

LCRA Firm Customer Pro Rata Curtailment FAQs April 2024

What does “pro rata” curtailment” mean?

“Pro rata” means proportional. “Pro rata curtailment” refers to mandatory curtailment that would require all LCRA firm water customers to reduce their water use by the same percentage.

If LCRA were to institute pro rata curtailment, firm water customers would have to reduce their overall water use by 20% and could face surcharges of up to 10 times the normal water rate for using more than their allotted amount. If the drought continues, the LCRA Board of Directors could increase the curtailment percentage required from each customer.

Is LCRA going to implement pro rata curtailment?

LCRA would implement curtailment only if the severe drought continues and the combined storage in lakes Buchanan and Travis, the region’s primary water reservoirs, continues to fall. LCRA projections show the earliest that mandatory curtailment could occur would be fall 2024, with the possibility that rainfall over the spring and summer could postpone or negate the need for pro rata.

The curtailment would be required if the LCRA Board makes a Drought Worse than Drought of Record (DWDR) declaration. This would mean the Board has determined the current drought is potentially worse than the Drought of Record, or the worst drought our region has seen, and warrants more significant response measures.

LCRA would make a DWDR declaration if:

- The drought has lasted least 24 consecutive months,
- The drought intensity is greater than that of the Drought of Record, and
- The amount of water in lakes Buchanan and Travis is less than 600,000 acre-feet, or 30% of capacity.

During a DWDR declaration, water will be distributed on a pro rata basis to extend firm water supplies.

What is the Drought of Record?

The Drought of Record is the worst hydrologic drought on record. For the lower Colorado River basin, this is the 2008-2015 drought.

In Texas, the Drought of Record is the basis for state water planning and water right permitting. LCRA’s water supply and drought contingency planning also are based on the Drought of Record.

What is the pro rata curtailment process?

Though mandatory curtailment would occur only after a DWDR declaration by the LCRA Board, pro rata curtailment plans from firm water customers must be submitted to LCRA in advance of any declaration.

Here is the curtailment process:

- When LCRA projections show the region could be within six months of a DWDR declaration, LCRA will send firm water customers their annual and monthly water use for a baseline year, which LCRA has determined to be June 2022-May 2023, and the amount of water they would be allocated during pro rata curtailment. The baseline year reflects the most recent 12-month dry period when LCRA was not requesting firm water customers implement mandatory drought response measures. The baseline use minus the 20% curtailment percentage is the customer's annual allotment.
- Customers can request modifications to the monthly baseline amounts by submitting documentation to LCRA by May 1 demonstrating the baseline amount should be modified due to:
 - Population growth;
 - Plant outages or other incidents resulting in less than a normal water demand;
 - Real water savings from water conservation or drought contingency efforts achieved in the reference year; or
 - Other documented reasons.
- Firm customers must develop or update their pro rata curtailment plans and submit them to LCRA by July 1. The plan must include specific measures the customer will implement to achieve the required water savings.

Some customers also may need to amend their drought contingency plans to include new measures or strategies and file the updated documents with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and LCRA.

- If extreme dry conditions continue and the criteria for declaring a DWDR are met, the LCRA Board would issue a DWDR declaration. At that point, firm water customers would be required to curtail water use to their allocated amounts. Each customer will determine measures to achieve curtailment.

How does LCRA determine the percentage of water use that must be curtailed?

LCRA's Drought Contingency Plan provides for an initial minimum curtailment of 20%. This percentage may be adjusted by the LCRA Board if the drought worsens, depending on hydrologic and water supply conditions.

How would pro rata curtailment be enforced?

Each quarter, LCRA will compare each customer's actual water use to its quarterly allotment. If the amount used exceeds the quarterly allotment, the customer could face

a surcharge at the end of the calendar year. If the amount used is less than the customer's quarterly allotment, the customer would receive a credit that could be used in a subsequent quarter of the same calendar year. Any surcharges would be assessed and collected at the end of the calendar year. LCRA also may stop delivery of water and take any necessary legal action to enforce pro rata curtailment and related rules and plans.

What is the penalty for more water than allotted?

LCRA rules provide for a tiered surcharge rate of up to 10 times the standard firm water rate depending upon the percentage of water used above the authorized allotted amount. The LCRA Board also may establish different surcharge amounts at the time it declares a DWDR.

Under what circumstances would LCRA grant a customer an increase from its curtailed allotment?

LCRA would grant a variance if it determines that failure to grant the variance would cause an emergency condition adversely affecting public health, welfare or safety. Details of how to apply for a variance are included in [LCRA's pro rata rules](#).

Would there be incentives for using less water than allocated?

Yes. In addition to the surcharge, the LCRA Board may establish incentives at the time it declares a DWDR.

Would trading of allotments be allowed?

Under LCRA's pro rata rules, a customer not using its annual allotment can sell or trade the unused allocation to another customer if the sale is consistent with its overall pro rata curtailment plan and affected contracts.

When would pro rata curtailment end?

The LCRA Board would determine the conditions for lifting pro rata curtailment prior to initiating any curtailment. LCRA's Water Management Plan provides that a DWDR declaration will be cancelled when combined storage of lakes Buchanan and Travis is above 1.4 million acre-feet. The LCRA Board may lift or reduce the amount of pro rata curtailment prior to a cancellation of a DWDR declaration.

For more details, please see the [LCRA Pro Rata Curtailment Rules for Water Use by Firm Water Customers](#) at www.lcra.org/prorata.