

Minutes of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council

1. Call to Order

Steve de Kozlowski called the 99th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council to order at 10:06 am on January 23, 2009. The meeting was held in the Ramage Conference Center, Room C, in Columbia, S.C. 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; Mr. Bob Perry, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries; David Tomkins, S.C. Department of Agriculture; Ms. Jeannie Eidson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Cam Lay, Clemson University, Department of Pesticide Regulation; Mr. Stan Hutto, Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism; Mr. Marc Cribb, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division; and Mr. Steven de Kozlowski, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division.

Visitors in attendance were Chris Page, Michael Hook, Walter Meitzen; S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division

2. Minutes of the March 13, 2008 Council Meeting

A call for changes, additions, deletions, and or modifications to last meeting's minutes was made by the chairman. None was offered. Lay motioned for the minutes to be approved as written; the motion was seconded by Eidson. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Recommendations of 2009 Santee Cooper/SCDNR Cooperative Meeting

Page began with a mention of staff present at the meeting and pointed to his assessment

that most items discussed were agreeable to all parties. He went on to mention that operations in Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) were among some of the issues left unresolved. A grass carp stocking was planned. Inabinet presented a suggestion that 8,600 carp be introduced into the system and Page suggested 8,300. A stocking of 8,395 fish was agreed upon. Page went on to discuss the intent to strategically stock the fish. Efforts would be made to divide the fish proportionately between the two lakes based on each lake's hydrilla coverage, furthermore, where logistically possible, fish would be introduced directly into the infestation. Attendees referred to a hand-out that Page provided that summarized areas of change within the 2009 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. De Kozlowski suggested that the verbiage within the plan clearly reflect the planned specificity of the stocking; "as conditions would warrant, grass carp *will be* released in close proximity to areas of the lake with the greatest hydrilla growth". A discussion ensued regarding appropriate approaches to preempt possible negative public opinion specifically regarding past accusations that stockings go beyond the approved, published levels. Perry suggested inviting independent observers and or local sports writers. It was pointed out that notice is already given, maps and budgets are provided, and press releases are already made.

With regards to the WMA discussion, Inabinet mentioned that Buddy Baker wanted to see additional work done in some of the WMA's. One area of work pertained to expanding duck landing areas in Hickory Top WMA. This would be in conjunction with recent clearings and a planned interior dike which would increase inundation in higher elevations. Inabinet also mentioned Baker's intent to carry out operations at the most appropriate time. Other lake management issues, including crested floating heart control operations, complicated timing in the past, and it was noted that if such situations arise again, SCDNR staff is willing to step in and help with applications. Lay and Page discussed the addition of crested floating heart to Clemson University's noxious weed list.

In closing, it was mentioned that the standing agreement between SCDNR and Santee Cooper needed to be reviewed. Some areas were to be reviewed by Perry and Inabinet and some verbiage may need to be changed but for the most part it is still a good agreement. Inabinet stressed that any new agreement needs to be dated. The chairman

moved the discussion to agenda item number four.

4. Final Draft: 2009 Aquatic Plant Management Plan; to be released for public comments

Page directed attendee attention to a hand-out he provided that summarized planned expenditures, and to the handout that he provided earlier. He explained a new policy put in place in response to recent budget issues that placed a \$40,000 per water body cap on cost share expenditures. De Kozlowski explained that due to recent budget cuts the source of cost share money may see new uses and the budget of the Aquatic Plant Management Program may be reduced further. Page offered that recently the average cost per treatment acre has gone down due to changes in staffing, treatment techniques, and a reduction in large infestations, especially those of phragmites.

Page reviewed changes in the 2009 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. He mentioned the addition of new hydrilla infestations and re-infestation of lakes including Lake Russell. It was mentioned that past plans to address hydrilla infestations in Savannah River basin lakes were eclipsed by issues relating to recent droughts. Hook offered information on recent Lake Thurmond hydrilla surveys; infestations were migrating deeper into the pool with the low lake levels as well as expanding into previously un-infested areas. Eagle mortality reports were low this year. Perry added that eagle populations were strong across the state and though not a desirable or necessary situation, the Lake Thurmond area was in fact a unique hole in otherwise strong populations.

Page moved the focus to grass carp stocking plans in Goose Creek Reservoir; 2,250 carp will be stocked to deal with 150 acres of hydrilla (15 carp per vegetated acre). Carp population is currently not quantified, and anecdotal evidence suggests that it has been impacted by bow fishing. Conversations with law enforcement staff are focused on making grass carp taking regulations clearer to all parties involved.

