacts to recreational activities this summer. Much of Central Texas and the Hill Country continue to be designated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as exceptional drought conditions, the worst of the four categories of drought. Absent significant rainfall, lake levels will continue to drop as seasonal water demands increase and LCRA provides water for downstream irrigation customers. If current dry conditions persist, Lake Buchanan may fall to 985-995 mean feet above seal level (msl) and Lake Travis may fall to 630-640 msl by late summer. The highest elevations of the conservation pools for lakes Buchanan and Travis are 1020 msl and 681 msl, respectively. The historic lowest elevations for lakes Buchanan and Travis are slightly below 984 msl (1951) and just above 614 msl (1952), respectively.

We can also expect additional boat ramps to be closed and navigational hazards to surface in some areas. A listing of affected boat ramps can be found on LCRA's web site at www.lcra.org/droughtupdate. Those customers with water intakes in the lakes

will need to make necessary adjustments so that they may continue to divert water as lake levels decline.

At the same time, the Highland Lakes continue to fulfill their primary function as water supply reservoirs for our region. LCRA's state-approved Water Management Plan, which governs how LCRA operates the Highland Lakes, has certain trigger levels based on the combined amount of water in lakes Travis and Buchanan during certain times of the year. Depending on which trigger is activated, they require the implementation of more aggressive conservation measures, the reduction of water available to interruptible customers, the reduction of releases for environmental flow needs, and the implementation of drought contingency measures. All these triggers are designed to protect our commitments to firm water customers.

LCRA's firm water customers may be asked to implement mandatory water use restrictions later this summer under their drought contingency plans if the combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan reach or fall below 900,000 acre-feet of water. Total combined storage as of February 28, 2009 is about 1.28 million acre-feet of water. Such restrictions may include, but not be limited to, restrictions on lawn watering, swimming pools, car washing, and aesthetic ponds, fountains and other water features.

If the drought conditions persist beyond this year, LCRA will be cutting back interruptible water supplies to the four downstream irrigation operations in 2010 as well as further reducing releases for environmental flow needs, in accordance with LCRA's state-approved Water Management Plan. If conditions become worse than the drought of record, then a pro-rata curtailment of water available to our firm water customers is required to be imposed under state law.

Weather Outlook

Weather trends and long-range weather forecasts indicate drier than normal weather will likely persist at least into May. In the tropical Pacific, weak La Niña conditions are in place. La Niña patterns typically cause drier than normal weather conditions across most of Texas in the fall and winter months. Scattered showers will fall from time to time over the next two to three months, but rain totals are not expected to be heavy enough to have a significant impact on the ongoing drought. La Niña is forecast to dissipate mid to late spring with the Pacific returning to a neutral state by summer. There is some thought that rainfall may increase slightly in late spring and early summer. Still, forecasts do not suggest that there will be an end to the drought in the near term.

Current Lake Conditions

As of March 6, the combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan was above 1.2 million acre-feet of water, or about 64 percent of the authorized combined storage capacity. The level of Lake Buchanan was about 1,004 feet above mean sea level

(msl), At this level, the amount of stored water in Lake Buchanan is about 573,000 acre-feet of water, or about 65 percent of its storage capacity. The level of Lake Travis was just above 654 msl. At this level, the amount of stored water in Lake Travis is about 717,000 acre-feet of water, or about 63 percent of its storage capacity.