

- **APPENDIX H**

**Summary of Public Comments, Responses, and Plan Modifications to the Draft
South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Plan**

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- **Santee Cooper Lakes**

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- **36 Comments, 3 Opposed, 33 Supported**
Internet petition, 206 opposed

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Comments

- **Opposed:**

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- We, the undersigned, support population levels of 10 triploid grass carp per acre of hydrilla as stated in the 2013 DRAFT SOUTH CAROLINA AQUATIC PLANT MANAGEMENT PLAN [hereafter known as 'The Plan'] for the Santee Cooper lakes, Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie. We do not, however, agree with additional stocking of 52,590 triploids to account for the "additional submersed species that are palatable to triploid carp". Triploid Carp are a control method for hydrilla only, and additional fish should not be added under the notion that the fish might consume native, beneficial vegetation. If the fish are consuming native vegetation, other options at controlling hydrilla should be explored. We make these recommendations based on the following:

- Availability of certain aquatic plant species is necessary to provide food and habitat for waterfowl populations wintering on the Santee Cooper System, and
- The Santee Cooper system is a multiuse system and, we believe, the interests of waterfowl and waterfowling are under represented in The Plan, and
- Winter waterfowl populations utilizing the Santee Cooper system are just starting to show a recovery after the over-release of triploids that occurred during the mid-1990s, and
- The Plan lists triploids as control agents only for hydrilla not any other aquatic species, and
- The Plan does not consider the reduction of hydrilla coverage as a result of the very low water levels that dewatered thousands of acres on both lakes in late 2012 through January of 2013.
- Coverage of 5,290 acres of non-hydrilla vegetation is biologically healthy for a shallow-water system of more than 170,000 acres

- Clark McCrary +205 others

- "Once again I am writing you to ask that you please reduce the amount of sterile grass carp that you plan to release this year."

- -Bruce Bonge

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- "...I do not understand how we need to eradicate the entire "invasive" species of aquatic plants simply because Cross can't draw water out of the lake to cool the 4 units that it has?" "Save the Hydrilla!! The other invasive aquatic species may need some attention in small isolated areas but for the love of the lake don't drop the wrecking ball on the entire ecological system for small isolated areas."

- -Marc Scarborough

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- “After reading the draft plan for Lake Moultrie and Marion, I would request that the panel look at other control methods other than carp. I have been seeing the threat being the crested heart plant more than any other.”
- -Jess Williams
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- **Supported:**
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- “The Santee Cooper Counties Promotion Commission supports DNR's plan to control and eliminate invasive plants in the Santee Cooper lake system.”
- -Mary Shriner, TMP
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- “I support the APMP for the treatment of weeds...”
- -Frank Bryant
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- “We support your efforts to control the invasiveweeds”
- -Carl M Cagle
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- “I approve 2013 weed control plan.”
- -Ann Kelley
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- “I support Santee Cooper in spraying the invasive weeds in the lakes.”
- -katandmac tds.net
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- “My husband and I are 100% supportive of the aquatic nuisance program.”
- -Christine Edwards
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- “Please put me on the record as strongly supporting the continuation of the weed control program.”
- -Ashley N. Cartrette
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- “I am very much in favor of aggressively treating the aquatic weeds”
- -Charles Bostic
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- “I agree with proposal that Santee Cooper and DNR has laid out to control invasive weeds.”
- -H.L. “Tap” Tapley
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- “I am in total agreement with Santee Cooper and DNR’s proposal to control invasive weeds”
- -Alfred H. Kelley
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- “I am in total agreement with controlling these weeds!”
- -Fay Tapley
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- “I sincerely hope that Santee will address this situation aggressively this year.”
- -Patricia R Motley
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- “I am in favor of DNR’s proposed plan for controlling aquatic weeds in Lake Marion.”
- -Ted Broughton

- "I support SCDNR's/Santee Cooper's effort to control invasive weeds in Lake Marion."
- -Dianne Munkittrick
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- "Please, please continue the battle! We need to have someone fighting for us to keep this growth under control. Thank you for all you do!"
- -Jeannette Palladino
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- "I would like to express my support of the 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan."
- -Debra Gleaton
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- "Please continue the weed control programs in this area"
- -Jami Cornwell
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- "My husband and I have no problem with Santee Cooper controlling the weeds in the lake"
- -Marion Vacher
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- "I am all for Santee Cooper attempting to re-introduce chemical weed control. I am not sure about the status of the grass carp program, but something has to happen or our lake front property will be a garden."
- -Rodney Johnson
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- "I live on one of the cannals, We really need to control the weeds. If not they will completely clog the canal."
- -Don Steele
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- "I am in favor of spraying the lake for weeds."
- -Frankie Herndon
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- "As a homeowner I sincerely hope that this is a program that will continue and not be influenced by occasional users of the waters."
- -Sandra & Wayne Smith
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- "Please allow the folks that know what is best for the lake to continue keep the programs working."
- -Danny Winstead
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- "We really support Santee Coopers plan to keep these weeds under control."
- -Robert and Bliss Adams
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- "Please do whatever you can to get rid of the rapidly spreading weeds and other invasive plants."
- -Tommy Geddings
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- "Please do not cancel this program or take anything away from it. If anything we need more."
- -Don and Karen Marlowe
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- “Please do not cancel this program or take anything away from it. If anything we need more.”
- -Mary McSwain
- “I realize the lake system is very large, I’m not for total elimination of the vegetation in the lake system, but it does require some type of control either with grass carp, spraying (using something that works) by boat or air.”
- -Glenn Baxley
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- “I would like to thank those on your staff who have kept the invasive aquatic, Floating Crested Heart, from taking over Saint Julien’s Cove over the past few years. I also appreciate the efforts of your Air Boat Spraying Team who have done an excellent job on their annual visits.”
- -Ed Davis
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- “I appreciate you in advance for letting me express my opinion of the spraying of the lake and keeping our water clear of the aquatic weeds.”
- -George Morris
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- “Please help us to clear our water of this nuisance so that people & wildlife can return to normal”
- -Peggy Ramsey
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- “Just a note to add to the others in support of your efforts to control the invasive weeds. We Agree!”
- -Joe Newman
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- “I encourage you to dedicate more time and resources to this and other endeavors to protect our lakes.”
- -Pamela D. Anderson

