

Freshwater Inflows and Matagorda Bay Update
June 10, 2004

This is a follow-up mailing to the Matagorda Bay Forum that was held last month. I want to give you some information on how to find out more about the events and meetings that we discussed there. It is important that we are involved in decisions that are made regarding water in this basin and in our state. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the following meetings/events/processes. Critical decisions are being made now and involvement is crucial! I have listed the events/meetings below in chronological order.

Thanks,

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Town Hall Meetings on Water, Hosted by LCRA – LCRA will host a series of Town Hall meetings in the Colorado River basin. General Manager Joe Beal will attend these meetings. They will be an open forum to discuss anything related to water quality or quantity in the basin. LCRA will also give a short presentation. These meetings will be from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the following locations:

- June 17, Burnet, Burnet Community Center, 401 East Jackson St.
- June 22, Lake Travis, Lakeway Activity Center, 105 Cross Creek
- June 23, Wharton, Wharton Community Center, 1924 North Fulton

The first meeting was held on June 8th in Smithville. Joe Beal spoke about the LCRA/SAWS project, the Colorado River floodplain, and water quality in the basin. He said that if there were a drought of record today that there were interests in the basin that would go without water. There were about 25 people in attendance. The meeting was an open forum to ask questions about anything relating to the basin. Participants asked about the Hamilton Pool pipeline, the river's alluvial aquifer, flooding, rainwater harvesting, the City of Austin's bed and banks permit, and other topics. LCRA had several booths set up to give out information on conservation, flooding, water supply, etc.

Study Commission on Environmental Flows – The commission has not scheduled its next meeting, but their scientific advisory committee is hard at work. The next meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) will be on June 18th in Austin. There is extensive information about the committee on the TCEQ website at http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/comm_exec/igr/sa_comm/. The presentations from their last meeting on May 21st as well as their proposed work plan are posted on this site. The work of the scientific advisory committee is important, as it is likely to lay the groundwork for any recommendations on environmental flows protections from the Study Commission.

HB 1437 – HB 1437 was enacted into law in 1999 to allow LCRA to sell 25,000 acre-feet of water per year to Williamson County through an Interbasin Transfer. The bill requires that there be “no net loss” of water to the Colorado basin. LCRA will be holding 3 public meetings on the topic of “no net loss” and what it means in regards to HB 1437. They will hold meetings in Wharton, Burnet and Williamson Counties during the last week of June. LCRA does not have all the details together yet on this but you may contact Gail Oliver (LCRA) at 512/473-3200 for more information about the public meetings. The LCRA website will also have information on the meetings on its website soon, but it was not up yet when this mailout was prepared. You can look up a copy of

this bill (76th Texas Legislature, Regular Session) on Texas Legislature Online at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us>.

Lower Colorado Regional Water Planning Group (Region K) - Region K is tentatively scheduled to hold its next general meeting on July 14th at Aqua Water in Bastrop. The agenda will be posted on the Region K website at <http://www.regionk.org/>.

Region K/Region L (South Central Texas) Joint Meeting – Region K and Region L will be holding a joint meeting to talk about issues that effect both basins. Items to be covered are the LCRA/SAWS water project, a presentation on the EQIP program and how it effects the LCRA/SAWS project, LCRA's 290 pipeline, the SAWS/ALCOA Carrizo project and other water transfers/topics. The meeting will be 9:00 AM, July 20th at the San Marcos Activity Center, 501 East Hopkins.

Restudy of Freshwater Inflow Needs for Matagorda Bay – the LCRA will hold a stakeholder workshop for the public on August 5th, 3:00 – 5:00 at McKinney Roughs Environmental Learning Center. The workshop will include an overview of the project, timelines, methodology, and an opportunity for public comment. This is the first of two workshops. The second one will be in the Fall.

LCRA Water Management Plan Amendments (WMP) - LCRA periodically amends its WMP. The plan governs operations of the Highland Lakes and lays out when and how much water the Colorado River and Matagorda Bay receive for environmental and other needs. LCRA submitted their proposed changes to TCEQ in May 2002 and their application was declared administratively complete on May 7th (Water Right #5838). TCEQ is performing a technical review of the application and also drafting a notice that should go out in the next few months. After the notice is published the public can comment on the draft changes for 30 days. After this the TCEQ will incorporate recommendations from their internal technical review and possibly some public comments into the WMP revisions. You can see the proposed changes on the LCRA website at http://static.lcra.org/docs/WMP_changes.pdf.

Pending Large Water Rights Applications by LCRA and the City of Austin – There are several large water rights applications for Colorado River water pending at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). I will provide more information on these applications at a later date. I am waiting on specific information from TCEQ.

Water Conservation Implementation Task Force – The Task Force is working on Best Management Practices for water conservation. The deadline for comments on the draft version has passed. There will be another opportunity to comment on them after they are revised. The next meeting of the Task Force is June 28th in Austin. They meet on the last Monday of the month. More information is available on the web at <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/conservation/taskforce.asp>.

Senate Select Committee on Water Policy – The Select Committee has still not set any more dates to meet. Their original schedule was disrupted by the special session. We will let you know if we hear of any more meetings. You can also check online at <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/commit/c750/c750.htm>.

Study and Review of the LCRA-SAWS Project – The 6-year feasibility study period for the LCRA-SAWS project is now underway. LCRA has hired consultants to perform the studies. The impact of the project on Matagorda Bay will be analyzed during this phase. The project would not proceed if studies indicate the project would degrade the bay and estuary system. LCRA's website on the project is at <http://www.lcra.org/saws/index.html>