

PLTA

NEWS!

The Protect Lake Travis Association
10801 Rush Rd.
Austin, Texas 78732

Summer 1996

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PLTA ANNUAL MEETING JULY 27

On Saturday, July 27, at 1:30 PM the annual meeting of the Protect Lake Travis Association will be held. The meeting will be held in the Board Room of W.C.I.D. #17, at 3812 Eck Lane. W.C.I.D. #17's office is about 100 yards down Eck Lane from its intersection with RR 620 (which is next to the intersection and traffic light at Hudson Bend Rd. & RR 620).

The highlight of this meeting will start at 2 PM and is a panel discussion of "High-rise Buildings and the Future of Lake Travis." The panel will be made up of representatives of the City of Austin, Lower Colorado River Authority, W.C.I.D. #17, Travis County, Volente Fire District, Hudson Bend Fire District, and others, and will be moderated by PLTA. Discussion items will include what agencies and regulations exist now; will future high-rise buildings pose a risk to Lake Travis water quality, fire protection, road system; is a high-rise condominium just a subdivision which goes up; if there are risks, what action(s) should be taken and how would they be implemented.

The reason that PLTA is holding this discussion at this time is because at least one high-rise project is under consideration (an 18 story condominium, just recently down-sized to two 9 story buildings) and there are other projects being considered for the shores of Lake Travis. In June, the City of Austin approved a site plan at RR 620 and RR 2222 (within the view of Lake Travis but in the Bull Creek - Lake Austin watershed) for a project that will include a high-rise hotel.

Also being considered at this meeting will be changes to the bylaws, counting of the ballots for PLTA director election (see inside for ballot), officer elections, update on interbasin transfers (Trans Texas Study), and PLTA's financial report. Please mark July 27 on your calendar and come participate.

IMPORTANT MEETINGS COMING UP

The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) will have two work sessions for their board directors on August 20, one to review LCRA's staff recommendations on changes to the Highland Lakes Marina Ordinance and the other to review recommendations to the Lake Travis Management Plan (times have yet to be set, call 473-3200 close to this date for times). Then on August 21-22, at the LCRA monthly board meeting, the LCRA Board will consider adoption of changes to the Highland Lakes Marina Ordinance.

LCRA will be holding public meetings to discuss staff recommendations for action to be taken on the Lake Travis Management Plan: August 27 at 7 PM for the Lago Vista area at Bar-K Clubhouse; September 4 at 7 PM for the Austin area at the LCRA Board room at 3701 Lake Austin Blvd.; and September 5 at 7 PM for the Lakeway area at Lakeway city council chambers. Then on September 18-19, at the LCRA monthly board meeting, the LCRA Board will consider adoption of the recommended actions to the Lake Travis Management Plan. If you have any input to offer on either the amended Highland Lakes Marina Ordinance or the Lake Travis Management Plan, make sure you get your comments in before these dates or attend the meetings and make your comments known.

LAKE LEVEL FORECAST

Lake Travis is forecast to drop to about 643 feet above mean sea level (msl) by October if there is no significant rainfall, according to LCRA. This would be the lowest level in about 12 years (Oct. 6, 1984—636.6 feet msl) and would put Lake Travis at about 55 % of capacity. LCRA was able to make a call on stored water in Lake Ivie because of a 1985 settlement agreement between LCRA and the Colorado River Municipal Water District and 142,000 acre-feet was added to the Highland Lakes. This water was released between May 4 and June 17 and if it had not been called down, Lake Travis would be about 5 feet lower then it is now, which is about 655 feet msl.

No Sewage In Our Lakes !

"SAN ANTONIO HOSE" COULD HAVE A DRAINING EFFECT
BY COLE ROWLAND, PRESIDENT OF THE HIGHLAND LAKES GROUP & PLTA DIRECTOR

The Trans-Texas Water Program is a statewide project designed to provide additional water supplies to the cities of Houston, Corpus Christi and San Antonio. Among the methods being considered for obtaining new water for San Antonio is a water pipeline from Lake Austin to send Lake Travis water to San Antonio, making the Colorado River part of the San Antonio municipal water system. The pipeline is referred to as the "San Antonio Hose," and people have asked a number of questions about such a water pipeline.

1. Is it legal?

If the water were purchased from the Lower Colorado River Authority, as suggested in the Trans-Texas consulting report, the water transfer would be in violation of the enabling act of the LCRA, which prohibits water transfers outside the LCRA's 10 county statutory district. Also, the Texas Constitution prohibits state funds from being used for water projects involving inter-basin water transfers. If you consider the Trans-Texas Program a "water project," in that sense then the Trans-Texas Program violates both state law and the Texas Constitution.

2. Is there surplus water available in the Colorado?

LCRA's hydrology shows that in the event of a repeat of the worst drought on record (the criterion for water availability), there would not be sufficient water to satisfy the needs of the water users within the Colorado basin, much less those in San Antonio.

