

Beki Halpin

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen of the Texas Sunset Commission. I am Beki Halpin, Co-Chair of the Green Sanctuary Mission at our church and also with 350 Austin.

There is a famous line from a Bob Dylan song, "The times they are a changin'," and today that is certainly the case. Our whole country has begun a new quote unquote "normal" of swinging between drought and flood. In 2011 central Texas had the worst drought on record, LCRA lakes went almost dry and everyone slammed the brakes on water use for fear we would have none. This year we got such a huge water bomb the lakes over filled, flooding homes and businesses, barely escaping flooding of downriver cities like Austin.

We are in uncharted territory and LCRA needs to have plans for not just 100 and 500 year droughts and floods, but droughts and floods of biblical catastrophe. That's where we are going like it or not and we will do much better if LCRA has a plan for very worst-case scenarios for both drought and flood.

As a part of the Sunset process these plans should be required and made publically available.

LCRA owned Fayette coal plant is a power plant auditioning to be a stranded asset. Coal is being pushed out by cheaper solar and wind. Coal plants across Texas are closing for strictly economic reasons. LCRA doesn't make its money off electric generation, or water. It makes the majority of its money on transmission services, bringing electricity from solar and wind farms in west and south Texas to urban areas. That's the future. Austin is investing in a utility scale solar farm east of Austin. The 10 square mile site of Fayette coal plant also east of Austin could be converted to a solar farm. Transmission lines are already in place. Don't be left holding a money-losing coal plant.

Finally, LCRA wants to take water from an ancient finite aquifer, the Simsboro, that has negligible recharge and sell it to water poor areas so they can be developed. It may take a few decades for this aquifer to be depleted if its water is mined and sold, but it is basically nothing but a big bucket of water that does not refill and when it is empty, it is empty. Selling water for development based on this resource is the worst kind of water planning. The LCRA should not be involved in this.

Thank you.

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Trisha Linebarger](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Friday, December 7, 2018 11:31:01 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: sunset@sunset.texas.gov <sunset@sunset.texas.gov> On Behalf Of Texas Sunset Commission
Sent: Friday, December 7, 2018 11:20 AM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission <Sunset@sunset.texas.gov>
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: LOWER COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY

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Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

The Staff Report is very strong in the areas it tackles, especially asking for more transparency in general. I also agree that LCRA needs to do a better job of informing and including all stakeholders in their decisions.

The Staff Report does not require strong planning for increased future extreme weather, drought and flooding that is going to be the pattern for our region going forward. There needs to be a plan in place for the very worst of the worst case scenarios, especially for flooding and drought. Formation of the plan should involve experts, scientists, and stakeholders. The plan should be publicly available.

The Staff Report acknowledges that electric generation and transmission generates the lion's share of LCRA revenue. However, it is actually transmission that generates this revenue, providing about 85% of it. Staff report does not adequately ask that the transmission side of LCRA's business, which is so lucrative and also beneficial to stakeholders, be evaluated for more and better opportunities. Wind and solar farms are being developed in far flung parts of Texas and getting this electricity to urban areas is solidly profitable. Additionally, ancillary services such as storage will soon be profitable and can be added to LCRA's businesses in conjunction with transmission. The huge role transmission plays in the financial success of LCRA should be acknowledged and potentially enhanced.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

The LCRA is invested in the Fayette Coal plant with the City of Austin. It appears that Fayette is either losing money or barely making money. Other coal plants across the state are closing down for economic reasons and seeing the writing on the wall, the City of Austin wants out of this money loser.

This legislative body should thoroughly examine the profitability of Fayette Coal Plant for the last five years and for the next ten years going forward.

If the coal plant were closed, the land this plant sits on could be easily converted to a solar installation since

transmission lines already serve it.

Austin is investing in a new utility scale solar installation east of town and LCRA could make a similar investment on the current Fayette Coal site.

This would also accomplish a huge water saving for the Colorado River system since the current coal plant uses 17million acre feet a year of river water for cooling. Solar farms use none.

Looking at the LCRA financial statements, it appears that LCRA is staying afloat on transmission income. Total operating income of LCRA from electric generation, water, and other is 33.9 million. Total operating income from their transmission services is 192.6 million. Transmission provides the lion's share, 85%, of income for LCRA. Transmission services is a profitable and secure business strategy that has enormous potential for the future as more wind and solar are developed across the state. Further, as storage is added to the picture in the near future, there is even more opportunity for expansion and income. The ERCOT market is transitioning this direction and LCRA should be position itself as a leader in state of the art clean energy and its transmission. The economics of electric generation are moving toward wind and solar, making it more difficult to justify dirty coal plants and storage will make renewable energy completely dispatchable.

The LCRA should engage with stakeholders for long term planning. Water needs in Texas are shifting as well as rainfall patterns. LCRA should plan for future years where there is almost no rain like we had in 2011 and lakes run almost dry as well as years with huge "water bombs" like we had this year, 2018. We will likely have more intense droughts than the one in 2011 and even bigger "water bombs" than the one we endured this year. What is the plan for these events? The public needs to be included in this plan. It should not be hidden.

LCRA has entered into an agreement to pump water from the Simsboro aquifer in Bastrop County and sell it to potentially whoever will buy it. The LCRA should not be in the business of taking water from one group of Texas residents and selling it to another. The people whose homes and businesses depend on the Simsboro water now will see their wells drop until they are no longer functional. The LCRA does not need to be in this business and it has nothing to do with the rights and responsibilities LCRA was chartered to have. Taking water from a finite aquifer in order to enable development in a "water poor" region is a recipe for disaster when the aquifer is exhausted and can no longer provide the expected water. It is very poor water planning and the injustice of taking the water one Texan depends on to sell it to someone else is glaring to all. If LCRA persists in the ill advised adventure of taking and selling water from the Simsboro, the LCRA should commit to making all current landowners, cities, businesses and water districts who currently depend on Simsboro water whole should their wells go dry and need to be deepened in order to provide the water they depend on.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree