

CTWC PUBLIC COMMENTS TO LCRA BOARD
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2022 LCRA HEADQUARTERS, AUSTIN

Good morning. I'm Cindy Smiley, an attorney here in Austin, speaking today on behalf of the Central Texas Water Coalition (or CTWC), a nonprofit organization concerned about the sustainability of the Highland Lakes as a water supply for this region.

Our comments today are focused on Agenda Items 11 and 12. Background information on these agenda items was presented at the Water Operations Committee yesterday morning, which I attended. Although I didn't hear the name of the CTWC referenced in those discussions, there were some statements made that, if they were directed at CTWC, deserve a response. **First**, CTWC works hard to provide accurate information, and it has no interest in spreading misinformation. If we have misstated or misunderstood something, we want to correct it. An open dialogue with LCRA staff and Board members would be welcome, but this depends on LCRA's willingness to meet. **Second**, I want to assure you that CTWC did not oppose LCRA's application for groundwater wells in the Bastrop area. We're happy that LCRA is evaluating new water supply options.

On the agenda items before you today, these questions are still unanswered:

- Why are Interruptible water rates subsidized by LCRA?
- Why can't we see an apples-to-apples comparison of raw water rates for Firm and Interruptible Customers?
- Why are Interruptible Customers receiving this preferential treatment to the detriment of LCRA's other customers and to the detriment of LCRA's own revenues?
- Why aren't you using the \$13 Million Agriculture Reserve Fund to fund conservation projects?
- Why aren't you using water pricing to encourage conservation?

When I listened to the presentation at the Water Operations Committee Meeting yesterday morning, and I heard the Board and staff remarks about the 150 written comments and their content, I was sure that hordes of crazed, uninformed masses had bombarded the LCRA with inaccurate and misguided comments. But when I actually read the comments last night, I saw no such thing.

I saw thoughtful comments from knowledgeable, concerned citizens who took the time to respond to the opportunity to provide public comments in accordance with a Texas agency's rulemaking process. I didn't see a basis for the criticisms and mischaracterizations of the public comments at the Committee Meeting yesterday. And it didn't appear that LCRA respected the public's concerns regarding the risks to upper basin water supplies, even though, shortly before the discussion on Interruptible Rates, the LCRA's report on the Basin Conditions was another frightening reminder that the inflows into the Highland Lakes are at record lows. If LCRA intends to honor the Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendations for earning public trust and practicing greater transparency, we're not off to a very good start. Let's work together to do better.