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# Rice farmers unlikely to get water for second year

By Matthew Tresaugue | January 8, 2013

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AUSTIN – A Central Texas river authority put rice farmers on notice Tuesday that they are unlikely to receive irrigation water for the second year in a row because of worsening drought conditions.

At an emergency meeting, the Lower Colorado River Authority adopted a plan that would cut off downstream growers unless two large reservoirs near Austin hold at least 850,000 acre-feet of water on March 1.

The amount of water in Lake Buchanan and Lake Travis has dropped to 825,630 acre-feet, or 41 percent capacity, and the river authority does not expect them to recover in the coming months.

The new plan comes two months after the river authority's governing board had set a target of 775,000 acre-feet before releasing water to rice farmers in Colorado, Matagorda and Wharton counties. Conditions, however, changed, and board members said they had to act to protect water supplies for those who live in and around Austin.

One acre-foot is enough water to satisfy the needs of two or three typical Texas households.

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