

Improving LCRA: Considerations for the Sunset Advisory Commission



The Central Texas Water Coalition recognizes and supports the vital role that the Lower Colorado River Authority plays in the management of water resources for the Lower Colorado River Basin. CTWC wants to ensure sustainability of water availability while supporting environmental flows for the entire basin. We must all rethink the way surface water is utilized.

To meet the challenges of LCRA's critical role, we offer these recommendations:

~ Improving LCRA transparency

Review water ratemaking processes with improvements in transparency and opportunity for meaningful public participation, including disclosure and explanation of all components of firm and interruptible rates, and real opportunity to challenge a rate at the state level. In all aspects of LCRA's operations and decision-making processes, assure that complicated water management matters can be reviewed and understood by all stakeholders.

~ Addressing inequities

Review of LCRA's water sales contracts to assess its fairness and effectiveness in recovering LCRA's costs. Assure that firm water customers are not unfairly burdened with costs associated with water deliveries to other customers.

~ What costs money, gets conserved

Review of LCRA's interruptible water sales and water rates, with a focus on their effectiveness in promoting conservation and meeting LCRA's obligations under the terms of its state-issued water rights and 1989 Adjudication Order.

~ Science matters

Review of LCRA's methods for determining water availability and selling of water, in view of the tremendous population growth in Central Texas and the ever-present threat of drought and reduced inflows from the watershed. Assure that LCRA, which is entrusted with tremendous volumes of state-owned surface water, uses best available data and science to evaluate those water supplies, and manages and protects that water supply in accordance with the terms of its water rights.

~ What gets measured, gets managed

Improve measurement and efficiency of agricultural interruptible water use and water losses, with solutions for minimizing those losses and recovering those costs.

~ Improving LCRA governance

Review of LCRA's governing board structure to avoid the risks posed by conflicts of interest.

~ Due Process Right of Review

Develop a practical mechanism for challenging rates set by wholesale water suppliers. Affirm the stakeholders' rights to participate in the state's review and approval of the LCRA's future Water Management Plans, including participation as a party in a contested hearing.

It's time to make changes

LCRA must be statutorily tasked to aggressively protect and develop new water supplies and conserve existing supplies for future generations. The Legislature should add specific language in LCRA's enabling legislation to address such issues as water conservation, protection of water supplies for future generations, and beneficial, non-wasteful water use by all LCRA customers, so that there will be no question that these responsibilities are assigned to the LCRA.

CTWC wants to participate in achieving change for the future benefit of all in the Basin