

**Drought Contingency Plan for Domestic, Temporary,
Landscape Irrigation and Recreational Use Contracts
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Irrigation and Recreational Use Contracts**

**Lower Colorado River Authority
Draft – For Board consideration in March
2024**

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1.0 Declaration of Policy, Purpose, and Intent

The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) provides contracts to customers for water supply. In cases of drought, periods of abnormally high usage, system contamination or extended reduction in ability to supply water due to other reasons, LCRA may require water customers to institute temporary restrictions to limit non-essential water use. This Drought Contingency Plan (Plan) is designed to prolong the availability of water supply for critical needs during drought periods or other water supply emergencies.

This Drought Contingency Plan applies to the use of raw water supplied by LCRA to domestic and temporary water use contract holders (up to 10 acre-feet per year) and landscape irrigation and recreational use contract holders (up to 30 acre-feet per year). The provisions of this plan do not apply to the use of water from another source such as potable water from a local supplier or rainwater.

Water uses regulated or prohibited under this Plan are non-essential and continuation of such uses during times of water shortage or other emergency water supply conditions is deemed to constitute a waste of water.

2.0 Authorization

The LCRA General Manager or his or her designee is hereby authorized and directed to implement the applicable provisions of this plan. The LCRA General Manager or his or her designee shall have the authority to initiate or terminate drought or other water supply emergency response measures as described in this Plan. (*See Appendix A*).

3.0 Public Education

The LCRA General Manager or his or her designee will periodically provide the customers subject to this Plan with information about this Plan, including the importance of the Plan, information about the conditions under which each stage of the Plan is to be initiated, processes used to reduce water use and impending or current drought conditions.

4.0 Coordination with Regional Planning Groups

LCRA will provide a copy of this Plan to the Lower Colorado Regional Planning Group (Region K).

5.0 Notice Requirements

In accordance with the requirements of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), LCRA will notify the TCEQ executive director in writing within five (5) business days of the implementation of any mandatory provisions of the Drought Contingency Plan, or on another schedule as TCEQ may require.

6.0 Permanent Water Use Restrictions

The following restrictions apply on a year-round basis.

6.1 Irrigation Schedule for Landscaped Areas

Irrigation of landscaped areas with hose-end sprinklers or in-ground irrigation systems shall be limited to the following schedule:

- Residential addresses ending in odd numbers: Wednesdays and Saturdays
- Residential addresses ending in even numbers: Thursdays and Sundays
- Commercial (including Homeowners and Property Owners Associations): Tuesday and Friday
- Watering times: Midnight to 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. to midnight
- No regular watering is recommended in the months of November through February.

6.2 Prohibition of Water Waste

Water waste is prohibited, including the following:

- Failure to repair a controllable leak, including a broken sprinkler head, a leaking valve, leaking or broken pipes, or a leaking faucet.
- Operating an irrigation system:
 - with a broken head.
 - with a head that is out of adjustment and spraying into a public street or parking area.
 - with a head that is fogging or misting because of excessive water pressure; or
 - between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- Allowing water:
 - to run off a property and form a stream of water in a street for 50 feet or greater; or
 - to pool in a street or parking lot to a depth greater than one-quarter of an inch.

7.0 Initiation and Termination of Response Stages

The LCRA General Manager or his or her designee will monitor water supply conditions on a regular basis and will determine when conditions warrant initiation and termination of each stage of this Plan in accordance with LCRA's Water Management Plan and LCRA's Drought Contingency Plan for Firm Water Customers. Water supply conditions will be determined by the source of supply and weather conditions.

Public notification of the initiation or termination of drought response stages will be by a variety of means, including e-mail and/or mail. LCRA also will, as needed, share information with the public on water supply conditions, water use and conservation.

7.1 Triggering Criteria for Initiation and Termination of Drought Response Stages

The following triggering criteria apply to all contracts covered by this Plan.

(1) STAGE 1 - Mild Water Shortage Conditions

- A. **Criteria for initiation** – the combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan drops below 1.1 million acre-feet.
- B. **Criteria for termination** – combined storage increases above 1.2 million acre-feet.

