

Minutes of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council

1. Call to Order

Interim chairman Bob Perry called the 104th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council to order at 10:01 am on March 11, 2010. 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.

Mr. Perry spoke of the intent to appoint a full time chairman by the next meeting. He then asked council members to introduce themselves. He then recognized Councilman Chris Page who was appointed by Deputy Director Ken Rentiers to fill the position vacated one week prior by Steve de Kozlowski. Mr. Page introduced the members of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program staff; Michael Hook and Walter Meitzen. Other DNR and Santee Cooper Staff made introductions to the audience. A commemorative plaque was shown that will be presented to the outgoing chairman Steven J. de Kozlowski, thanking him for his 30 years of service to the council. Mr. Perry ensured that all visitors had signed in and let them know that an opportunity for them to speak would be provided.

Attendance:

Council members in attendance were Mr. John Inabinet, S.C. Public Service Authority; Mr. Stan Hutto, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism; Mr. Jeff Thompson (via conference call), S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, Ocean and Coastal Resource Management; Mrs. Jeannie Eidson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Mr. Cam Lay, Clemson University, Department of Pesticide Regulation; Mr. Mark Cribb, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division; Mr. Bob Perry S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division; and Mr. Chris Page, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division.

Visitors in attendance were Barry Beasley, Michael Hook, and Walter Meitzen, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division; Larry McCord and Chip Davis, S.C. Public Service Authority; Scott Lamprecht, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division; Jay A'Hern, SCFishingReport.com; Mary Shriner, Santee Cooper Country; Michael Pallatino, Carl Cagle, Carolyn Cagle, Jennifer Miller, Hugh Miller, Winston Hinds, Alfred Kelley, Ann Kelley, and Debra Gleaton, Goat Island Boat Club.

2. Minutes of the January 13, 2010 Council Meeting

Minutes were reviewed and no changes were offered. Cribb moved to accept the minutes as submitted, Page seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. Renewal of MOU between Santee Cooper and SCDNR regarding aquatic plant and habitat management goals

Mr. Perry opened discussion pertaining to the recent MOA renewal which covers the next five years. Updates, improvements, and clarifications were made to the document including but not limited to verbiage pertaining to the *minimum* 10% native vegetation coverage threshold. The council and audience were provided with a copy of the MOA.

4. Final Draft 2010 Aquatic Plant Management Plan to be released for public comments

Mr. Page took the floor to discuss the public comments received in response to this year's plan. The council and visitors were provided with a synopsis of comments. 675 comments were received with 69 or 10% in opposition. This far exceeds the typical amount received. Refer to the included handout for an overview of comments.

Mr. McCord discussed current vegetation coverage in the Santee Cooper system. Current surveys indicate that 18.2% is vegetated; however the exotic species crested floating heart accounts for approximately 2,000 acres. If crested floating heart is successfully removed from the system, approximately 16.3% of Lake Marion and 13.5% of Lake Moultrie would remain vegetated which equates to 15.15% of the entire system. Mr. McCord reminded the audience that efforts will be made to expand native vegetation

coverage and opportunities will arise for volunteer support of the efforts as lake conditions allow. Plant coverage surveys of the lake system have employed outside contractors who use aerial photography including hyperspectral imaging to measure and identify aquatic plants. Lake management staff then ground truth that data by boat. Santee Cooper, DNR, and the APMC support the methods employed in the surveys, which were validated by USGS personnel in the 1990's.

Mr. Lamprecht discussed vegetation and the health of the fishery in the lake. The most severe effects of the recent long term drought included reductions in both vegetation and some fish populations. The effects are most notable above I-95 due to the extensive dewatering of the lake bed in that area. Return of water to the system and a more normal inflow through the spring will help populations increase from the modest declines recently seen. Mr. Inabinet added that typical annual inflow to the lake system is 15,000 cu ft/sec. On average, that number was reduced by 33% over the last 10 years.

Mr. Inabinet discussed the number of national fishing tournaments visiting the lakes in the recent past. Since 1975, 51 tournaments were held on the lakes. 25 tournaments or 50% of the total have been held in the last five years. During the 15 years when hydrilla dominated the system 3 tournaments were held. This refutes the claim that national tournaments have stayed away from the lakes since the decline in hydrilla.

Mr. Perry opened the floor to comments from the visitors.

Mr. Alfred Kelley of the Goat Island Boat Club spoke in support of the continued management of vegetation, hydrilla especially. He recalled the problems associated with its dominance of the system. Also, he mentioned the economic impact of hydrilla with respect to his real estate business. During the height of hydrilla his business was hurt more than anything he has seen in connection with the recent economic recession.

Mrs. Debra Gleaton offered the help and support of the Goat Island Boat Club in restoration/transplant efforts.

Mr. Carl Cagle wanted express his support of the plan and said that there would have been more letters of support if only the supporters had realized earlier that such a push was on by those advocating the increase of hydrilla populations.

Mrs. Mary Shriner of the Santee Counties Promotion Commission; Santee Country discussed the problems associated with hydrilla and the complaints that she received from

lake users during its height.

Mr. McCord asked for an explanation of the process still ahead of the carp stocking plan should it be approved by the council today. Mr. Perry explained that grass carp stockings in public waters of the state are subject to the final approval of the DNR board. The board's next meeting is Thursday, March 18, 2010 in this room. The board will review the recommendations of the council and approve or disapprove the stocking of grass carp. All DNR board meetings are open to the public. Mr. Perry said that he felt it would be inappropriate for DNR or Santee Cooper to encourage or discourage the attendance of supporters or detractors.

Mr. Perry asked for any public comment in opposition to the plan. There was none.

Mr. Perry asked for plan modification recommendations. Mr. Page offered two changes that are highlighted in the comment summary handout. There were no others. Mr. Inabinet moved to accept the amendments to the Draft 2010 Aquatic Plant Management Plan suggested by Mr. Page. Mr. Cribb seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. Mr. Lay moved to approve the modified Draft 2010 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. Mrs. Eidson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Other Business

Mr. Page gave a tentative update on the status of the new aquatic plant control contract. This year will be the first year in the new five year cycle. Bids have been submitted and reviewed and the contract is awaiting final approval. This iteration differs in that it will be honored statewide to any state agency and it provides for both the direct sale of herbicides and application services.

Mr. Perry spoke to the current budget situation for SCDNR as a whole. In years past, state appropriated monies totaled nearly \$42 million. This year's hopeful expectation is \$14 million.

The next council meeting date will be scheduled near the middle of June.

6. Adjournment

Being no further business the Council adjourned at 11:07 a.m.