

<https://communityimpact.com/austin/central-austin/environment/2022/07/19/travis-county-commissioners-urge-for-reformed-water-management-plan-amid-increasing-drought-risk/>

## Travis County commissioners urge for reformed water management plan amid increasing drought risk



By [Katy McAfee](#) | 4:04 PM Jul 19, 2022 CDT  
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*Lake Travis is one of two lakes in the Highland Lakes system that supplies water to approximately 2 million Central Texans. (Darcy Sprague/Community Impact Newspaper)*

On July 19, Travis County commissioners approved sending the Lower Colorado River Authority an official request to re-examine its [water management plan](#) at a time when Texas A&M University's Office of the Texas State Climatologist [reported](#) rising temperatures are threatening Travis County's access to water.

The LCRA is tasked with providing a reliable water source to Central Texas by monitoring the usage of Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan, the two water reservoirs in the Highland Lakes system. This system provides water to almost 2 million people in Central Texas, according to the [Central Texas Water Coalition](#)—an organization

focused on protecting the water supply in the Highland Lakes.

While the lakes were designed to ebb and flow during droughts and wet seasons, data from the CTWC shows the inflow of water into the lakes is reaching historic lows, and arid weather patterns are bringing extended droughts to Austin.

“You don’t see the flaws until you are in a bad spot,” CTWC President Jo Karr Tedder said, referring to the LCRA’s water management plan. “We are in a bad spot.”

The water shortage is especially evident when analyzing the inflow of water into Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan during Junes throughout history. The average inflow of water in June since 1942 was 160,646 acre-feet. The average inflow of water in June 2022 was 4,364 acre-feet, according to the CTWC. One acre-foot of water is about the size of a football field and 1 foot deep.

“It’s clear that the water sources are declining, coming into our drinking water supply,” Commissioner Brigid Shea said. “We are looking at the potential for an extreme shortage of water for drinking.”

City leaders are asking the LCRA to not only amend their water management plan to account for an increased likelihood of drought, but also to provide for the growing population in Travis County.

According to the CTWC, the economic and environmental supply is not meeting the demands as Travis County’s population increases year after year. [The Texas State Water Plan](#), which focuses on meeting the state's water needs from 2020-70, projects a 9% increase in water demand and an 18% decrease in water supply.

Shea added Travis County needs to become more serious about water conservation as the LCRA is releasing water for rice farming, a swamp land crop. Drinking water is also being used for air conditioning, which accounts for about 90% of a typical office’s water needs. According to Shea, both of these could be supplied with treated wastewater.

“Consider this resolution sounding the alarm,” Shea said.