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Concern arises over Lake Hodges water level: this is why Amber Coakley

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Concern arises over Lake Hodges water level: this is why
SAN DIEGO (FOX 5/KUSI) — Residents and officials in North County are trying to raise the water level of Lake Hodges, but they're facing their biggest challenge — the state mandate of levels. California government requires lakes to be no deeper than 280 feet; however, concerned people are asking that the reservoir be raised to 293 feet. As of Friday, the lake had dropped to 273 feet, which is the lowest it's been in the last 40 years.

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The reason to increase the depth is due to the high risk of wildfires in the area. All the dried brush near the lake is considered as fuel for a fire.

Crews typically use the water in the lake to put out fires. One of those times was during the Witch Creek fire in 2007, which remains one of the biggest wildfires in San Diego County history. In fact, the area is still scarred by the blaze.

A group of citizens and advocates are now calling for changes to the Lake Hodges dam as the popular reservoir continues to shrink in size. The dam in the Rancho Bernardo area was built in 1918, with plans underway for years to replace the aging infrastructure.

Due to its current status, the City of San Diego is under a state order to keep the lake water level at about 30% capacity. That led to massive water releases after last winter's storms and now a drying-out lake after a lack of rain this year, in turn, leading to concerns about possible wildfires.

“It is a huge difference in the likelihood of a fire here. It comes down from up above Ramona and can come right down this canyon just like it did before, only there’s a lot more fuel,” local resident John Anshus commented on the matter.

The group, named Calls For Change to Lake Hodges, hopes to convince the state to allow the city to increase the water levels of the lake. Meanwhile, the city received a \$240 million loan earlier this year to take the first steps toward replacing the dam.

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