



# HB 1437 Agriculture Water Conservation Program

## Introduction

The House Bill (HB) 1437 Agriculture Water Conservation Program is an innovative way to conserve water, meet rising municipal demands, and maintain agricultural productivity.

The Texas Legislature passed HB 1437 in 1999. The bill authorizes LCRA to transfer up to 25,000 acre-feet of water annually to Williamson County, if the transfer results in “no net loss” of water to the lower Colorado River basin.

The bill also establishes a conservation surcharge on transferred water. The surcharge funds conservation projects that result in “no net loss” of water to the basin.

March 2006

## Fact Sheet

### What is the HB 1437 Agriculture Water Conservation Program?

The program is a joint effort among individual producers, local soil and water conservation districts, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and LCRA. The purpose of the program is to implement water conservation projects that conserve surface water used for agriculture in the lower Colorado River basin. Water savings from these conservation projects will help achieve the legislated goal of “no net loss” of water in the basin while also allowing the transfer of water for use in Williamson County.

### What does the program do?

The program provides grants to eligible agricultural producers for pre-approved on-farm conservation projects such as irrigation land leveling, multiple inlets and tail water recovery systems. Producers who participate in the program may receive up to 30 percent of the cost of pre-approved water conservation projects.

LCRA, in cooperation with local offices of the NRCS and local soil and water conservation districts, works with producers to identify and plan qualifying projects. LCRA, as the administrator of the HB 1437 Agriculture Water Conservation Fund, reviews and approves grant applications and awards grant funds to help eligible producers implement beneficial water conservation projects.

### How does the program work?

- Producers submit an HB 1437 grant application to their local LCRA irrigation district office (Lakeside, Garwood or Gulf Coast). LCRA approves grants for projects based on eligibility requirements and availability of funds.
- LCRA, in cooperation with the local soil and water conservation district, notifies the applicant of the grant award and signs a cost-sharing agreement with the grant recipient.
- Upon successful completion of the project and project certification by the local NRCS office, the grant recipient is reimbursed for up to 30 percent of the project’s costs based on NRCS guidelines in place at the time the cost-sharing agreement was signed. LCRA reviews completed projects periodically to monitor their success in conserving water.

### Who is eligible?

To qualify for a grant, a producer must be a customer of one of LCRA’s irrigation districts (Lakeside, Garwood or Gulf Coast), and must have obtained a surface water rice irrigation contract from LCRA at least once during the past three years, or the field for which the application is being made must have been irrigated through an LCRA rice irrigation contract at least once during the past three years.

### **What are the rules of participation?**

- Producers must complete the pre-approved project within 18 months of the cost-sharing agreement's effective date, unless the NRCS or local soil and water conservation district office grants an extension beyond the effective date. In that event, grant recipients must complete the project by the extended deadline.
- Producers must place the field that is the subject of the agreement in rice production within three years of the agreement's effective date. If the producer fails to do so, any payments made by LCRA to the producer, plus interest, must be refunded to LCRA no later than Aug. 31 of the year three years after the agreement's effective date.
- Proposed projects are for NRCS-approved practices only and must provide for the conservation of surface water.
- If a proposed project is related to existing contracts with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), for participation in the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), then the EQIP field has not been placed in production prior to the year in which the agreement becomes effective.
- Producers who previously received funding for a conservation practice from LCRA must maintain the conservation practice for the term specified in the previous funding contract.
- Producers must have a District Cooperative Agreement with their local soil and water conservation district or an EQIP contract.

### **Where can I get a grant application and details on the program?**

Grant applications and detailed guidelines on the process, eligibility requirements, and rules of participation are available at LCRA's local irrigation district offices. For more information, contact your local LCRA irrigation district or local soil and water conservation district.

#### **Garwood Irrigation District**

P.O. Box 404  
7859 Hwy. 71  
Garwood, Texas 77442  
(979) 758-3017

#### **Gulf Coast Irrigation District**

P.O. Box 1500  
100th Seventh Street  
Bay City, Texas 77404  
(979) 245-4631

#### **Lakeside Irrigation District**

209 S. McCarty  
Eagle Lake, Texas 77434  
(979) 234-7336