(2) STAGE 2 - Moderate Water Shortage Conditions

- A. **Criteria for initiation:**
 - 1. When the combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan drops below 900,000 acre-feet; or
 - 2. On March 1 or July 1, the combined storage is below 1.1 million acre-feet, and the cumulative prior three-months of inflows total is less than the 25th percentile of historic inflows for that three-month period.
- B. **Criteria for termination** –combined storage increases above 1.1 million acre-feet.

(3) STAGE 3 - Severe Water Shortage Conditions

- A. **Criteria for initiation** –combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan falls below 750,000 acre-feet.
- B. **Criteria for termination** –combined storage increases above 825,000 acre-feet. Upon exiting Stage 3, Stage 2 will be in effect.

(4) STAGE 4 - Critical Water Shortage Conditions

- A. **Criteria for initiation** – Customers must implement Stage 4 Drought Response Measures when:
 - The LCRA Board declares a Drought Worse than Drought of Record or other water supply emergency and orders the mandatory curtailment of firm water supplies at a level more severe than Stage 3.
- B. **Criteria for termination** –LCRA cancels a declaration of Drought Worse than Drought of Record or other water supply emergency. Upon exiting Stage 4, a less-restrictive stage may become operative as determined by the LCRA Board.

8.0 Drought Response Measures

8.1 Targets for Water-Use Reductions

- (1) STAGE 1 - 10% reduction in water use.
- (2) STAGE 2 - 20% reduction in water use.
- (3) STAGE 3 - 25% reduction in water use.
- (4) STAGE 4 - 30% reduction in water use.

8.2 Required Measures

(1) STAGE 1 - Mild Water Shortage Conditions

- A. Continue to follow the permanent landscape watering schedule.

(2) STAGE 2 - Moderate Water Shortage Conditions

All Stage 1 required measures and these additional required measures:

A. Irrigation of Landscaped Areas:

1. Irrigation of landscaped areas with hose-end sprinklers or in-ground irrigation systems shall be limited to a no more than ONCE weekly watering schedule. A variance may be requested for commercial landscapes and recreational areas (including public parks) where no part of the landscape is watered more than once per week. Where no part of the landscape is watered more than once per week.
 - Residential addresses ending in odd numbers: Saturdays
 - Residential addresses ending in even numbers: Sundays
 - Commercial/ HOA/ POA addresses: Fridays
 - November through February: No irrigation with in-ground irrigation systems allowed
2. Outdoor watering hours will be limited to between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. on designated days. This requirement does not apply to irrigation of landscaped areas if it is by means of:
 - i. a hand-held hose with a positive shut-off device; or
 - ii. a faucet-filled bucket or watering can of 5 gallons or less.
3. New irrigated landscapes may be installed, and revegetation seeding may be performed only pursuant to a variance granted by the LCRA General Manager or his or her designee for a period of no more than 30

days.

B. Pools:

1. Draining and refilling of residential swimming pools, hot tubs and wading pools is allowed only onto pervious surfaces or onto a surface where water will be transmitted directly to a pervious surface, and only if:
 - a. Draining excess water from pool due to rain in order to lower water to maintenance level;
 - b. Repairing, maintaining, or replacing pool components that have become hazardous; or
 - c. Repair of a pool leak.

C. Outside Water Features:

1. Operation of an outside water feature is allowed only if the system recirculates through a closed-loop system.
2. Operation of outdoor misting systems at a commercial facility is allowed only between the hours of 4 p.m. and midnight.
3. Splash pad type fountains are allowed only if the recirculate the water.

D. Athletic Fields:

1. Watering should follow a no more than once-per-week schedule per irrigated area unless the athletic fields are used for organized sports practice, competition, or exhibition events when irrigation outside of the standard weekly schedule is necessary to protect the health and safety of the players, staff or officials present for the athletic event.
2. All ornamental landscape areas around facilities with athletic fields shall follow general landscape irrigation restrictions.

