

**Minutes from the 112th meeting of the
South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Chris Page called the 112th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council to order at 10:15 am on January 31, 2013. The meeting was held in Board Room 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. Larry McCord, S.C. Public Service Authority; Mrs. Jeannie Eidson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Mr. Mark Cribb, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division; Mr. Chris Page, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division; Stan Hutto, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism; Mr. Jeff Thompson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, Ocean & Coastal Resource Management; Mrs. Tammy Lark-Lognion, Clemson University Department of Pesticide Regulation and Mr. Bob Perry, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division.

Visitors in attendance were Mr. Chip Davis, S.C. Public Service Authority; Mr. Tom Kirsby, S.C. Public Service Authority; Mr. Clark McCrary, Vallisneria Propagation Presentation Speaker; Mr. Miles Altman, Concerned SC Sportsman; and Mr. Michael Hook, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division.

2. Appointment of New Council Member

Mr. Page presented a letter confirming Larry McCord as a council member, filling the vacant position left by John Inabinet's retirement. Mr. Page welcomed Mr. McCord to the

group. Mr. McCord indicated that he appreciated the opportunity to “roll his sleeves up and get to work”.

3. Minutes of the 110th and 111th Council Meetings

Mr. Page presented the minutes from the 110th and 111th meetings of the Aquatic Plant Management Council for review. Minutes were reviewed. Mrs. Eidson made the motion for the 110th and 111th meetings of the Aquatic Plant Management Council minutes to be accepted as written. Mr. Cribb seconded the motion. No discussion was needed and the motion carried unanimously.

4. A Partnership Effort for Further Transplanting Native Preferred Species in Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie

Mr. Page indicated that while the Aquatic Plant Management Council doesn't have control over native plant re-establishment programs, he thought it would be of interest to the Council considering all of the work done on the Santee Cooper Lakes. Mr. Page then introduced Mr. Clark McCrary.

Mr. McCrary indicated that he began conversations with SC Ducks Unlimited, which evolved into a conversation with Ducks Unlimited at the national level, in order to facilitate native plant transplanting on the Santee Cooper Lakes. Mr. McCrary also said that he had initiated contact with Larry McCord at Santee Cooper and with Chris Page with the SCDNR about the project. All involved mentioned they would be willing to help with the project. The goal of the project would be to further promote new areas of valisneria around the Santee Cooper Lakes. To begin the project, Mr. McCrary would like to see some work days set up in the spring and early summer to begin transplanting the Vallisneria from the Spiers Landing area to the upper portions of Lake Marion. Some areas of interest may include Hickory Top Beach to Persanti Beach, Santee Cooper WMA, and Low Falls Flat. These were initially chosen because of their suitable habitat and a location in the lake that should promote further dispersal of the seed by the natural

currents in these areas. Mr. McCrary would really like to get the ball rolling with the transplant effort and he noted that he has volunteers willing to help and has funding available from SC Ducks Unlimited and possibly even private businesses from the surrounding area. Discussion followed detailing the exclusion devices for protection of the newly transplanted plants. Discussion also entailed more areas for transplanting, suitable habitats, and the threat of advancing hydrilla populations. Santee Cooper, via Larry McCord, again indicated that they were very appreciative and was willing to work with any group who was interested in helping. He also indicated that a grant was being developed for a transplanting/establishment of native plant communities on the Santee Cooper National Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Page thanked Mr. McCrary for his participation with the project and asked him to develop a project proposal to be delivered to Santee Cooper and the SCDNR detailing the project.

5. Draft 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan for Public Release

Mr. Page introduced the Draft2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan to the council. It was noted that the only changes to the plan from the previous year were made on the following water bodies: Lake Greenwood, Lake Murray, Lake Monticello Recreation Lake, and the Santee Cooper Lakes. The major changes to Lake Greenwood and Lake Murray was the addition of verbiage that indicated that it was nearing time to begin the maintenance stocking of grass carp in those lakes. The Lake Monticello Recreation Lake was a complete addition to the plan, as hydrilla was recently discovered in the area. Mr. McCord was then introduced to details the proposed changes made to the Santee Cooper Lake portion of the plan.

Mr. McCord began with a PowerPoint presentation detailing the history and present condition of the aquatic vegetation on the Santee Cooper Lake System. A quick history of the evolution of the plant populations from 2006 to present conditions was given first. Last year's prescribed treatment and sterile grass carp stocking was reviewed. Mr. McCord then detailed the aquatic plant survey and noted that there was "a little over 7,000 acres" of hydrilla in the lakes. Increasingly valisneria is becoming more and more impacted by hydrilla. Many places that at one time were solid valisneria are becoming

dominated by hydrilla or at least transitioning to mixed stands of valisneria and hydrilla.

