



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Mike Rogers, Assistant City Manager *MR*
Susana Carbajal, Assistant City Manager *SC*
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Assistant City Manager *EAF*

From: Shay Ralls Roalson, P.E., Director, Austin Water *SMR*
Jorge Morales, Director, Austin Watershed Protection *JPM*
Keith Mars, Director, Development Services *KM*

Date: September 10, 2026

Subject: Lake Austin Drawdown – Preparations and Update

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on preparations and permit applications related to the Lake Austin drawdown scheduled to begin October 12, 2026 and conclude November 30, 2026.

Background

As outlined in the [August 20, 2026 memorandum](#), City staff began meeting with Lake Austin business and property owners in October 2025 to discuss a variety of concerns, including green algae, hydrilla management, and potential for a drawdown. In April 2026, staff emailed stakeholders notifying them of the potential for a lake drawdown this fall. Additional stakeholder meetings occurred in May 2026 and June 2026.

Following Winter Storm Uri in 2021, Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) does not intend to conduct lake lowerings in the months of December to February due to the importance of maintaining generation reliability and capacity during the high energy demand seasons. Similarly, LCRA does not intend to conduct lake drawdowns during the summer months of June to September. LCRA has indicated that drawdowns are possible in October and November, as well as March to May. However, drawdowns during March through May would coincide with the LCRA's increasing springtime deliveries of water released from Lake Travis into and through Lake Austin. Those releases could cause daily fluctuations in the water level on Lake Austin, with the highest fluctuations towards the upper end of the lake. As a result, property owners could experience disruptions when conducting maintenance along their shorelines within that timeframe. In addition, March through mid-May is a critical time for fish to spawn (lay eggs in shallow areas). Therefore, the remaining available time frame for a Lake Austin drawdown is now limited to the months of October and November.

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Given the need for property maintenance and debris clean-up, the fact that there has not been a drawdown since 2017, and the fact that Lakes Travis and Buchanan are nearly full improving the regional drought status, the City requested the latest possible time frame within the time constraints.

While some residents and businesses have expressed concerns about potential economic impacts that are associated with the October-November time frame for a drawdown, there are also property owners who are currently preparing and taking the necessary steps, including hiring contractors and pulling permits, to make repairs and improvements to their property.

Permit Applications to date.

Since launching the dedicated [Lake Austin Drawdown Site Plan Exemption Form](#) on August 31, Development Services staff have assisted approximately 25 customers with permitting questions related to the drawdown. To date, two applications have been submitted for work related to the drawdown. Both applications propose repairs to existing bulkheads. During the last draw down in 2017, Austin Development Services received approximately 70 permit applications for work related to the drawdown.

Vegetation Management.

Under the [State Aquatic Vegetation Plan \(TAC Title 31, Rule § 57.932\)](#), organizations and individuals wishing to conduct vegetation management activities in public water must first submit a Treatment Proposal for review by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and local controlling entities in order to ensure that all material is completely contained so that it may not reenter the environment. City of Austin and TPWD officials have begun discussions on how we might work together to streamline these requirements such that individuals would not need to receive approvals from both entities. These discussions are preliminary, and staff expect to share more information soon on the [City's website](#).

Clean-ups planned.

To maximize the drawdown period, the City is working with partnering community organizations to facilitate a clean-up effort of the exposed shoreline and remove as much litter as possible from the lakebed while the lake levels are lower.

Economic impact.

Since October and November are important tourist months for our community, staff will complete a post-event economic analysis to understand the economic impact from this year's drawdown on local businesses. The information gathered will inform future decisions. In addition, the Austin Economic Development department provides access to [resources](#) that can provide support to businesses impacted by the lake draw down and are working with lead departments and conducting outreach to stakeholders to share those resources. Resources include business education, financial coaching and access to capital programs.

Next steps

The City hosted an [open house event](#) to provide Austinites with an opportunity to learn more about the Lake Austin drawdown. The event took place yesterday, September 9, 2026 at the City of Austin's Permitting and Development Center located at 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive from 6 to 8

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p.m. Staff from Austin Water, Austin Watershed Protection, Austin Development Services, and Austin Economic Development were available to answer questions about issues such as what to expect during the drawdown process and permitting requirements for shoreline maintenance and property repairs.

In the future, the City plans to request drawdowns no more than once every four years. The decision to request a drawdown will depend upon multiple factors, including regional drought status. Additionally, the City will be evaluating economic impacts to better inform whether drawdowns will continue to be feasible given the timing constraints.

General information about the drawdown is available. Should you have any questions related to permitting, additional information can also be found on the [Austin Development Services Boat Docks](#) website.

Additional questions can be directed to the following contacts:

- Lake Austin drawdown process: Shay Ralls Roalson, P.E., Director, Austin Water at Shay.Roalson@austintexas.gov or (512) 972-0108
- Permitting repairs to property: Viktor Auzenne, Division Manager, Austin Development Services at Viktor.Auzenne@austintexas.gov or (512) 978-4691
- Hydrilla or other vegetation questions: Liz Johnston, Environmental Officer, Austin Watershed Protection at Liz.Johnston@austintexas.gov or (512) 468-6406

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Department Directors