

To the Lake Houston Area Community,

This is a long email, but I wanted to recap the conclusion of the Lake Houston Area Chamber's Lives Over Levels Campaign to the San Jacinto River Authority Board of Directors to temporarily and seasonally lower Lake Conroe, review the vote held Thursday night in Conroe, and discuss how it is a big WIN for our area.

I'm sure by now, you've heard the San Jacinto River Authority Board of Directors approved to continue temporary, seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe at Thursday night's Special Board Meeting.

The temporary, seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe will begin in the Spring on April 1 with the SJRA gradually reducing the lake from 201' msl to an elevation of 200' msl. Recapture will begin June 1. This strategy is no different from the 2019 Spring Mitigation Strategy.

In the Fall, SJRA voted to lower the elevation to 200' msl from August 1 to August 31. (In 2019 it was lowered to 199' msl). Then beginning September 1, Lake Conroe will be lowered to the elevation of 199.5' msl with recapture beginning October 1. If a storm enters the region, the City of Houston may initiate an additional prerelease to 199 ft. by notifying the SJRA in writing of their call for prerelease.

This plan is effective through December 2022.

This plan is different from the protocol put in place in 2018 and 2019. So why is this a big win and a good solution for our area?

**Keep in mind:**

- The point of temporary, seasonal lowering is to help provide capacity as we work to complete recovery and resiliency projects. As we've completed projects (such as two rounds of dredging) it's reasonable for our original 2018 lowering strategy to be modified.
- Lake Houston will be lowered 1 ft below normal pool elevation for the entire 2020 year while dam repairs are being made, adding to capacity.
- Since the approval of the original seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe was made nearly two years ago millions of cubic yards of sand has been removed. The decrease in sand and sediment has restored some capacity in our waterways - we HAVE made significant progress with our dredging projects.
- The SJRA Board agreed to do the new protocol for seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe through the end of 2022 giving us three years to get our gates in place - previous votes have only been for one year.
  - The board agreed to give us the time we requested to finish projects. They listened to our definition of a "temporary request" and approved it. They could have chosen to review again after one year (as they have with the past two votes) and we would be doing this all over again next year.

- If a storm enters the region, the City of Houston may initiate an additional prerelease to 199 ft. by notifying the SJRA in writing of their call for prerelease. Keep in mind, this is the first time we've ever moved the needle on a pre-release strategy with named storms.

**Also, note:**

- The Lake Conroe Association has been requesting the SJRA Board discontinue seasonal lake lowering and made this proposal at the January 21 Special Meeting.
- At the end of the January meeting, SJRA Board Chairman Tisdale said by the next meeting (Feb 20), he wanted everyone to work collaboratively to strike a balance and come back with solutions.
- Lake Conroe Association did not change their position or come back with alternative solutions. They stuck to their original "no lowering" request. Instead of working to strike a balance, they even spent \$12,000 to do their own study in order to prove their point that lake lowering provided no real benefit. This resulted in the board not only disregarding their request to stop lowering Lake Conroe, but they went further by opting to not revisit this issue for another three years.
- Our leadership, including Rep. Dan Huberty and Mayor Pro Tem Dave Martin worked continuously together to find a way to restructure the original plan from 2018 & 2019. We were all in support of the suggested protocol by the City of Houston which was presented by Mayor Pro Tem Dave Martin. We made the point that Lake Houston will also be lowered by 1ft from normal pool level for the entire year – thus sharing in the lake lowering burden. Additionally, since we have made significant progress with dredging, we felt the proposal of lowering Lake Conroe to 200 feet msl from April 1 - May 31 and to 199.5 feet mls from August 1 – September 30 was an appropriate proposal.
  - Although SJRA Board Members Mark Micheletti and Kaaren Cambio voted in favor of the City of Houston's proposal, the motion failed.
  - The final approved recommendation was a very similar. With the exception of 6" in August, we got everything we asked for with an additional bonus of this being in place for three years and an agreement the City of Houston could call for an additional lowering of 6" by written request when there is a named storm in the gulf.

**We overcame what seemed at times were insurmountable odds to make this outcome happen. The last two weeks we faced numerous roadblocks, opposition from various local, state and federal elected officials, recommendations made by state agencies which provided less protection than we had requested, as well as a well-funded advertising campaign with billboards, ads, bumper stickers – all demanding SJRA "Stop The Drop."**

**WE NEVER GAVE UP AND WE PREVAILED.**

Please take a moment to personally thank **Mark Micheletti and Kaaren Cambio**, two SJRA Board members who are passionate advocates for Lake Houston. They are fighters and they never gave up.

And please, send your thanks to **City of Houston Mayor Pro Tem Dave Martin and State Representative Dan Huberty**. The dynamic duo did it again! How fortunate are we to have them representing and fighting for our area?

#### **What is next?**

- The Lake Houston Area Chamber will continue to work with the City of Houston and the San Jacinto River Authority on the approved recommendation. Both entities have participated in our monthly Long Term Recovery Task Force where updates and project statuses are presented. This is just one piece of our overall strategy and work to continue to help our area recover and become more resilient.

#### **It's time for "Thank You's" and Appreciation**

- **SJRA Board:** Many have reached out requesting contact information to send their gratitude to the SJRA Board of Directors. There is an email form for the board of directors at <https://www.sjra.net/about/board/>. We encourage you to send a note of thanks. If you prefer to do this as a written letter, please send it to the Board's attention at SJRA's address: P. O. Box 329, Conroe, Texas 77305.
  - **Mark Micheletti and Kaaren Cambio** are two members of the SJRA Board who reside in Kingwood and have been fierce advocates on behalf of the lake lowering program. If you'd like to send an email of thanks to them, please send it to [chamber@lakehouston.org](mailto:chamber@lakehouston.org) and we will forward emails to them. Please use a subject line of "Thank You SJRA Board Members Mark Micheletti and Kaaren Cambio" so we can easily collect and distribute.
- **City of Houston:** Emails of thanks can be sent to Mayor Pro Tem Dave Martin at [dave.martin@houstontx.gov](mailto:dave.martin@houstontx.gov) and Mayor Turner at [mayor@houstontx.gov](mailto:mayor@houstontx.gov).
- **State Representative Dan Huberty:** Emails of thanks can be sent to [dan.huberty@house.state.tx.us](mailto:dan.huberty@house.state.tx.us).

**Finally – thank you**. This outcome from Thursday night would definitely not have been possible without your participation by sending emails, sharing news and info, and showing up at the meeting Thursday night.

Onward,

Jenna Armstrong

**Jenna Armstrong, IOM**

President/CEO

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