

Minutes of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council

1. Call to Order

Chairman Chris Page called the 109th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council to order at 10:00 am on January 10, 2012. The meeting was held in Conference Room 310 of the Dennis Building at 1000 Assembly St. in Columbia, SC. This meeting was open to the public and ample notice had been provided according to Section 30-4-80 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Attendance:

Council members in attendance were Mr. John Inabinet, S.C. Public Service Authority; Mrs. Jeannie Eidson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Mr. Bob Perry, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division; Mr. David Tompkins, S.C. Department of Agriculture; Mr. Mark Cribb, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division and Stan Hutto, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism.

Visitors in attendance were Larry McCord, S.C. Public Service Authority; and Scott Lamprecht, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division.

2. Minutes of the November 16, 2011 Council Meeting

Mr. Page presented the minutes from the 108th meeting of the Aquatic Plant Management Council for review. Mr. Perry indicated a change to be made on the third page, the next to last sentence, regarding the removal of sterile grass carp should the system become unbalanced due to a reduction of hydrilla. Mr. Perry would like to amend the minutes or have a discussion during the meeting today as to the specifics of the logistics of the grass carp removal, the cost of the proposed plans, and who would fund the operation. Discussion ensued and it was decided to discuss these issues during the meeting at hand. Mr. Perry made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. (10:03)

Mr. Inabinet second. Motion to accept minutes as written passed unanimously.

3. Review the Discussion of the Approval of the Draft Plan for the Public Comment Period (10:40)

Chairman Page presented a brief synopsis of the draft 2012 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. Included in this synopsis are some additional State Park lakes to be included in the 2012 plan. SCPRT will be paying for this work with no matching funds provided by the SCDNR. Other parts of the 2012 plan are similar to last year's plan, with the one exception being the additional sterile grass carp proposed for the Santee Cooper Lakes System. Additionally, Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie were combined into one unit in the 2012 plan.

Discussion ensued detailing the Santee Cooper Lake System. Mr. Perry briefed a number of SCDNR staff recently and it was noted that this rebalancing stocking will most likely cause some alarm among several user groups, fishermen and waterfowlers in general. We need to be prepared for this and we need to demonstrate that we are making a science based, rational decision. However, seeing this is an adaptive management, this will require constant tweaking and we are prepared to remove carp as quickly and efficiently as we possibly can do it in the case of loss of desirable vegetation in the system. (17:24) One possible solution to this was discussed at the last meeting, carp removal rodeos. For these rodeos prize money will be a necessity, a nominal entry fee to cover the administrative costs, and possible sponsors should be identified. Another option offered by Mr. Inabinet is to enact a bounty for the removal of grass carp. A subcommittee may be needed in the future to further the carp removal discussions. Experts on carp removal and rodeos should be included on the subcommittee. Discussion followed regarding the amount of detail to be included in the plan with respect to the removal of grass carp. It was noted that the wording discussing the removal of grass carp in the 108th meetings minutes may be sufficient if included in the 2012 plan. Mrs. Eidson mentioned that by including plans for grass carp removal the case could be made that the council is unsure of the correct stocking numbers. She feels that the carp numbers are good for the amount of vegetation currently in the system and overstocking is not a problem. Overstocking may become a problem if high number stockings are continued in the future, especially if the hydrilla expansion slows. (25:00)

The current verbiage in the plan, stating that “changes to stocking strategy will be considered if survey results, re-growth, or habitat loss warrants”, is sufficient and provides a means to adjust carp numbers either up or down. Mr. Perry suggested changing “considered” to “implemented”. Discussion followed and several members of the council agreed. It was also decided that the word “stocking” would be dropped as well. The plan should be changed to say, “changes to the strategy will be implemented if survey results, re-growth, or habitat loss warrants”. Mr. Lamprecht was asked to devise a rudimentary, preliminary plan for the removal of grass carp to be presented to the council at a later date. Mr. Lamprecht mentioned several issues that would need to be addressed first and foremost. The legality issue regarding the removal of grass carp and the disposal of said fish after the event are two primary concerns that come to mind first. Mr. Perry made the motion to make the aforementioned changes to the Santee Cooper portion of the plan and adopt it with these changes in place. Mrs. Eidson provided second. The motion passed unanimously. (39:54)

Lake Bowen was added to the 2012 plan. The lake historically had hydrilla and currently has chara. The lake had grass carp at one time but no longer holds a viable population. A rate of 10 fish per acre was suggested in the plan.

Lake Keowee is still listed in the plan. Surveys are still showing small amounts of hydrilla in the system.

Lake Murray is still listed in the plan. Surveys do not indicate any vegetation in the lake. The grass carp population is approaching the maintenance stocking levels. Habitat enhancement work was advised by the subcontractor surveying the lake to SCE&G staff.

Lake Wateree is still listed in the plan. Water willow is being reported as problematic to homeowners. No treatments have been completed by the SCDNR in several years.

Santee Coastal Reserve and Santee Delta has received considerable phragmites control. Herbicide maintenance of the phragmites population will be continued.

Naval Weapons Station no longer has funding for any work to be completed. U.S. Corps of Engineers no longer has funding for any work along the intercoastal waterway. Both are still included in the plan in case funding becomes available.

The 2012 plan also includes information pertinent to the NPDES permit.

SCDNR state lakes are included in the plan but the details are limited.

Lake Wiley is included in the plan. Lake Thurmond and Lake Russell may be included in the plan in the future. No funding is available for work on these lakes but management is discussed with the managers of the separate lakes.

Mr. Hutto provided the surface acres for the state park lakes. (52:53)

Mr. Inabinet discussed cost share options between SCDNR and Santee Cooper. In the past several years no cost share has been available. Mr. Inabinet proposed a measure to act as a cost share without actually having a cost share in place. Mr. Inabinet proposed that SCDNR waive the grass carp certification fee. Discussion followed detailing the proposal, the logistics of the testing of the grass carp, and the details of the grass carp certification program. Mrs. Eidson suggested a MOU between the two agencies detailing the proposed measure to ensure the certification fee is waived from the cost provided by the carp suppliers. Mr. Perry suggested that this issue is best worked out between the two agencies executive offices. Mrs. Eidson made a motion that the aquatic plant management council supports any measures deemed appropriate to reduce the overall cost of the sterile grass carp stocking. Mr. Inabinet second. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Page made a motion was made to approve the draft 2012 Aquatic Plant Management Plan as amended and to be released for public comment. Mrs. Eidson made the second motion. The motion passed unanimously.

No other new business was discussed.

4. Adjournment

Being no further business the Council adjourned at 1:10 p.m.