

Minutes of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council

1. Call to Order

Chairman Steve de Kozlowski called the 102nd meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council to order at 10:09 am on November 17, 2009. The meeting was held at the Wampee Conference Center in Pinopolis, 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; Mr. Bob Perry, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division; Ms. Jeannie Eidson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Mr. Stan Hutto, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism; Mr. Jeff Thompson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, Ocean and Coastal Resource Management; and Mr. Steven de Kozlowski, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water, and Conservation Division.

Visitors in attendance were Chris Page, 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; and Scott Lamprecht, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division.

2. Minutes of the July 14, 2009 Council Meeting

The minutes were reviewed and a motion to accept the minutes was made by Perry and seconded by Eidson. The motion carried unanimously.

3. 2009 Aquatic Nuisance Species Program Control Operations

Page provided members with a spreadsheet that summarized DNR's aquatic nuisance species (ANS) control operations to date for 2009. Page pointed to successful ANS population reductions as evidenced by the reduction in total treatment acreages. He attributed this reduction to biological controls and the increased efficacy of currently available chemical controls. Page pointed to the total treated acres of Phragmites which was lower relative to past years, some of which was attributed to the lack of funding. He referred specifically to Santee Delta WMA where Phragmites is largely under control and future treatments could be of much smaller scale. He also pointed to the promise of a change in management strategy that includes temporal controls on chemical treatment, inundation, and prescribed fire. De Kozlowski echoed the importance of the new management approaches and added that on a recent visit large numbers of ducks were seen on the property. Page went on with concerns regarding management strategies employed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on their dredge spoil sites as they applied to Phragmites; current practices are thought to spread rhizomes and foster further growth. Lamprecht asked if the relatively small number of acres treated this year allowed for a reduction in Phragmites. Page said that reductions were still evident. Page turned to Island Apple Snail (IAS) treatments. He explained that previously employed control strategies may trigger a response in the snails that prevents optimal population control; high rates of copper can cause the snails to close their opercula during the times of highest copper toxicity. He went on to say that a new strategy that decreases copper concentration but increases the duration of exposure has shown promising results. Page also updated the council regarding a recently reached cooperative agreement with Horry County Stormwater Management Program; county staff will provide survey and GIS data support. De Kozlowski pointed out that much of this progress was in response to a letter from the council to the Horry County Administrator. Page went on with an overview of IAS ecology. A discussion concerning retention pond maintenance regulations as they pertained to IAS ensued. Page ended by informing the council of *Hygrophila polysperma* (hygrophila) infestations in Goose Creek Reservoir.

McCord gave a PowerPoint presentation on AIS in the Santee Cooper Lake System. He gave an overview of identification, ecology, and treatment of crested floating heart (CFH) and reported that populations are spreading and increasing. Promising control efforts were conducted and true results will be evaluated in the spring. McCord stressed the need for listing CFH as an invasive species and he discussed plans to begin education efforts. A conversation ensued focused on imminent CFH issues including its spread to natural areas beyond the lake; early, worrisome public misinformation and attitudes concerning CFH; and the need for coordinated public education campaigns. McCord turned the conversation to local special interest groups that are working to return hydrilla to the lake system. Also discussed were current regulations regarding private individuals stocking fish in public waters. McCord then discussed the increased populations of the favorable SAV Vallisneria. He mentioned ongoing transplanting efforts and plans to further expand Vallisneria populations by various means. A discussion ensued pertaining to possible natural spreading mechanisms. McCord then turned the discussion to the recent spread of hydrilla. Much of the expansion was focused near impoundments. Hydrilla is starting to out compete native vegetation in several areas. At this point, McCord asked for questions and concluded his summary.