A small discussion on the increased presence of water hyacinth on the lakes this year was entertained. It was noted that warmer winter temperatures for the last two years and higher than average river flows coming into the upper lake most like was the cause of the increased visibility of the water hyacinth population.

Discussion returned to the distribution of the hydrilla population between the two lakes. Bathymetry of the two lakes was also discussed. It was also noted there was an increase in the documented eelgrass populations but with that being said many of the eelgrass beds were in mixed stands with hydrilla. This results in the fear that there will be significant future decreases in eelgrass numbers. Mr. Page noted that the eelgrass acreage combined with the native submersed vegetation acreage was at 9.2% which almost reaches the goal of 10% aquatic vegetation coverage. Mr. McCord mentioned that those numbers will be difficult to maintain with hydrilla present. He noted that habitat loss due to direct competition and the use of a biological control agent would be the reasons to expect declines in the native submersed plant populations. Historic sterile grass carp populations and maintenance stocking efforts were discussed. A discussion followed about the timing of the 2012 sterile grass carp stocking. Of the 109,000 sterile grass carp to be stocked in 2012, only approximately 89,000 were stocked prior to September. The remaining 31,400 fish were stocked in late September or October. The possible impacts of the delayed stocking were discussed. Following the same stocking strategy as last year, Mr. McCord proposed a 2013 sterile grass carp stocking rate of 113,600. This number was reached by subtracting the 31,400 late stocked fish from 2012 from the 145,000 fish ascertained from following the guidelines set forth in the adaptive plant management strategy for 2013's aquatic plant populations. Pros and Cons of fall and spring stocking times and possible future strategies were evaluated.

Mr. Page discussed how the 2013 changes to the plan were presented, any changes to the plan was made in red. There weren't many changes from last year, mostly updating the numbers and deleting extraneous verbiage. Mr. Chip Davis questioned whether the "percentage increase" number should be presented in the 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. Mr. McCord expanded upon that thought process, detailing that the

percentage increase could indicate a value different from the slope of the line on a graph representing the same information. For example, the percentage increase from 2010 to 2011 was greater than the percentage increase from 2011 to 2012 but the slope of the line on the graph depicting the actual numbers is steeper going from 2011 to 2012. Mr. McCord said he didn't have a problem with the percentage increase value being left in the plan as long as in the future that number wasn't used in making decisions based on the percent increase or decrease. Mr. McCord would rather see those decisions based on the actual acreage figures found in the yearly surveys. Mr. Page did indicate that some of the cost share issues from the past were not included in the plan. He mentioned that SCDNR will continue to assist Santee Cooper by providing herbicide control work on the WMA's and possibly another project similar to last year's helicopter treatment of Crested Floating Heart. A discussion on the SCDNR/Santee Cooper cost share followed. Mr. Crib made the motion to accept the draft Santee Cooper portion of the 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan as written to be put out for public comment. Mr. McCord seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Page then went over the other changes for the 2013 Plan. Lake Monticello Recreation area was added to the plan. 25 acres of hydrilla was discovered and a small treatment was completed last year. The plan proposes a 25 fish per vegetated acre rate for 25 acres for a total of 625 fish. The funds will be provided from a trust fund set up for SCE&G from the original grass carp stocking on Lake Murray. Lake Greenwood and Lake Murray was just updated to modernize them. Both lakes, most likely, will be needing maintenance levels of grass carp stockings in the near future. As for this year, no stocking is needed. Lake Murray has seen some re-growth of naiads and pondweeds. Lake Greenwood has not seen any appreciable re-growth yet. Mr. Page also indicated that the cost share has been dropped from \$40,000 to \$30,000 for all water bodies in the 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. A motion was made to accept the draft 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Plan for release to the public was made by Mr. Bob Perry. Mr. McCord seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. New Business

Mr. Scott Lamprecht brought to the council's attention that he is still pursuing the legality and process of the removal of grass carp from a South Carolina water body. A brief discussion followed detailing the merits of including this issue in next year's plan.

Mr. Page also mentioned the aquatic vegetation floating on the Santee Cooper lakes over the winter. It was caused by higher than average flows in the rivers flushing the water hyacinth in the upper swamp into the main lakes. Mr. Page also indicated that there was a large mat of water hyacinth blocking the Santee River as well. There has been a fair amount of public comments on both issues but no immediate action is planned.

7. Meeting adjourned

Being no further business a motion was made for the Council to adjourn at 2:00 p.m. by Mr. Perry. 2nd was made by Mrs. Eidson. Motion passed unanimously.