



City of Houston
Houston Public Works

San Jacinto River Authority



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2018

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**CITY AND SJRA RECEIVE APPROVAL TO MOVE FORWARD WITH
TEMPORARY FLOOD MITIGATION PROPOSAL FOR LAKE HOUSTON
AND LAKE CONROE**

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality will use “enforcement discretion” if flood mitigation releases for Lake Houston and Lake Conroe exceed annual water rights

HOUSTON, TEXAS - Hurricane Harvey deposited tremendous amounts of silt in the West Fork of the San Jacinto River. The silt physically changed the river’s ability to safely pass flows during storms and created the need for a significant dredging project to restore the river’s capacity. As a temporary flood mitigation solution, the City of Houston and the San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) proposed a temporary, joint reservoir operations strategy for Lake Houston and Lake Conroe. The temporary flood mitigation would be in place for up to two years or until the dredging project is completed.

The proposed strategy involves the pre-release of water from Lake Houston immediately prior to certain storms and the seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe’s water level during the Spring and Fall.

A significant hurdle to final consideration of the proposed temporary strategy was a decision by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) on how releases of water from the two reservoirs would be “accounted for” by the state. TCEQ issues permits that limit how much water can be diverted each year from water supply reservoirs like Lake Houston and Lake Conroe.

The proposal from Houston and SJRA highlights the difficulty of balancing the state’s long-term need for reliable water supplies with the short-term goal of protecting public health and safety while emergency measures are implemented to reduce flood risks.

In a letter to the City of Houston and SJRA on Friday, June 15, 2018, the TCEQ expressed its intent to use enforcement discretion to allow the two agencies to move forward with finalizing their temporary flood mitigation strategy.

The letter states that “if flood mitigation releases . . . result in an exceedance of the annual permitted amounts for diversion or release by SJRA of the City of Houston, the TCEQ Executive Director will exercise enforcement discretion with respect to such exceedance.” The TCEQ’s decision acknowledges the importance of accounting for all diversions from the state’s water supply reservoirs, but it also recognizes the emergency nature of the flood mitigation work being conducted in the San Jacinto River.

The City of Houston and SJRA express their sincere appreciation to the leadership and staff at the TCEQ for their thoughtful consideration of the unique flood challenges that our region is facing. We look forward to finalizing the details of our proposed joint reservoir operations strategy. Additional details on the project including a timeline will be provided as they become available.

ABOUT HOUSTON PUBLIC WORKS

Houston Public Works (www.HoustonPublicWorks.org) is responsible for streets and drainage, production and distribution of water, collection and treatment of wastewater, and permitting and regulation of public and private construction covering a 627-square mile service area. Houston Public Works is accredited by the American Public Works Association. **Facebook & Twitter: @HoustonPWE**

ABOUT SAN JACINTO RIVER AUTHORITY

Created by the Texas Legislature in 1937, the San Jacinto River Authority is a government agency whose mission is to develop, conserve, and protect the water resources of the San Jacinto River basin. Covering all or part of seven counties, the organization's jurisdiction includes the entire San Jacinto River watershed, excluding Harris County. SJRA is one of two dozen river authorities in Texas, and like other river authorities, its primary purpose is to implement long-term, regional projects related to water management and development. For more information, visit www.sjra.net.