



Every Drop Counts

By: Jordan Austin, Lake Conroe Division

Since 1937, the San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) has worked diligently to develop, conserve, and protect the water resources of the San Jacinto River basin by providing water-related services, developing water supplies, and managing the Lake Conroe dam and reservoir. With the population in Montgomery County increasing so quickly, SJRA's role of ensuring adequate and secure future water supplies has become even more critical.

Part of this enormous task includes efforts to ramp up water conservation. In fact, water conservation has become an increased concern throughout the entire State of Texas due to the recent drought conditions across the state. One of the common measures being taken by water entities across Texas is the updating of Water Conservation and Drought Contingency Plans (WC&DC Plans). WC&DC Plans are a requirement of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) intended to protect and extend our valuable water resources, such as Lake Conroe. These important plans help SJRA manage water supplies, ease the impact of drought conditions, and assist in planning for future development and population increases.

One of the primary elements of these plans requires SJRA to report all water usage to TCEQ. TCEQ requires SJRA to account for all water usage by allocating reported pumpage amounts to the different water rights SJRA has obtained from the state.

Many homeowners don't realize the significant influence that outdoor landscape irrigation has on our water supplies, but the truth is it's a very big factor, especially in the hot summer months when high evaporation rates are already impacting our surface water supplies. The Environmental Protection Agency, under their Water Sense Program states, "Nationwide, landscape irrigation is estimated to account for nearly one-third of all residential water use, totaling nearly 9 billion gallons per day."

As part of the required updates to its WC&DC Plans, SJRA is enhancing its efforts to account for all private landscape irrigation uses, including individual homeowners who are using Lake Conroe as a water source to irrigate their lawns or landscape. Anyone who diverts water from Lake Conroe must have a contract in place with SJRA. State law requires that all uses of state-permitted water be accounted for. If you are a resident with lake front property, you should have recently received a

letter from SJRA asking you to contact our offices if you have an irrigation system installed (or would like to install a system) that has the ability to use Lake Conroe as a water source for landscape irrigation. If you received this letter, please respond with the appropriate form, which was included with the letter and is also available electronically on SJRA's website. If you've already had a landscape irrigation license in the past, you will receive your normal annual invoice shortly after April 1st.

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Lake Conroe is a valuable resource, and with the proper management will continue to serve our communities in Montgomery County. We must all work together to help protect and conserve our water supplies for future generations, and this includes properly accounting for all uses and educating homeowners on proper irrigation techniques.

For more information on how to apply for a private landscape irrigation contract, please visit Lake Conroe's website at www.sjra.net/lakeconroe, or contact our office at (936) 588-1111. ♦

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