



P.O. Box 26322
Austin, Texas 78755

Email: cindy@smileylawfirm.com
Office Phone: 512.394.7121

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VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMITTAL

Members of the Board of Directors
Lower Colorado River Authority
3700 Lake Austin Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78703

Re: Comments of the Central Texas Water Coalition on LCRA's Proposed Revised Drought Contingency Plans and Rules

Dear Board Members:

On behalf of the Central Texas Water Coalition (CTWC), thank you for accepting and considering these comments on LCRA's proposed changes to its Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) Rules for Water Sale Contracts (DCP Rules), proposed DCP for Firm Water Customers, and proposed DCP for Domestic, Temporary, Landscape Irrigation and Recreational Use Contracts. CTWC appreciates LCRA's proactive efforts to address the threats presented by the serious, continuing drought in the Lower Colorado River Basin, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide public input as LCRA works to maintain its water stewardship responsibilities in these challenging times.

Comments on the Proposed DCP Rules.

CTWC strongly supports proposed amendments that will improve LCRA's operational responsiveness and its ability to incentivize and enforce more protective and stringent water management practices by all LCRA customers. At the same time, CTWC urges LCRA to set forth its expectations and requirements as clearly and simply as possible. The following comments provide suggestions and/or questions on various provisions of the proposed rule changes:

General Comments:

Please consider developing a method for translating the various reference and trigger points expressed in these rules as "acre-feet of Combined Storage in Lakes Buchanan and Travis" into "lake elevations" for these two lakes. We realize this may not be an easy task, but we believe it would greatly enhance the public education work of LCRA and its customers. While many people are cognizant of lake elevations, such as the fact that Lake Travis is approximately 50 feet low at this time, few people can translate that information into the "total combined storage in acre-feet"

that is the benchmark for LCRA's DCP rules and plans. Is it possible to translate these critical numbers (such as 1.1 million acre-feet, 900,000 acre-feet, and 600,000 acre-feet) into corresponding lake elevations for the water supply lakes?

Please review the use of references to "landscape irrigation" and "ornamental landscaping" to assure that the terms are used consistently.

Please avoid implementing rules that would prohibit residential customers from outdoor watering, in minimal quantities, for the purpose of maintaining foundations and trees that are in imminent threat of harm caused by continuing drought conditions.

Please clarify whether the reference to "automatic irrigation systems" refers only to systems that spray water above the ground surface. Would an automatic drip irrigation or subsurface irrigation system be subject to the same limits as a spray irrigation system? How does this differ from soaker hoses? Hand-held hoses? Point-source irrigation? And drip irrigation? These terms are used in the proposed DCPs for the various LCRA customers, and there seems to be some confusion as to their acceptance under LCRA's guidelines.

Specific Comments:

1. Chapter 1, Section 1.1. In the last sentence of this paragraph, should the new language refer to "landscape, irrigation and recreation contracts with a MAQ of 30 acre-feet per year OR LESS..."?
2. Chapter 1, Section 1.2. Please explain the reference to Texas Water Code Chapter 222.
3. Chapter 3, Section 3.1(g)(2). Please consider revising the first sentence to read as follows: "The drought contingency plan must have a landscape watering schedule that restricts daytime outdoor water use and does not ever allow the irrigation of ornamental landscaping to occur more than twice a week. (This twice-a-week maximum applies throughout the year, regardless of the applicable drought stage under LCRA's DCP.)"
4. Attachment A, Section 1.B.2.f. Please explain why "Water waste" should be allowed under a possible variance issued by a Firm Water Customer to its end-user. It seems more appropriate for the waste of water, described as "failure to repair a controllable leak, and run-off from a property" to be prohibited without exception.

Comments on the Proposed DCP for Firm Water Customers.

As noted above, CTWC enthusiastically supports LCRA's efforts to slow the impending water supply crisis that is developing in Central Texas by establishing rules and criteria for responsible water use by ALL of its customers. For its Firm Water Customers, clear and understandable guidance is critical to accomplishing these goals. We support LCRA's efforts to "standardize" outdoor watering restrictions and terminology so that the "drought stages" are easier to comprehend. Please continue to review and consider whether the terminology and consequences of the provisions in this proposed DCP can be universally understood by LCRA's customers (and the end-users of the LCRA water).

We encourage LCRA to seek methods of translating the total Combined Storage volumes, as presented in acre-feet, into lake elevations or some other, more accessible reference point for municipal retail customers. Such an effort could prove very useful in conveying the urgency of the water conservation efforts mandated by the LCRA's DCP rules and DCP templates.

Please review the references to "in-ground automatic irrigation systems" and "automatic irrigation systems" and how those systems differ from drip irrigation systems.

In Section 5, please clarify that this DCP applies only to the use of firm water provided by LCRA. If a water customer uses water obtained from its own groundwater wells, even though the wells are located within the Colorado River Basin, that groundwater is not subject to LCRA's jurisdiction.

Please provide more guidance on how the Drought Stages will be entered and exited. For example, is this an instantaneous event? If so, how will Firm Customers be aware of such transitions? Will Firm Customers be responsible for daily tracking of the total Combined Storage volumes reported in LCRA's River Operations reports and then responding accordingly? Or will there be a lag time for reacting to the points of entry or exit from certain Combined Storage volumes? Would it be reasonable for LCRA to advise its Firm Customers of the entry or exit from a Drought Stage and ask the Customers to respond accordingly within a certain number of days after receiving such notice from LCRA?

In Section 7.2(b), there is a reference to a recent comparison against "historic inflows" as one of the criteria for LCRA's entry into Drought Stage 2. CTWC clearly supports LCRA's proposed use of inflows to the lakes as an indicator of drought severity and the need to slow down non-essential uses of water. We are grateful for this recognition of the serious and vulnerable situation that now exists in the upper basin with respect to its diminishing lake levels. However, it is unclear which period of "history" or period of record will be used to determine the "historic inflows" referenced in this provision. Also, are we correct in assuming that the referenced "inflows" are the inflows to the Highland Lakes that are measured at four streamflow gauges and reported as "total gauged inflows to the Highland Lakes" on LCRA's River Operations Reports? Please consider more a more layman-friendly description of this criterion, so that Firm Customers can evaluate whether this criterion has been met.

In Section 8, LCRA states that "Customers' DCPs should be developed pursuant to LCRA guidelines and submitted for LCRA review and acceptance within 60 days." Please explain how that 60-day deadline is calculated. Does the clock start running at the March 26th LCRA Board Meeting? Or does the clock start running when LCRA issues a draft template DCP for its Firm Customers?

Comments on the Proposed DCP for Domestic, Temporary, Landscape Irrigation and Recreational Use Contracts.

Although the introductory provisions of this DCP describe its applicability to a specific group of LCRA contract-holders, please confirm that this DCP does not apply to customers of an LCRA Firm Water Customer. Instead, such customers will be subject to the DCP promulgated by the LCRA's Firm Water Customer.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. We always appreciate the chance to communicate with the LCRA Board, management, and staff, and we look forward to your responses to these comments and questions (either in writing or in a meeting with CTWC representatives).

Sincerely,

Cindy Smiley

Cynthia C. Smiley

cc: Tom Harrison, President, CTWC
Shannon Hamilton, Executive Director, CTWC