- **Comments and Revisions:**

- **Response:**

- SCDNR and Santee Cooper continue to agree that we need aquatic vegetation in the Santee Cooper Lakes to have a great natural resource. We also agree that vegetation absolutely needs to be of the native variety and not hydrilla. Eradication of established hydrilla utilizing current technology is virtually impossible. The goal of aquatic plant management on the Santee Cooper Lakes is to reduce hydrilla acreage while promoting a diverse natural habitat for fisheries, waterfowl and other animals. That goal is set forth in a Memorandum of Understanding between Santee Cooper and the SCDNR. The MOU provides for a minimum of 10% of the surface area of the lakes to be maintained with a diverse assemblage of native aquatic plants which includes a combination of submersed, floating leaf, and emergent plant species that provide habitat and food for game and non-game fish and wildlife species. According to a survey in the fall/winter, 22% of the Santee Cooper system has aquatic vegetation with over 9% of that being submersed native vegetation. These totals are well above the 10% minimum with almost that amount of native submersed vegetation alone.

- The hydrilla increase is what is so problematic. Not only has the hydrilla acreage doubled to just over 7210 acres on the main lake system, It is actually replacing some of the native eel grass (*Vallisneria*) in some coves in lower Marion and upper Moultrie.
- The consensus of those that disapprove of the plan seems to be in favor somewhat of controlling the invasive weed hydrilla while allowing native species to flourish. Generally the most unified approach by some of the commentators is to allow the 25 fish per vegetated acre for 7,210 acres(to move forward with disapproval towards the extra fish directed towards the additional stocking rate of 10 fish per vegetated acre of native pondweeds and naiads. The opinion is the stocking of this extra amount will definitely be detrimental to the ever increasing population of beneficial native vegetation. While those opinions contain merit it does not take into account the SCDNR and Santee Cooper's intent to monitor the progress of the carp's control and the potential negative impacts to native vegetation. The plan is not trying to eliminate the naiad or pond weed, but trying to account for the distraction it creates to hydrilla herbivory. Research is still underway by SCDNR fisheries staff to determine the most effective ways to reduce the grass carp population if they are effective on the hydrilla but have too great a negative impact on beneficial native species. This is a concerted effort to shift from a maintenance issue to a more aggressive approach to re-balance the system to reduce hydrilla while still promoting growth of native beneficial vegetation.
- In order to enhance native plant growth and habitat, innovative management techniques shall continue to be utilized. Introduction of desirable native plant species, which enhancing wildlife and waterfowl management areas and implementing strategic lake level management measures will be continued in 2013. Those efforts include Santee Cooper and SCDNR staff; along with numerous concerned volunteers spending numerous hours on the lakes in an effort to harvest seed for additional plantings in the spring and summer. Techniques are have been developed for more efficient and effective planting techniques
- Also included in the MOU is annual monitoring of the vegetative community and a cooperative effort to monitor the health of the fishery and waterfowl populations. The data derived from annual surveys will be utilized in an annual meeting between SCDNR and Santee Cooper to review the results of monitoring and treatment programs and to determine the effectiveness of the programs and to develop annual work plans.
- Sterile grass carp are utilized so that we may control their numbers in the lakes and eliminate an overabundance. Current research shows that the carp have an approximate mortality rate of 32% per year. Grass carp have been in the system throughout the entire recent period of vegetation expansion. Some \$400,000 was expended to determine the impacts of stocking grass carp in the Santee Cooper lakes, including impacts to fisheries, water quality, and vegetative coverage. Additionally, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed and published a detailed Environmental Assessment for the use of grass carp to control hydrilla in South Carolina in both the late 1980's and again in 2005. The EA considered impacts to native fish populations, water quality, aquatic plant populations, as well as tourism and recreation (fishing, hunting and boating). Among other positive findings, the EA states that "sterile grass carp provide a safe, cost effective means of controlling

nuisance aquatic vegetation in South Carolina. Once again, DNR and Santee Cooper are committed to protecting and enhancing the native vegetation community. We plan to continue to monitor their status and take corrective action if unnecessary impacts occur.

- **Plan Modifications:**

- None at present time.

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