



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and Council Members  
**From:** Greg Meszaros, Director, Austin Water  
**Date:** October 18, 2016

**Subject: Lowering of Lake Austin**

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The City of Austin has requested a lowering of Lake Austin from the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA). Although coordinated efforts have kept nuisance aquatic vegetation to minimal amounts in Lake Austin, this lake lowering would provide an opportunity to stay ahead of the growth and spread of such vegetation. The City has also received drawdown requests from property owners along Lake Austin to allow for repairs of bulkheads and boat docks. In addition, City of Austin Fire Station 31 has inquired about a Lake Austin lowering for maintenance to their boat ramp.

The last lake lowering occurred in January 2011. There is currently a window of opportunity to drawdown Lake Austin that will end when LCRA's Tom Miller Dam gate rehabilitation project begins by the end of FY 2017. This work will preclude a lake lowering for several years.

With these considerations, the City has requested an approximately 10 foot lowering lasting approximately 6 weeks from initial lowering to completed refill, from early January through mid-February. Details of the lake lowering agreement will be worked out between the City and LCRA in the coming weeks. The City of Austin Watershed Protection Department will also coordinate with LCRA to develop a communication plan and provide notifications to the public regarding the lowering. Staff will provide updates to Council as we progress in our discussions with LCRA and finalize public communication processes.

Should you have any questions or need any additional information please contact me or Liz Johnston, Environmental Program Coordinator, Watershed Protection Department, at (512) 974-2619.

**cc:** Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager  
Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager  
Robert Goode P.E., Assistant City Manager  
Joe Pantalione, Director, Watershed Protection Department  
Sara Hensley, Director, Parks and Recreation Department  
Rodney Gonzales, Director, Development Services Department  
Jackie Sargent, General Manager, Austin Energy  
Cora Wright, Interim Director, Code Department  
Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr, Austin Fire Department

Attachments: **City of Austin Lake Lowering Request Letter to LCRA (October 2016)**



# City of Austin

## City Manager's Office

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767  
(512) 974-2200, Fax (512) 974-2833

October 12, 2016

Phil Wilson, General Manager  
Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA)  
P.O. Box 220  
Austin, TX 78767-0220

Subject: Lowering of Lake Austin

Dear Mr. Wilson,

The City of Austin, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and LCRA have worked together since the fall of 2002 to control nuisance aquatic vegetation such as hydrilla and Eurasian milfoil on Lake Austin through an integrated management plan and address other concerns related to the lake. Historically, a key component to this management plan has included drawdowns of the water level of the lake during winter months.

Due to recent drought conditions, no drawdown has occurred since January, 2011. While there continues to be a minimal amount of nuisance aquatic vegetation in Lake Austin, both hydrilla and Eurasian milfoil have been found growing in the native vegetation enclosures that the City of Austin has placed within Lake Austin to promote native vegetation. A lowering would provide an opportunity to stay ahead of nuisance vegetation growth and spread. Consideration of a drawdown has also been requested by property owners along Lake Austin to allow the assessment and repairs of bulkheads and boat docks. In addition, City of Austin Fire Station 31 has inquired about a Lake Austin lowering for maintenance to their boat ramp.

Given the upcoming (end F.Y. 2017) Tom Miller Dam gate rehabilitation project, which will preclude a lake lowering for several years, and the favorable (i.e., nearly 100% storage capacity) conditions of the upstream Highland Lakes system, the City requests that Lake Austin be lowered. We are requesting an approximately ten foot lowering lasting approximately six weeks from initial lowering to completed refill, from early January through mid-February. The City requests that the lowering be done in such way that the water level lowering is paced over a period of several days enabling various organisms, such as fresh water mussels, to move with the lake level.

The City will work with LCRA staff on the details of an agreement along the lines of previous lake lowering agreements. Coordination efforts with LCRA will include working together on a communication plan and notifications to the public regarding the lowering. Any necessary specific details regarding this joint effort on public communication can be included in the lake lowering agreement between LCRA and the City. Once approved by LCRA, the City will also coordinate with TPWD to address any of their requirements, if applicable.

Liz Johnston, Environmental Program Coordinator, Watershed Protection Department, 512.974.2619, is the City's point of contact on this request. I appreciate LCRA's continued cooperation with all partners in managing vegetation and other issues on Lake Austin and look forward to working with you in the future.



# City of Austin

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(512) 974-2200, Fax (512) 974-2833

Sincerely,

**Robert D. Goode, Assistant City Manager**

[Robert.Goode@austintexas.gov](mailto:Robert.Goode@austintexas.gov)

CC: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager  
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Greg Meszaros, Director, Austin Water  
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