E. Events:

1. Events involving the use of water such as car washes, festivals, parties, water slides, and other activities involving the use of water are permitted, if the water being used drains to a recirculating device, or onto a pervious surface to prevent water waste.

F. Restricted Activities:

1. Dust control. Use of water to control dust is limited to uses necessary to meet requirements of federal, state, or local permits related to land development or for public health and safety.
2. Washing of structures, impervious surfaces, and vehicles. Use of water

to wash any structure, impervious surface, or motor vehicle (such as a motorbike, boat, trailer or airplane) is prohibited except on designated watering days between the hours of midnight and 10 a.m. and between 7 p.m. and midnight. Such activity, when allowed, shall be done with a hand-held bucket or a hand-held hose equipped with a positive shut-off nozzle.

(3) STAGE 3 - Severe Water Shortage Conditions

All measures required in Stage 1 and Stage 2 apply, plus these additional required measures:

A. Irrigation of Landscaped Areas:

1. Irrigation of landscaped areas with hose-end sprinklers or in-ground irrigation systems shall be further limited to the following schedule:
 - Residential addresses ending in odd numbers: Saturdays
 - Residential addresses ending in even numbers: Sundays
 - Commercial/ HOA/ POA addresses: Fridays
 - Outdoor watering hours will be limited to six hours a day between the hours of 4 a.m. and 10 a.m. on designated days.
 - November through February: No irrigation with in-ground irrigation systems allowed.
2. Outdoor watering hours for hand watering will be limited to before 10 a.m. or after 7 p.m., on the same designated days that apply to watering with hose-end sprinklers or irrigation systems. The allowed methods of hand watering landscaped areas are:
 - A hand-held hose with a positive shut-off device;
 - A faucet-filled bucket or watering can of five gallons or less; or
 - A soaker hose; or
 - Tree gator watering bags.
3. New irrigated landscapes representing a redesign of more than 50% of the landscaped area may only be installed if:
 - A 30-day watering schedule variance has been applied for and accepted (see section 9.2);
 - Only drought-tolerant or native plants/turf are installed;
 - No more than 25% of the irrigated landscaped area is turf and the turf is drought-tolerant; and
 - Irrigation of beds is accomplished by drip irrigation with an automatic timer.

B. Pools:

1. Installation of swimming pools is only allowed when equipped with an

automatic pool cover.

2. Public/community swimming pools should be filled or replenished only as necessary to maintain safe levels of water quality for human contact and for maintenance and should be covered when not in use.

C. Outside Water Features:

1. Operation of ornamental fountains is prohibited.
2. Operation of outside water features is only allowed when such features are used for aeration necessary to sustain aquatic life.
3. Operation of residential aesthetic or recreational devices, such as water slides, is prohibited.

D. Athletic Fields:

1. Watering should follow a no more than once-per-week schedule for no more than 6 hours per irrigated area unless the athletic fields are used for organized sports practice, competition, or exhibition events when irrigation outside of the standard weekly schedule is necessary to protect the health and safety of the players, staff or officials present for the athletic event.
2. All ornamental landscape areas around facilities with athletic fields shall follow general landscape irrigation restrictions.

E. Ponds:

Ponds used for aesthetic, amenity and/or stormwater purposes may maintain water levels only to the extent necessary to preserve the integrity of the liner and meet the LCRA Highland Lakes Watershed Ordinance or other applicable non-point source pollution regulations.

F. Restricted Activities:

1. Washing impervious surfaces. Washing sidewalks, walkways, driveways, parking lots, street, tennis courts and other impervious surfaces is prohibited except for immediate health and safety reasons.
2. Vehicle washing. Use of water to wash any motor vehicle is prohibited except on designated watering days between the hours of 4 a.m. and 10 a.m. Such activity, when allowed, shall be done with a hand-held bucket or a hand-held hose equipped with a positive shut-off nozzle.
3. Construction-related revegetation. Revegetation of disturbed areas due to construction is allowed if required by local, state, or federal regulations and requires a temporary watering variance from LCRA.
4. Events. Events involving the use of water such as car washes, festivals,

parties, water slides and other activities involving the use of water are prohibited.

