MAJOR FLOODS ON THE COLORADO RIVER

Major floods have occurred in the lower Colorado River basin in every decade since the 1840s, including:

DECEMBER 1991
Heavy December rains caused extensive flooding upstream and downstream of the Highland Lakes. Lake Buchanan rose to its all-time high of 1,021.4 feet msl – about 1 foot above the Buchanan Dam spillway. Lake Travis rose to its all-time high of 710.44 feet msl – less than 4 feet below the Mansfield Dam spillway. LCRA opened eight floodgates at Buchanan Dam, four floodgates at Wirtz Dam and four floodgates at Mansfield Dam. Lake Travis rose to 692.17 feet msl.

JUNE 1997
Intense rainfall caused a basin-wide flash flood that pushed the level of Lake Travis to 705.11 feet msl – its third-highest level on record. LCRA opened 10 gates at Wirtz Dam for the first time since the 10th gate was added to the dam in 1971. LCRA opened six floodgates at Buchanan Dam and four floodgates at Mansfield Dam. Lake Travis rose to its second highest level of 707.38 feet msl on May 18.

MAY 2016
After years of record-breaking drought, a prolonged rainy period refilled the Highland Lakes. In May 2016, floodgate operations occurred simultaneously at Mansfield and Buchanan dams for the first time in almost nine years. LCRA opened four floodgates at Buchanan Dam, two floodgates at Wirtz Dam and four floodgates at Mansfield Dam. Lake Travis rose to 704.39 feet msl – its fifth highest level on record.

AUGUST 2017
Hurricane Harvey churned along the coastal plains of Texas for four days and brought major flooding to the Colorado River from Bastrop to Matagorda Bay. The river jumped its banks and found new flow paths through Columbus and Wharton, causing severe damage. However, the heavy rainfall did not extend to the Hill Country, and no flood releases were made from the Highland Lakes.