

LAKE LOWERINGS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a lake lowering?

LCRA occasionally lowers one or more of the pass-through Highland Lakes as a community service to provide customers and lakeside property owners an opportunity to repair and maintain docks, retaining walls and other shoreline property, as well as to dredge, remove debris and perform other maintenance work. The drawdown also helps curb the growth of nuisance aquatic vegetation.



The drawdowns typically are scheduled in January-February, when water use is low, disruption to aquatic life and recreation is minimal, and the maximum effect on vegetation is possible due to cool, dry winter weather.

LCRA only schedules drawdowns if they will not interfere with essential water supply operations.

2. Which of the Highland Lakes will be lowered in 2020 and when will the drawdown occur?

LCRA will lower lakes LBJ and Inks for eight weeks in early 2020, from Jan. 2- Feb. 28.

3. How much will Lake LBJ be lowered?

LCRA is lowering Lake LBJ about 4 feet, from its normal operating range of 824.4 to 825 feet above mean sea level (feet msl) to a range of 820.2 to 820.8 feet msl. Lake LBJ will be lowered about 1 foot a day for four days beginning Thursday, Jan. 2.

In addition to creating electricity through hydroelectric turbines at Wirtz Dam, Lake LBJ serves another critical function. Lake LBJ is the cooling lake for the Thomas C. Ferguson Power Plant, a combined cycle plant and an important contributor to the Texas electric grid and LCRA's power generation. Four feet is the maximum LCRA can lower the lake without risking impacting the operation at the plant. As such, LCRA will only lower the lake 4 feet.

LCRA will move the water released from Lake LBJ downstream through Lake Marble Falls into Lake Travis.

4. How much will Inks Lake be lowered?

Inks Lake will be lowered about 8 feet, from its normal operating range of 886.9 to 887.7 feet msl to a range of 879 to 879.5. Inks Lake will be lowered about a foot a day for eight days beginning Thursday, Jan. 2.

LCRA will move the water released from Inks Lake downstream through lakes LBJ and Marble Falls into Lake Travis.

5. How much will Lake Travis rise because of the water moved downstream to lower Lake LBJ and Inks Lake?

The water released from Lake LBJ and Inks Lake to draw the lakes down totals about 28,000 acre-feet. The water could cause Lake Travis to rise about 1.7 feet.

6. When and how will Lake LBJ and Inks Lake be refilled?

Lake LBJ and Inks Lake will be refilled with a combination of water released from Lake Buchanan and water flowing into the Colorado River from tributaries downstream of Buchanan Dam.

The refills of both lakes will occur at a rate of 1-2 feet a day from Monday, Feb. 24, through Friday, Feb. 28.

The water to refill Lake LBJ and Inks Lake will total about 28,000 acre-feet (about 23,000 acre-feet in Lake LBJ and 5,000 acre-feet in Inks Lake) and could cause Lake Buchanan to fall a maximum of about 1.3 feet. The actual impact to Lake Buchanan could be reduced by rainfall or additional inflows to lakes Buchanan, Inks or LBJ.

7. Do I need permits to perform work on my dock or marina, or to dredge or fill during the drawdown?

A permit is not needed for dock repairs, but all work must comply with the [Safety Standards for Residential Docks on the Highland Lakes](#), which is available on lcra.org.

A permit is not needed to perform routine maintenance on a marina, but is required if repairs exceed what may be considered routine, or if reconstruction or replacement of a portion of the facility is needed. In order to expedite repairs and replacement, LCRA will allow a permit holder to start repairs under the emergency reconstruction provision (section 5.02C) of the [Highland Lakes Marina Ordinance](#) if written notice is provided to LCRA within 72 hours of the work beginning. Within 30 business days after the work begins, the permittee is required to submit an application for a marina facility permit amendment. Contact Matt Phillips in LCRA Water Surface Management at 512-578-1578 for questions regarding marina maintenance, reconstruction or replacement.

DREDGE AND FILL: LCRA has secured a lakewide permit from the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) allowing property owners to perform maintenance dredging and repair existing retaining walls on Lake LBJ and Inks Lake from Jan. 2- Feb. 28, 2020, as long as the property owner registers their project with LCRA.

NOTE: Property owners wanting to perform maintenance outside of this time period must obtain an individual dredge and fill permit from LCRA.

Registration forms for work to be performed on Lake LBJ and Inks Lake during the drawdown are available:

- Online at lcra.org/lakelowerings.
- By calling LCRA Water Quality Protection at 512-578-2324.
- In person at the LCRA Western Maintenance Facility, 2643 Wirtz Dam Road, Marble Falls, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

8. What activities are not allowed during the drawdown?

- Burning in the lakebed, which is prohibited by Section 26.121 of the Texas Water Code.
- Shoreline work in excess of 500 feet or dredging more than 2,000 cubic yards unless LCRA and USACE approve the project before the work begins.
- Reclamation of land lost to erosion or flood damage.
- Disposing of dredged material on sandbars or islands in the lakebed or along the shoreline.
- New construction.

9. What do I need to know about doing work in the lakebed during this drawdown?

- Do not leave tools or machinery in the lakebed overnight.
- Work should be completed before the lake refills begin on Feb 24, 2020.

10. When was the last time any of the Highland Lakes was lowered?

LCRA last lowered Lake LBJ in 2019, and Inks Lake was last drawn down in 2018. Under normal circumstances, these lakes would not be eligible to be lowered again for four years, but LCRA made an exception to assist with ongoing flood recovery efforts and to allow residents another opportunity to repair docks, retaining walls and other infrastructure, and remove any remaining debris.

Lake Marble Falls was last drawn down in 2018.

Lake Austin was last lowered in 2017. Lake Austin will not be lowered again until a multi-year floodgate replacement project underway at Tom Miller Dam is complete.

11. What if it floods during a drawdown? What if there is a power emergency that requires LCRA to move water into the lowered lakes through hydroelectric generation?

Unforeseen circumstances, such as floods or power emergencies, could prompt LCRA to change or cancel the scheduled drawdown to pass water through the Highland Lakes. Equipment and tools should not be left in the lakebed unattended and should be removed from the shoreline when not in use.

12. Where can I get more information about performing work in the lakebed during the drawdowns?

For more information, submit an inquiry through [Contact LCRA](#) or call LCRA Water Quality Protection at 512-578-2324.

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