

# Item 31

## Revised

# Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request



**Meeting Date:** October 30, 2012

**Prepared By/Phone Number:** Garry Brown 854-9386

**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:** Commissioner Karen Huber

**Commissioners Court Sponsor:** Commissioner Karen Huber

**AGENDA LANGUAGE:** Consider and take appropriate action on resolution asking the Lower Colorado River Authority to request and submit to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for approval the re-authorization or renewal of an Emergency Drought Order for 2013.

**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:**

AGENDA REQUEST DEADLINE: All agenda requests and supporting materials should be submitted as a pdf to the County Judge's office, [agenda@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:agenda@co.travis.tx.us) by **Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** for the next week's meeting.

**WHEREAS**, last year the LCRA requested and TCEQ passed an Emergency Drought Order that resulted in water not being released for interruptible customers downstream; and

**WHEREAS**, this emergency order is set to expire at the later date of the following: the end of December, 2012, the termination of the Governor's Disaster Proclamation of the Exceptional Drought Conditions, or the initial 120 day period allowed by Texas Water Code ; and

**WHEREAS**, an extension or new order, would provide Interruptible customers limited water releases when combined lake storage is below 920,000 acre-feet and above 850,000 acre-feet and would curtail stored water for Gulf Coast, Pierce Ranch and Lakeside irrigation operations' interruptible supply released from Lakes Travis and Buchanan if lake levels are below 850,000 acre-feet; and

**WHEREAS** the current lake level for Lake Travis is 634 feet, which is 47 feet below full (681), and 58 percent below volume capacity or 42 percent full (481,000 AF); and

**WHEREAS**, the current lake level for Lake Buchanan is 993 feet, which is 27 feet below full (1020), and 54 percent below volume capacity or 46 percent full (401,000 AF); and

**WHEREAS**, according to LCRA staff, with the release in 2013 of interruptible stored water and the combined lakes storage currently at only 882,000 AF, the lakes could be drained to a combined storage capacity of below 400,000 a/f (less than 20 percent full) as provided in the current Water Management Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, LCRA staff specified with the release there is a 25 percent chance in 2013 of reaching 600,000 acre-feet of combined storage in lakes Travis and Buchanan and, depending on Highland Lakes inflow conditions, could meet the criteria for an LCRA Board declaration of a drought worse than the drought of record, which moves Firm customers into a mandatory pro rata curtailment of at least 20 percent; and

**WHEREAS**, the 1989 Adjudication Order states "The supply of stored water pursuant to non-firm, interruptible commitments **should be interrupted or curtailed to the extent necessary to allow LCRA to satisfy all existing and projected demands for stored water pursuant to all firm uninterruptible commitments;**" and

**WHEREAS**, similar language is found in the firm water permits from Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan stating "LCRA shall interrupt or curtail the supply of water under this certificate....pursuant to commitments that are specifically subject to interruption or curtailment, to the extent necessary to allow LCRA to satisfy all demands for water under such certificates pursuant to all firm, uninterruptible commitments;" and

**WHEREAS**, El Nino is not forming as predicted for the short term, the outlook is for drier conditions than previously forecast, and John Neilsen-Gammon, State Climatologist, predicts we are in a drier than normal long term trend; and

**WHEREAS**, *January 2012 through September 2012 Highland Lakes inflows are only 37 percent of average; and*

**WHEREAS**, when the LCRA board approved the emergency drought plan in September of 2011, the Lake Level of Lake Travis was at 631 feet, being only a small difference between what is now at 634; and

**WHEREAS**, more than a million people in the upper basin depend on Lakes Travis and Buchanan for drinking water and basic human needs; and

**WHEREAS**, the Lake Travis Economic Impact Report and the Upper Highland Lakes Economic Report indicate that Lake Travis and Buchanan tourism, businesses and property values generates hundreds of millions of dollars for the local and state economy.

**NOW THEREFORE,**

Be it resolved that Travis County Commissioners Court respectfully asks the LCRA Board to request and submit to TCEQ for approval, the re-authorization or renewal of the Emergency Drought Order so we do not further jeopardize the drinking water and livelihoods of Central Texas businesses, industries, residences, tourism, and local and state revenues on the Highland Lakes.

SIGNED AND ENTERED THIS \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF OCTOBER, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SAMUEL T. BISCOE  
COUNTY JUDGE

\_\_\_\_\_  
RON DAVIS  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
SARAH ECKHARDT  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
KAREN L. HUBER  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT 3

\_\_\_\_\_  
MARGARET J. GÓMEZ  
COMMISSIONER, PRECINCT 4