3. Should San Antonio look closer to home for its water?

San Antonio residents have water rates that are among the lowest in the state, about half that of Austin residential water customers. San Antonio is notoriously lax at conserving its available water supply. According to an April 13 article in the San Antonio Express-News, 33 of San Antonio's 42 major water users failed to comply with the drought rules of the Edwards Underground Water District, which currently require a 15 percent cutback of water use. The list of noncomplying major water users included the San Antonio Water System, Bexar Metropolitan Water District, a dozen suburban communities and the Sea World theme park. San Antonio voters in 1995 turned down bonds for completing their own local reservoir, the Applewhite Reservoir. Unfortunately, building a pipeline to an existing reservoir such as Lake Travis or Lake Austin is cheaper than building a new reservoir.

4. What effect would the pipeline have on the economy of the Highland Lakes?

A study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1994, showed that recreational visitors to the Highland Lakes produce \$266 million in "total output and sales" each year, representing about 3,300 local jobs. The study also found that in the event of chronic low water levels in the Highland Lakes reservoirs, these numbers would be reduced by about 40 percent.

5. Will it work?

In 1965, the Texas Water Development Board led another attempt at transporting water long distances. That plan would have piped water from the Mississippi River to West Texas. After the plan was defeated as a constitutional amendment, a study by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Mississippi River Commission showed that the cost of the plan would have been seven times larger than the benefits. The Central Arizona Project, which moves water uphill from the other Colorado River to farmers around Phoenix and Tucson, has turned out to be a multibillion-dollar boondoggle, at the taxpayers' expense.

The City of Austin joined the Trans-Texas Program in 1993 based on the prospect of water being piped from Toledo Bend Reservoir in southeast Texas to cities in Central Texas. Even if this was economically feasible, which is very doubtful, legislators from southeast Texas do not seem receptive to the prospect of transferring water from Toledo Bend to distant metropolitan areas.

Recently, Austin's city officials seem to be having second thoughts about Trans-Texas, apparently realizing that Austin has much more to lose from Trans-Texas than it has to gain. Last fall, one member of the Austin City Council voted for a resolution condemning the proposed water pipeline from San Antonio to Lake Austin as a board member of the Capitol Area Planning Council. Another council member voted for a similar resolution as a member of the Travis and Williamson Counties Alliance of Cities Board. Similar resolutions were adopted by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and the Travis County Commissioners Court.

I believe that when the people become informed about the San Antonio pipeline proposal and its potential impact on Lake Travis (Austin's water supply), the economy and sources of water recreation, they will let their elected officials know they should "oppose the San Antonio Hose."

(Note: enclosed with this newsletter is a bumper sticker - "I OPPOSE THE SAN ANTONIO HOSE." Please use it by putting it on your car, if when you come out you want water in the lake. Also enclosed is a postcard pre-addressed to Governor Bush to let him know your feelings about sending Lake Travis water to San Antonio. Use it or lose it!!!) **"When the well's run dry, we know the worth of water." Benjamin Franklin**

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EARTH SHARE OF TEXAS

PLTA is a member of Environmental Fund for Texas (EFT), which raise funds for its members through workplace giving campaigns, helping establish new campaigns and working with the other members to make sure EFT becomes a long-term source of grassroots funding for environmental organizations in Texas.

Environmental Fund for Texas is changing its name to **Earth Share of Texas**. EFT has reached agreement with Earth Share, a federation of national environmental organizations, to represent their members, as well as EFT's members, in workplace giving campaigns in Texas, under the name **Earth Share of Texas**. **Earth Share of Texas** will offer donors the convenience of local, national and international environmental organizations in a single list. "We look forward to a continued successful relationship with Texas donors under the banner of **Earth Share of Texas**," said Kal Stein, Executive Director of Earth Share.

Some of Earth Share's better known agencies include National Wildlife Fund and Rainforest Alliance. Some Earth Share member agencies were also affiliates of Environmental Fund for Texas, including Sierra Club, Texas Clean Water Fund, Environmental Defense Fund and The Trust for Public Land.

What happens now with Environmental Fund for Texas and its local agencies? EFT will continue to exist as a corporate body with its current Board of Directors (PLTA President, **Bob Vann** serves as a director). All of its internal policies and governance structure remain in place. EFT, under the business name of **Earth Share of Texas**, will represent all of Earth Share's agencies in workplace campaigns in Texas and act as their fiscal agent, as currently done for local groups like PLTA. Current members of Environmental Fund for Texas have become members of **Earth Share of Texas** and receive designated contributions as before.

"This agreement represents the collaborative effort of both federations to put forward the best product possible in the workplace fundraising area," **Earth Share of Texas** Executive Director Mike Rush says. "The proven name recognition of the Earth Share name and logo combined with the identity of local groups in Texas will make **Earth Share of Texas** attractive to donors."

Address Correction Requested

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