(4) STAGE 4 – Critical Water Shortage Conditions

All previously required measures apply, plus and these additional required measures:

A. Irrigation of Landscaped Areas:

1. All irrigation of ornamental plants and turfgrass is prohibited. The use of hose-end sprinklers and automatic irrigation systems, including drip irrigation, are prohibited except as provided under item 2 below.
2. Irrigation of foundations, trees and vegetable gardens is allowed with hand-held hoses with a working on/off nozzle, bucket, drip irrigation or soaker hoses for 6 hours between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. or 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. one day per week on designated days.
3. Installation of new ornamental landscapes that include turf grass is prohibited.

B. Pools:

1. The filling or replenishing of water to single-family residential swimming pools is allowed only if the pool is covered with a pool cover when not in use.
2. Public/community swimming pools are allowed to fill or replenish water to maintain safe levels of water quality for human contact and should be covered when not in use.

C. Outside Water Features:

Use of water to operate outside water features, including fountains, outdoor misting systems, ornamental ponds, and splash pads, is prohibited.

D. Ponds:

Only under a written request and approval by a municipal firm water customer or LCRA may water be used for wet water quality ponds to protect the liner and meet the LCRA Highland Lakes Watershed Ordinance or other applicable non-point source pollution regulations.

E. Washing of Structures and Vehicles:

Use of water to wash any structure or motor vehicle is prohibited except in

instances with a direct public health and safety risk.

F. Additional Restrictions:

1. In the event LCRA Board requires additional drought response in this stage, the LCRA Board or the General Manager shall determine additional restrictions such as a prohibition on irrigation of landscaped areas.

9.0 Enforcement

9.1 Enforcement Provisions

The following enforcement provisions shall apply to all customers subject to this Plan:

- (1) No person shall knowingly or intentionally allow the use of water from LCRA in a manner contrary to any provision of this Plan, or in an amount in excess of that permitted by the drought response stage in effect at the time.
- (2) Any person who violates this Plan shall be subject to the following surcharges and conditions of service:
 - A. Following the first documented violation, the violator shall be given a notice specifying the type of violation and the date and time it was observed.
 - B. Following the second documented violation, the violator shall be sent by certified mail a notice of violation and shall be assessed a surcharge of \$200.
 - C. Following the third and any subsequent documented violation, the violator shall be sent by certified mail a notice of violation and shall be assessed a surcharge of \$700.
 - D. For repeat violations, LCRA may terminate the contract, refer the matter to TCEQ, seek injunctive relief, and/or seek any other remedies available.
- (3) Each day that one or more of the provisions in this Plan is violated shall constitute a separate violation. Watering schedule violations do not carry over from year to year for purposes of deeming a violation a second or subsequent violation. Tracking of multiple violations restarts at the beginning of the calendar year. Any person, including one classified as a water customer of LCRA, in apparent control of the property where a violation occurs or originates, shall have the right to show that he or she did not commit the violation.

9.2 Variances

- (1) The LCRA General Manager or his or her designee may grant variances:

- A. Temporary watering schedule variances are allowed for new landscapes that use drought-resistant landscaping or water-conserving turf. Temporary watering schedule variances are also allowed for revegetation of disturbed areas due to construction, or if required by local, state, or federal regulations.