4. Hydrilla Expansion on Santee Cooper Lakes, Goose Creek Reservoir, and Lake Greenwood

Page gave a PowerPoint presentation on hydrilla coverage in Lake Greenwood and Goose Creek Reservoir. He began with a summary of hydrilla populations in Lake Greenwood. Hydrilla has expanded through much of the lower lake. In some areas, acreages have remained the same but density has decreased. Also mentioned was the newly encountered population of Vallisneria. Page touched on the past and future of grass carp stocking. Last year 15 fish were stocked per vegetated acre (approximately 3,300 fish). To continue this management approach for the current 401 acres of hydrilla, approximately 1,000 fish should be stocked to compensate for expected fish mortality (32%) and approximately 2,700 fish should be stocked to compensate for the expansion of hydrilla (180 acres @ 15 fish per vegetated acre). A stocking of 3,700 fish would bring

the total near a target of 6,015 fish. Inabinet asked how that rate would compare to the 1 carp to 8 surface acres maintenance stocking rate suggested by Dr. Kirk's research. Page said the maintenance rate would be about 1,400 carp. Discussion turned to Goose Creek Reservoir where Page spoke of the decrease in hydrilla over the past year. Though acreages are largely unchanged (140 acres), some areas previously dominated by hydrilla are now dominated by native species. *Hygrophila polysperma* was positively identified through a cooperative effort with DNR ANSP, the USC Herbarium, and the Smithsonian Institute and its presence was reported to the USGS Invasive Species Program. In other areas of the reservoir, nursery areas were brought under considerable control. Anecdotal evidence of grass carp loss to bow hunting was collected from area home owners. Grass Carp regulation/identification signs have been posted at public landings to help curb the loss of grass carp due to bow hunting. To compensate for carp mortality (32% of last year's stocking) and to treat hygrophila (6 acres @ 25 carp per vegetated acre) a total of 870 fish would need to be stocked. De Kozlowski asked about chemical treatments of hygrophila this year and Page informed him that Clearcast and Aquathol K were both used with varying results. A discussion ensued regarding current grass carp stocking theory. The point was made that carp no longer seem to be controlling hydrilla in the Santee Cooper lakes. Lamprecht mentioned and Inabinet continued that carp populations appear to be below maintenance levels there. McCord added that this a critical time in the success of native vegetation in the lakes; if Hydrilla is not controlled soon it will outcompete the natives and the carp numbers that will have to be stocked to control the increased Hydrilla population could have further negative impacts on native vegetation populations. A target of 20,000 carp in the lake system was suggested. McCord added that this level is low enough to prevent negative impacts on native vegetation. Eidson asked how the 20,000 fish compared to the current levels. De Kozlowski pointed to the target of approximately 12,000 fish for this year. Lamprecht added that 20,000 fish target could be considered the minimum target based on the semi-open nature of the system and the apparent loss of maintenance control. Eidson cautioned that a delay should be expected between stocking and control. McCord added that the current plant community structure in the lake should be considered when final numbers are decided. De

Kozlowski finished with a reminder that the council will hear the DNR and Santee Cooper stocking recommendations at the next meeting. He called for data on the systems to be available then.

5. Draft 2010 Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Page turned specifically to the Draft 2010 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. The previously discussed grass carp stockings were the only current major changes to the plan. Funding changes that were put in the plan last year are expected to stay in place. Agreements regarding treatments on Santee Cooper WMAs are also expected to remain largely unchanged. De Kozlowski recommended removing water bodies from the plan that are not expected to need treatment because funding levels may change.

6. Other Business

DeKozlowski stated that further budget cuts are possible this year. Water Recreational Resource Funds have been supplying the ANS Program and others and have recently been used to fund new areas of the Land and Water Conservation Division and are looked to for division funding in tough times. The Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan has been approved by the Federal Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. Page reported from the current regional meeting. He mentioned the 'White List' approach was taken in Texas where plants not listed as acceptable are assumed illegal. He recapped regional AIS concerns and the meeting focus of fostering interstate treatment MOUs. De Kozlowski stressed that the acceptance of the federal plan opens the possibility of federal funding. Discussion turned to upcoming meeting dates. The next meeting was set for Tuesday January 19th 2010 in Columbia, details to be provided. Following target dates include March 11, July 15th (intended as a field trip meeting), and December 18th (intended as the yearly wrap up meeting).

7. Adjournment

Being no further business the Council adjourned.