



Frequently Asked Questions regarding SJRA/COH Temporary, Flood Mitigation Strategy
for Lake Houston and Lake Conroe

July 30, 2018

Key messages:

- This is a **TEMPORARY** strategy . . . it is intended to provide flood mitigation while the US Army Corp of Engineers' emergency dredging project is completed. The USACE's dredging contractor began mobilizing this month (July 2018), and the current ESTIMATE is that the dredging project will be completed in nine months.
- The mitigation benefit during a major flood event is somewhat limited (due to (i) Lake Conroe's small contribution to the overall watershed, and (ii) the small impact on our overall releases); but SJRA and the City of Houston were asked by numerous community leaders to come up with a way to mitigate smaller storms while dredging is completed.
- SJRA and downstream communities realize and appreciate the negative impact that this creates around Lake Conroe, but they are asking for patience for a short period of time while the emergency condition in the West Fork is remedied.

1. Has the temporary strategy for Lake Conroe and Lake Houston been finally approved by all the necessary parties?

- a. Yes. Both the SJRA and the City of Houston have considered and approved the proposed strategy.
- b. SJRA and the COH requested an opinion from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to determine how releases would be treated for purposes of water rights accounting. On Friday, June 15, TCEQ answered that the state would use "enforcement discretion" if releases caused SJRA or the COH to exceed their annual permits.
- c. The final terms were agreed to on July 26, 2018.

2. What exactly is the temporary proposal for Lake Conroe?

- a. As a point of reference, the normal pool level of Lake Conroe is 201' msl.
- b. Spring season – April 1 through May 31.
 - i. Starting on April 1, SJRA will gradually reduce to and maintain the level of Lake Conroe at 200' msl (one foot below normal pool).
 - ii. Starting on June 1, SJRA will begin to capture flows to restore normal lake elevation.
- c. Fall season – August 1 through September 30.
 - i. Starting on August 1, SJRA will gradually reduce the level of Lake Conroe with a goal of reaching 200' msl (one foot below normal pool) by August 15.
 - ii. After August 15, SJRA will continue gradually lowering the level of Lake Conroe with a goal of reaching (and maintaining) 199' msl (two feet below normal pool) by August 31.

- iii. Starting October 1, SJRA will begin to capture flows to restore normal lake elevation.
- d. If the lake level has already dropped to the target elevation just due to evaporation, no releases would be made.
- e. If a storm enters the forecast while seasonal releases are being made to lower the lake level, such releases would be stopped and the river allowed to drain out until rainfall is out of the forecast.

3. When would the lake lowering strategy end?

- a. The intent of the proposal is to provide a near-term, flood mitigation benefit while the USACE dredging project on the lower West Fork is completed.
- b. The USACE dredging project is currently scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2019.
- c. The SJRA board's proposal stated that the lake lowering strategy would be reviewed annually at the February board meeting and must be renewed by a vote of the Board in order to extend it for another year.

4. Why does the proposed strategy for Lake Conroe not involve the pre-release of water before a storm event?

- a. Release of water from Lake Conroe prior to a storm would put flows into the San Jacinto River and Lake Houston potentially exacerbating downstream flooding. Weather forecasts are simply not accurate enough to risk pre-releasing water, which pre-saturates and pre-fills downstream basins.
- b. Staff from the City of Houston, the Coastal Water Authority, and the Harris County Flood Control District have expressed their desire to not pre-fill the river and Lake Houston prior to a storm with water released from Lake Conroe.
- c. Lake Conroe is located in the upper basin where it makes sense to retain flood waters to the extent possible.

5. What exactly is the temporary proposal for Lake Houston?

- a. If the forecast calls for greater than three inches of rainfall in the Lake Houston basin within 48 hours, the COH will lower the Lake Houston water level by one foot prior to the storm.
- b. This pre-release strategy is considered appropriate for Lake Houston because of its close proximity to Galveston Bay and the absence of populated areas in the area's downstream of the dam.