

## **Rice farmers denounce recommendation to cut off irrigation water for 3rd year in a row**

**EAST BERNARD, Texas (Jan. 27, 2014)** – Rice farmers in the lower Colorado River basin denounced today's recommendation by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality that LCRA irrigation water be cut off for the 3rd year in a row if the Highland Lakes are less than 55 percent full on March 1.

"This recommendation is catastrophic and it amounts to water inequity," said Ronald Gertson, chair of the Colorado Water Issues Committee, a group representing rice farmers in three counties.

"We are paying the price of the drought with our livelihoods, while some residents upstream are using more than five times as much water a day as the state recommends," Gertson said.

"We are exploring legal, legislative and financial remedies for this devastating decision," he said.

The TCEQ Executive Director recommended on Monday to approve LCRA's request to cut off irrigation water to the farmers on March 1 if the combined storage of Lakes Travis and Buchanan is less than 1.1 million acre-feet, or about 55 per cent of capacity. The 1.1 million acre-feet trigger level is 30 percent higher than in 2013.

"Keeping the Highland Lakes 30 percent higher than last year's emergency order is based on political, not scientific reasons," Gertson said.

The LCRA provides water to rice farmers in Wharton, Matagorda and Colorado counties through irrigation systems. Rice production in the three counties accounts for 40 percent of statewide production.

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