



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Fort Worth District**

# News Release

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## **Corps plans summer drawdown of B. A. Steinhagen Lake to combat nuisance vegetation**

*FORT WORTH, Texas* – In an effort to combat nuisance levels of non-native aquatic vegetation at B. A. Steinhagen Lake in Jasper and Tyler Counties, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, in coordination with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, plans a summer drawdown of the lake.

The normal elevation for the lake is 82.5' above mean sea level. The schedule for the summer 2006 drawdown is as follows:

- May 10-20, draw lake down to elevation 76' above msl.
- May 20-July 31, lake will remain at elevation 76' above msl.
- August 1-September 15, draw lake down below elevation 60' above msl.
- September 15-30, begin bringing lake back up to full pool.

This schedule is dependant on a number of factors, most notably weather (the drawdown will take place during the peak of the 2006 hurricane season), and is subject to modification.

B. A. Steinhagen Lake is a shallow 10,000 acre multi-purpose reservoir on the Neches and Angelina Rivers, impounded in 1951. It captures nutrient-rich run-off from East Texas and has slowly silted in over the years, becoming infested with exotic vegetation such as water hyacinth, hydrilla, and common salvinia, to such a point that recreation and hydro-electric generation have become greatly hampered during most of the summer and fall.

Winter drawdowns of the lake to control vegetation have been used in the past decade with limited success. During these, the lake was lowered to an elevation 76' above msl in hopes of getting a killing freeze on the exposed vegetation. The elevation of 76' above msl is the lowest elevation where hydro-electric generation can take place, but results of past drawdowns indicate it was not low enough, and hard freezes were difficult to plan for. Aquatic herbicide has been used for years to keep access points and boat lanes open, but controlling the lake-wide problem with herbicide is neither cost effective nor environmentally sound.

As a result, the Corps, in cooperation with the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Division offices of TPWD, the Lower Neches Valley Authority, and the Southwestern Power Administration, has decided to employ an intense summer drawdown in an effort to strand the vegetation on dry land and desiccate it in the East Texas sun. This procedure replicates past conditions at the lake, before

## DRAW DOWN

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the impoundment of Sam Rayburn Reservoir and the addition of the R. D. Willis Powerhouse at Town Bluff. The lake would historically reach extremely low elevations during the late summer, often below 60' above msl, because of low flows on the Neches and Angelina Rivers and water demands of downstream users.

This drastic elevation change, especially the low levels during summer, inhibited growth of nuisance aquatic vegetation. A more stable lake level was possible as a result of the dependable river flow on the Angelina after impoundment of Sam Rayburn in 1965. The need to keep Steinhagen at a steady high elevation to allow the powerhouse to run efficiently allowed for the nuisance aquatic vegetation to flourish and eventually take over during the last two decades. Reduction of this high level of non-native vegetation should improve recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat (especially waterfowl), fish production and hydro-electric generation.

As water levels drop, potential hazards can be exposed or get closer to the surface. Boaters are urged to exercise caution and be vigilant in watching for these dangers. Never travel at high speeds in areas you are unfamiliar with and always wear an approved personal flotation device. If possible, never boat alone and always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return. Visitors should be aware that all boat ramps on the lake will be unusable during the drawdown, and the two state ramps on the Angelina River (Bevilport and the SH 63 bridge) will be difficult, at best.

Low lake levels may expose archeological or historical properties and artifacts; however, the Corps cautions that destruction or disturbance of archeological properties, including removal of artifacts, from federal lands, are subject to criminal charges and civil penalties under the Archeological Resources Protection Act. Similarly, the removal or destruction of any artifact or historic property is subject to a citation and fine under Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations. The Corps asks that lake visitors leave artifacts where found and report the location to the lake office.

The use of metal detectors is prohibited except on designated beaches at Town Bluff. Visitors should also know that driving any type of vehicle, including all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles, along the shoreline or exposed lake bed is prohibited and the owner/driver can receive a citation and fine.

For further information, call the Town Bluff Project office at (409) 429-3491 or TPWD at (409) 384-6894 (Wildlife office) or 409-384-5231 (Martin Dies, Jr. State Park).

For more information call Clay Church, Public Affairs, at 817-886-1310 or visit the Fort Worth District website at [www.swf.usace.army.mil](http://www.swf.usace.army.mil) .