

LCCN¹ Perspective:

Water Resource Management

Last Update: February 6, 2014



LCCN is in a continuous and necessarily dynamic process regarding all elements that should comprise Montgomery County's water resource management strategy and action plans. It is essential that LCCN, on behalf of its community constituency, be able at all times to state and advocate both the individual elements that it believes belong in the strategy

and the positioning of each.

At the same time, LCCN hopes to find that, in the majority of cases now and going forward, there is both awareness and basic agreement on much of its positioning from responsible and involved public sector and private sector organizations. Where there is disagreement, LCCN is committed to understanding the basis for differences, assisting the development of new information where necessary, educating and polling its constituency on how to deal with such differences and available information and then assisting the community's perspective where necessary in pursuit of reasonable accommodations from public and private sector organizations.

LCCN's present perspective follows. During the first and second quarter of 2014, LCCN intends to expand its website to give the community access to current and future data, policy and political studies & reports. Through this site and other media outlets, it intends to analyze and regularly post any evolution in its core perspective.

¹ The Lake Conroe Communities Network is the greater **Lake Conroe Region (LCR) Community Advocacy Group**. It seeks to understand influence and champion coordinated decision making of all who must take responsibility for critical elements of the healthy growth of Montgomery County generally and the greater Lake Conroe Region (LCR) specifically. Near term, first priority emphasis is on water resource management plans and actions that impact that. For further details, see: LCCN Strategic Plan which is posted on the LCCN website listed below.

1. All components of water resource management plans and actions must:
 - Contribute to rather than detract from Montgomery County economic development
 - Work synergistically to produce publicly demonstrable, efficient and cost effective solutions for all aspects of Montgomery County's water resource needs.
2. Montgomery County economic development models – both near (5 to 10 years) and long term -- must address rapidly emerging realities:
 - **The Greater Lake Conroe Region (GLCR)** is the next big economic development zone for Montgomery County (The Woodlands is essentially saturated).
 - The Exxon Mobil development in Spring (and its 10,000 professional workers) is only the first of a series of such projects that will occur over the next 5 to 10 years that collectively will produce an unanticipated surge in new residents.
 - Many of these new residents will choose to live in the GLCR.
 - The scale and definition of requirements for GLCR planning as recently as 5 years ago are totally out of synch with the now impending Woodlands scale growth pattern
 - New residents and their families are likely to have very different needs and expectations than current residents of the GLCR.
3. County surface water is not sufficient to meet emerging transformational needs of Montgomery County or its Greater Lake Conroe Region.
 - The county has only one water reservoir – Lake Conroe.
 - The Lake Conroe watershed is inadequate to reliably replenish committed Phase I water withdrawals from the lake (1 ft lake level/yr -- 20,000 acre-ft/yr); future phases call for 4 times that withdrawal rate.
 - Surface water supplies approximately 80% of the City of Houston drinking water. Houston sources for this water presently include the majority of Lake Conroe's water. So demands on Lake Conroe water beyond those of Montgomery County could greatly increase total lake water withdrawals at least in the near term.

- Limited initial studies (TAMU; more are needed) already show that losses of reservoir water level will have consequential negative impacts on economic development. Further work is only expected to produce further evidence of and more severe negative economic impacts.
 - The impacts of low/fluctuating water levels will go well beyond simply water supply, impacting a range of environmental and quality of life factors critical to the economic stability and health of the region.
4. Stability of Lake Conroe water level is critical to private sector confidence and the achievement of the full economic potential of the Greater Lake Conroe Region. A full complement of water resources are necessary to achieve this:
- Naturally occurring, but fluctuating, rain water that drains into the lake.
 - Measured amounts of abundant, available and treatable groundwater from a mixture of county aquifers
 - Measured portions of abundant excess rain water from the adjacent Trinity River basin.
 - With proper education, the community at large and its elected officials will support the integrated costs of capture, processing and distribution of water from a balanced blend of the above sources.
5. Houston's call on Lake Conroe water must support, rather than conflict, with Montgomery County's water needs for economic development
- Until the City of Houston can improve its access to other surface water sources, its rights to the use of Lake Conroe water could severely impact both Montgomery County's overall water resource management and, as a result, its economic development potential.
 - The City of Houston now has severe problems with water loss from its aging underground piping system. Given escalating region-wide shortages of water, any future plan to tap the water from Lake Conroe must be accompanied by major Houston infrastructure repair investments to insure that the precious water that is drawn is actually put to productive use.
 - Montgomery County ultimately must have control and use of ALL of its surface water (and therefore all of the water in Lake Conroe). And it

must be able to employ the lake as its buffering reservoir in the management of its other water resources in order to have ANY chance for an economically productive, viable water resource management plan.

- Montgomery County needs to stand shoulder to shoulder with the city of Houston as it seeks to complete its effort to gain access to surface water from the Trinity River basin via the Luce Bayou so that it can be diverted to Lake Houston, displacing the city's need for surface water from Lake Conroe.
 - Montgomery County needs to mount a similar full court press NOW for the right, permits and systems to draw surface water from the Trinity River Basin.
6. Reliable, predictable conservation must be a core component of the county water resource management plan and actions.
- Implementation must be mandated by codes, standards, regulations and statutes.
 - Substantial penalties must accrue to violators commensurate with the public's costs for making up for incremental water supply requirements that result from failures of water consumers (commercial, Residual and industrial) to deliver expected levels of conservation
 - Goals for the scale of conservation must be economically rather than politically driven -- derived from the marginal cost tradeoffs between water conservation, production and the stability of Lake Conroe.
7. The overall water resource plan is only credible if coordinated, partnered action is publicly evident and progress is measured and reported regularly:
- This must encompass not only SJRA/LSGCD in their operational responsibilities, but also all affected elements of Montgomery County government, its Congressional and state legislators and its local cities, towns and MUD's that have governance responsibilities to the community for their health, stability, welfare and economic development.
 - Their collective scope of concern must encompass not only the basic necessities of water supply but ALL of the impacts that water resources have on the health, quality of life, welfare and economic development potential of the community.