Page informed the council about the status of treatment plans on Lake Greenwood. De Kozlowski requested that total acreage numbers in Lake Greenwood be included in the plan. In response to expanding infestations, many of which are in high energy areas, meetings are scheduled with appropriate fisheries staff to discuss the plan which proposes

stocking of 3,300 grass carp. De Kozlowski suggested that Page also address meetings of local sportsman clubs to preempt poor reception of stocking plans.

With respect to Lake Cunningham, Page informed the council about past treatments and plans to address 45 acres of problematic vegetation including elodea by stocking 675 carp and applying appropriate herbicides. Page reminded the council that the lake is a water intake for Greer and that the lake managers feel that they have enough control of water levels to keep carp from moving downstream during periods of high water.

Page added information on Boyd Pond, a recreation lake managed by Aiken County, where milfoil was treated with 2,4-D and emergent vegetation was cleared from key bank access sites.

Page recapped previously discussed stocking plans on the Santee Cooper Lake System. Eidson asked for clarity in the plan regarding previously discussed research by Dr. J.P. Kirk and the affect it had on the current stocking plans. Since plans follow the previously implemented protocols, Eidson suggested omitting reference to the new research in an effort not to confuse the discussion of the plan's rationale. Furthermore a typo referring to past population levels needs to be changed to reflect the correct year.

Page then discussed a hydrilla infestation on Lake Thickety where 5 known acres will be treated with 100 grass carp (20 per vegetated acre). This lake is a new addition from last year's plan. It is a DNR State Lake. Page covered the management scheme and access that DNR has established for the State Lakes. Discussion then went on to State Park Lakes where Hutto suggested that funds appear to be in place at the moment to continue treatment.

Page explained a new section that was added to this year's plan; it is titled South Carolina Border Lakes. It will be a section to deal with lakes that border state boundaries, including Lake Strom Thurmond, Lake Wylie, and the like. Though South Carolina has little power over lake shores in other states, this section will track neighboring state action and set a precedent for input into future actions on border lakes.

In conclusion, Page cited numbers in the plan including \$256,000 in cost share and \$450,000 in Water Recreation Funds. He also mentioned a budget deficit, the difference of which will be made up with funds from a standing slush fund. A recap of needed corrections was made; clarify reference to Dr. Kirk's research and ensure that

inconsistencies between the plan and the hand-out are corrected. Page and de Kozlowski expanded on the roles of various sources of funds including the trust fund and water recreational resource funds that arise from gas taxes.

De Kozlowski summarized the discussion, mentioning that the discussed modifications and changes needed to be made on the plan and final language and approval regarding the Santee Cooper stocking was needed. Page mentioned that the final draft of the plan will include maps and tables that were temporarily left out in the interest of document size.

Lay moved that the plan be approved as modified, per the discussions of the meeting, for public review and comment, and released following council approval of language in the plan pertaining to grass carp stocking in Lakes Marion and Moultrie. Perry seconded the motion which then carried unanimously.

5. Other Business

The chairman moved the discussion to budget issues, specifically USACE inputs. The suggestion was made to remove mention of funding sources that have recently not come through.

The chairman then moved to an update of the Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan. The Governor's Office sent the plan to the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force in Washington D.C. for approval two days after the last council meeting. Thanks were offered to Diane Kennedy for the outstanding job done with the formatting and presentation of the plan.

Next in the briefing was the hire of a new Deputy Director for the Land, Water and Conservation Division at DNR. Mr. Ken Rentiers will begin his service on February 2, 2009. At that time Mr. de Kozlowski will serve as Assistant Deputy Director. Eidson expressed her gratitude to Mr. de Kozlowski for his service as Interim Deputy Director and offered that DHEC staff felt it had been a pleasure to work with him in that capacity.

Mr. Lay then discussed the current decision of the Fourth Federal District Court regarding the need to issue NPDES permits for pesticide applications. Presently, the changes in interpretation do not affect the district serving South Carolina. Lay discussed thoughts on the issue including possible outcomes if the changes were to be implemented

nationwide. The expectation in that case is that water quality agencies will be charged with the issuance of blanket permits to other agencies, utilities, et cetera, subject to conditions (i.e. monitoring), based on label guidelines. A discussion ensued regarding how rulings unfolded in other districts.

De Kozlowski solicited input for a date for the next council meeting. It was decided that the council will meet March 4th, 2009; location to be determined.

6. Adjournment

Being no further business the Council adjourned at 12:10 p.m.