

To: Honorable Governor Greg Abbott

January 13, 2020

**Office of the Governor
State Insurance Building
1100 San Jacinto
Austin, Texas 78701**

From: Lake Conroe Association

P.O. Box 376 Willis, TX 77378

Dear Sir,

The Lake Conroe Association, in good standing since 1977, represents the residential and commercial interests as they pertain to any issue that threatens the quality or creates wastage of Lake Conroe resources.

We know that you are aware of the current debates on the effectiveness of the SJRA "Seasonal Lake Lowering Program" (SLLP) and have entrusted to the SJRA Board the role to make balanced and objective decisions regarding lake resources and any flood mitigation programs.

Attached to this cover letter is a petition signed by 3800 lake area residents who feel that the SJRA Board is about to breach its public statements that the SLLP was a temporary effort, it would end when dredging was completed on the West Fork River, and that it is an effective flood mitigation program both on the lake and downstream of the Lake Conroe dam.

We are not insensitive to the catastrophic flooding which happened downstream of Lake Conroe during Hurricane Harvey. Many of our residents were also flooded. Nor would we ever place our interests above helping those neighbors to avoid future flooding if renewal of the SLLP was technically well founded and would materially reduce flooding in the Lake Houston Area.

Until now you have heard very few complaints from our residents and businesses. We have patiently waited since the SLLP was implemented in 2018, trusted the SJRA public statements, and presumed that the SLLP was underpinned by a thorough technical study. We are now very concerned that the SLLP, despite the SJRA's own technical study which concludes it has no material impact on downstream flood mitigation, will be renewed.

It is important to place Hurricane Harvey in perspective regarding the events and actions taken by many entities such as the SJRA in handling an unprecedented rainfall. The SJRA attempted to retain as much water as possible to minimize downstream flooding and only released water after severe flooding on Lake Conroe became a reality and failure of the dam was imminent. The release rate of water was unprecedented and certainly contributed to the downstream flooding but still represented only about 15% of the total water flow to hit the Lake Houston area.

The lake operating normally since its 1973 inception has only conclusively contributed to severe downstream flooding in 1994 and during Hurricane Harvey both when very high release rates of water were required to protect the dam. All other severe rain events, occurring over the last 47

years, with normal lake levels have not caused excessive releases nor any documented downstream flooding. We feel this is adequate evidence that the SLLP offers no new significant benefit only waste and harm to Lake Conroe resources and now mounting costs to residents.

In 2019 the SJRA released 21.5 million gallons of fresh water to flow into the Gulf of Mexico to achieve the 1' and 2' lowering targets in May and August. However, unlike 2018 the water levels have not returned to normal and a 3 month seasonal lowering program has resulted in 9.5 months of water levels typically only seen in an early drought stage. We cannot see how this severe impact is justified for a program that does not materially reduce downstream flooding.

We stand ready to assist the Lake Houston area in any form to obtain funding and to support efforts to significantly improve drainage – the real problem – that has existed for many years. If there was any program involving Lake Conroe that provided well-founded flood mitigation and the resulting impact on Lake Conroe was properly assessed, we would support it.

Thank you for your leadership efforts to galvanize agencies and supply funding for the flood mitigation efforts in the greater Houston area. In that vein we ask that you help our efforts to eliminate a program that was well intended but in practice has no material flood mitigation impact and a significant and growing negative impact on our residents and businesses.

Mike Bleier – President

Lake Conroe Association