The following guidelines apply to Temporary Watering Schedule Variances for new landscapes:

- A 30-day temporary watering schedule must be applied for and issued before the irrigation may begin.
 - On days one thru 10, automatic irrigation or hose-end sprinklers are allowed every day, subject to the allowable watering hours for the drought response stage in effect.
 - On days 11-20, automatic irrigation or hose-end sprinklers are allowed every other day subject to the allowable watering hours for the drought response stage in effect.
 - On days 21-30, automatic irrigation or hose-end sprinklers are allowed every third day subject to the allowable watering hours for the drought response stage in effect.
 - On day 31, the customer must return to the watering schedule for the drought response stage in effect.
 - Hand watering is allowed anytime with a hose equipped with a positive shut-off nozzle, except as restricted under the watering hours or other restrictions for the drought response stage in effect.
- B. For commercial and large residential properties where the mandatory outdoor watering schedule is inadequate to cover large landscapes and subject to the requirements of the applicable drought response stage of this plan, a variance may be granted, provided that the variance does not increase the time allowed for watering each area but rather alters the schedule for watering; and allowing the use of alternative water sources (i.e., groundwater, reclaimed wastewater) that do not increase demand on LCRA-supplied water for outdoor use.
- (2) The LCRA General Manager or his or her designee may grant in writing temporary variances for existing water uses otherwise prohibited under this Plan if it is determined that failure to do so would cause an emergency adversely affecting public health, sanitation, or fire protection, and if one or more of the following conditions are met:
- A. Compliance with this plan cannot be accomplished during the duration of the time the Plan is in effect; or
 - B. Alternative methods can be implemented that will achieve the same level of reduction in water use.
- (3) Persons requesting a variance from the provisions of this Plan shall file a petition for variance to domesticwateruse@lcra.org any time the Plan or a particular

drought response stage is in effect. The petition shall include:

- Name and address of the petitioner
- Purpose of water use
- Specific provision of the Plan from which the petitioner is requesting relief.
- Detailed statement as to how the specific provision of the plan adversely affects the petitioner or what damage or harm the petitioner or others will sustain if petitioner complies with this plan
- Description of the relief requested
- Period of time for which the variance is sought
- Alternative water use restrictions or other measures the petitioner is taking or proposes to take to meet the intent of this plan and the compliance date
- Other pertinent information

(4) Variances shall be subject to the following conditions, unless waived or modified by the LCRA General Manager or his or her designee:

A. Variances granted shall include a timetable for compliance.

B. Variances granted shall expire when the plan, or its requirements, is no longer in effect, unless the petitioner has failed to meet specified requirements.

(5) No variance shall be retroactive or otherwise excuse any violation occurring before the variance was issued.

Appendix A: LCRA Board Authorization of Drought Contingency Plan

Appendix B: Drought Response Enforcement Process under the Drought Contingency Plan for Domestic, Temporary, Landscape Irrigation and Recreational Use Contracts

LCRA will regularly monitor use by customers from water and/or land. LCRA will issue violations for noncompliance with the provisions of this plan as follows:

First documented violation	Notice of violation issued. Customer notified of potential surcharges for subsequent violations
Second documented violation	\$200 surcharge
Third and subsequent documented violation	\$700 surcharge

Appendix C: Mandatory Watering Schedules

Permanent mandatory watering schedule

Outdoor watering using an in-ground irrigation system or hose-end sprinkler is allowed no more than twice per week for up to 15 hours and only during scheduled days and times as indicated below:

Residential

Odd number addresses: Wednesdays and Saturdays

Even number addresses: Thursdays and Sundays

Commercial (including large landscapes such as HOA common areas and public schools)

Tuesdays and Fridays

Watering Hours

Midnight to 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. to midnight

Stage 2 mandatory watering schedule

Outdoor watering using an in-ground irrigation system or hose-end sprinkler is allowed no more than once per week for up to 15 hours and only during scheduled days and times as indicated below:

Residential

Odd number addresses: Saturdays

Even number addresses: Sundays

Commercial (including large landscapes such as HOA common areas and public schools): Fridays

Watering Hours

Midnight to 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. to midnight

Stage 3 mandatory watering schedule

Outdoor watering using an in-ground irrigation system or hose-end sprinkler is allowed no more than once per week for up to 6 hours only during scheduled days and times as indicated below:

Residential

Odd number addresses: Saturdays

Even number addresses: Sundays

Commercial (including large landscapes, HOA common areas, and public schools)

Fridays

Watering Hours

4 a.m. to 10 a.m.