



LCA President's Update – June 25, 2024

Where did the water go and why?

In my May 20 update, I notified our members that “In the San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) Board meeting of April 25th the SJRA General Manager announced **that the Seasonal Lake Lowering Program (SLLP), implemented in 2018 was over. It would be replaced with a new program called “Active Storm Management” (ASM). *A lot has happened in a month.***

You may have seen an SJRA announcement on the morning of June 14 indicating that the SJRA would initiate a “diversion” (a fancy word for lowering) of water from Lake Conroe to Lake Houston at the request of the City of Houston (CoH). No details were provided as to the reason for the diversion or the amount of lake level lowering sought. After the LCA questioned the purpose of the diversion the SJRA announcement was updated to indicate it was due to the coming weeks rainfall but still no lowering level target was announced. Through further calls and emails that day the LCA found SJRA sources who had been quoted as saying the lowering target for Lake Conroe was 6” - a target lake level of 200.5’ msl.

One week prior the weather forecasts identified a tropical depression in the Gulf likely headed west to the Mexico coast not the Texas coast. However, it had the potential to create a rain band impacting the Texas Gulf Coast with **heavy rain (3”- 6”) south of I-10**. Rain forecasts for the Conroe area were indicating **rain of 1”-2”** on June 18-19. Given the expected rain for our area was very low the LCA made calls and sent emails requesting that the lowering diversion be suspended. On June 18 the SJRA and the CoH ceased lowering after releasing 5.4” - close to the original 6” target resulting in a lake level of 200.6’ msl.

Our area had less than 1” of rain – a non-event - yet the CoH / SJRA persisted to lower 6” as the rain forecast dropped. In our view the release from Lake Conroe was unnecessary and the decreasing rain forecasts supported stopping lowering well before 6”. It should be clear either the forecasts used by CoH were poor, they overreacted from the fall out of their problems in May, or they don’t understand that Lake Conroe has handled hundreds of rain events of 5”-8” with no problems on the lake or downstream for

40+ years.

The impact of this action by CoH and SJRA is **we are now stuck 6” below full pool and then much more as summer evaporation takes over. We likely won’t see normal levels until the Fall.** Water customers and residents lost the use of 2.4 billion gallons which passed through to Lake Houston and then entirely through the Lake Houston Dam to end up in the Gulf of Mexico.

Lake Houston itself was lowered 1’ for the storm but fully recovered that 1’ of lowering in one week and now stands at full pool.

The problem and why you should care. *This is not about losing 6” of lake level and the impact on recreation. The problem is during the 2022 and 2023 compromises sound judgment as to any lowering was used by both the CoH and the SJRA. Now just two months into Active Storm Management with one significant rain event and one non rain event we have seen flooding that should not have occurred and a total waste of 2.4 billion gallons as we head into an uncertain drought / storm season. The agreement for implementing active storm management contained many of the same criteria as the 2022 and 2023 compromises to the SLLP as well as the potential for real improvements in water management and flood mitigation. The LCA supported ASM if the things we were promised by the CoH and the SJRA in our meetings transpired.*

There are two date ranges for lowering which have been in place for seven years and never once breached. The lowering date window for the Spring is April 1 until June 1. The recent lowering occurred starting June 14 – two weeks outside of the Spring window. **The LCA has filed a formal complaint with both the SJRA and the CoH for a breach of the Active Storm Management agreement.** Our basis for the complaint is an unnecessary and complete waste:

1. The lowering occurred outside of ASM agreed date ranges.
2. We do not find any weather forecasts that projected a “major rainfall” event in the Lake Conroe watershed that merited lowering Lake Conroe.
3. Weather forecasts showed decreasing rain amounts and lowering should have been stopped earlier consistent with the ASM principles.
4. Finally, the public information water records for Lake Conroe and Lake Houston releases indicates that 100% of the water was released below normal pool and could not have been used for any beneficial purpose. This would be a violation by the CoH and SJRA of their joint water rights permit issued by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

What next? – we will continue to press our complaints with the CoH and the SJRA and the TCEQ. We have requested calls with our elected state representatives on the matter. We will be attending the June 27 SJRA Board meeting to reinforce our complaints and concerns about the latest unnecessary and wasteful lowering. We will lobby that the

protocols for any future lowering be made public and that the proper authorizations be in place from the TCEQ before any further lowering take place.

What can you do? Go to the LCA website for additional information that should be posted in the next 24-48 hours. Attend the June 27 SJRA Board meeting at 8AM and speak if you were impacted by flooding in May or do not support the recent lowering for the reasons we outline.

Please go the LCA website by using this link <https://lcatx.org/> .

Kevin Lacy – LCA President