

Texas Drought

Drought continues as weather turns dry

The rain in early 2012 has raised the Highland Lakes to about half full, but it will take a long stretch of sustained rains to fill them up and end the drought. Last year's record setting hot and dry weather produced the worst single-year drought in the state's history and reduced lakes Travis and Buchanan to 37 percent full.

The first half of May saw above normal precipitation across the Hill Country and most of Central Texas. However, this wet pattern diminished in the second half of the month as the jet stream retreated to the north and an area of high pressure set up over Mexico and most of Texas, causing warm, summer-like weather conditions. The forecast indicates typical summer-like weather will continue in June, with little change expected through late August. Rainfall across Texas over the summer months is forecast to average slightly below normal while temperatures will be slightly above normal. However, a repeat of last summer's record hot and dry pattern is not expected.

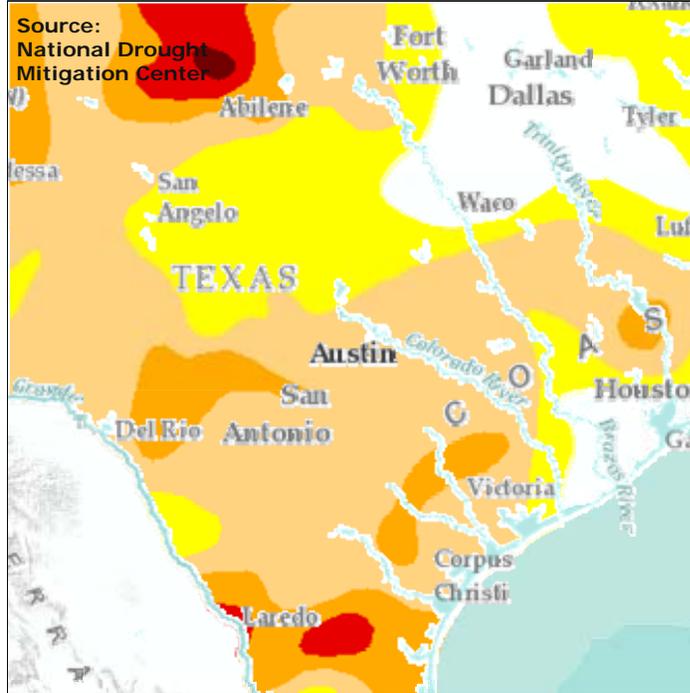
Because the combined storage of lakes Buchanan and Travis is still significantly low, LCRA will not provide Highland Lakes water to most downstream farmers this year. The [historic decision](#) became official on March 1, when the combined storage of the lakes failed to reach 850,000 acre-feet. That was the level agreed upon last September by LCRA, with input from stakeholders throughout the basin, including downstream farmers, when it established the emergency drought relief measures that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality approved in December.

Farmers in the Lakeside, Gulf Coast and Pierce Ranch irrigation operations will not receive any water from the Highland Lakes this year. Farmers in the Garwood irrigation operation will still receive some water from the Highland Lakes this year, up to 19,579 acre-feet, because of their contract with LCRA. For comparison, downstream farmers diverted about 368,000 acre-feet of Highland Lakes water last year for first and second crops.

Last year's blistering weather dried up many of the Highland Lakes' tributaries and reduced the water flowing into the lakes, called inflows, to their lowest level ever recorded. Gauged inflows last year amounted to 127,699 acre-feet, which is about 10 percent of the historical average. In 2011 inflows provided less water to the Highland Lakes than the lakes lost in evaporation.

Thanks to rain earlier this year, inflows for the first three months of 2012 approached historical averages. Inflows even surpassed the historical

How Severe is the Drought?



Use your mouse to zoom in or out or move the map.

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional

The [U.S Drought Monitor](#) each week classifies the intensity of dry conditions throughout the United States.

HOW FULL /

5

Lakes Travis and Buchanan are about 1,010 percent full.

BOB ROSE'S



RIVERS AND

LAKE	LEVEL
Buchanan	9
Inks	8
LBJ	8
Marble Falls	7
Travis	6
Austin	4

Daily River Re

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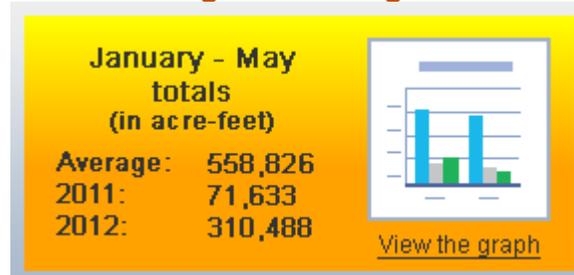
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- June 15, 2011
- May 23, 2011
- March 2, 2011
- Feb. 2, 2011

Water flowing into the Highland Lakes



average for the month of March, which was the first time monthly inflows were above average since April 2010.

However, this April saw a return to drier weather, and inflows were significantly below average in April and May. So far in 2012, there has been 310,488 acre-feet of inflows into the Highland Lakes, which is about 56 percent of average. An acre-foot is 325,851 gallons.

- Jan. 24, 20
- Dec. 7, 201
- Oct. 5, 201
- Sept. 22, 2
- Sept. 15, 2
- July 21, 20
- May 18, 20
- April 15, 20

Lake Conditions

The table below shows current conditions at lakes Travis and Buchanan, along with projected conditions through Dec. 1, 2012, as compared to the conditions experienced during historical lows. This forecast incorporates the temporary emergency changes to the WMP approved by the TCEQ on Dec. 7, 2011.

	2012	2012 (projections)		Historical Low***
	June 1***	Sept. 1**	Dec. 1**	
Lake Travis (feet above mean sea level (feet msl))	642.93 (28.4 feet below monthly average)	638-634	633-629	614.18 (8/14/1951)
Lake Buchanan (feet msl)	997.81 (16.9 feet below monthly average)	993-989	989-985	983.70 (9/9/1952)
Combined Storage of lakes Buchanan and Travis (million acre-feet) / % of capacity	1.03 51%	0.87-0.81 43%-40%	0.83-0.72 41%-36%	0.62 31% (9/9/1952)

**Based on persistent dry conditions and following TCEQ approved temporary emergency changes to WMP

*** Based on daily 8 a.m. lake levels

LCRA Utilities

In November, all LCRA utilities went to enhanced stage two restrictions, which allows landscape watering no more than once a week when the combined storage of lakes Travis and Buchanan falls to 750,000 acre-feet or less. While the combined storage is above 750,000 acre-feet, the enhanced stage two restrictions will not be lifted because the drought continues and storage levels could begin to fall as we approach warmer months.

On Jan. 24, Spicewood Beach Water System went into Stage 4 restrictions because of a drop in the level of the well serving the system. Outdoor watering is not permitted under Stage 4.

Boat Ramps and Water Intakes

Rising lake levels allowed public boat ramps to open on lakes Buchanan and Travis in March. On Lake Buchanan, the public boat ramp at White Bluff Park is open. On Lake Travis, the public boat ramp at Mansfield Dam is open.

TAKE A LOOK: See what the future may hold for lakes Travis and Buchanan



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