

Minutes from the 114th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council

1. Call to Order

Chairman Chris Page called the 114th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council to order at 10:15 am on December 11, 2013. The meeting was held at the Santee Canal Park in Monks Corner, 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. David Wanamaker, South Carolina Department of Agriculture; Mrs. Jeannie Eidson, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Mr. Larry McCord, S.C. Public Service Authority, Santee Cooper; Mr. Stan Hutto, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism; Mr. Chris Page, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water and Conservation Division; and Mr. Marc Cribb, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water and Conservation Division

Visitors in attendance were Mr. Daniel Hood, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water and Conservation Division; Mr. Michael Hook, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, Land, Water and Conservation Division; Mrs. Casey Moorner, S.C. Public Service Authority, Santee Cooper; Mr. Chip Davis, S.C. Public Service Authority, Santee Cooper; Mr. John Morrison, S.C. Public Service Authority, Santee Cooper; and Mr. Troy Deal, Santee Canal Park.

2. Introduction of New Council Member

Mr. Chris Page introduced the newest member of the Aquatic Plant Management Council, Mr. David Wanamaker of S.C. Department of Agriculture. Mr. Page gave Mr. Wanamaker the floor to introduce himself and inform the council of his background. Mr. Page informed Mr. Wanamaker of the structure and functions of the Aquatic Plant Management Council to include: planning of aquatic plant management activities on public water bodies; approval of such management practices; allowing for public input on proposed aquatic plant management practices; and summary of past aquatic plant management practices.

3. Minutes of the 113th Council Meeting

Mr. Page presented the minutes of the 113th Aquatic Plant Management Council meeting for review. Mrs. Jeannie Eidson requested to reword the last sentence of Pg.3, section B so that it reads “public comments have exhibited an improved awareness of the major issues” to convey the apparent growth in knowledge that the public has exhibited through its questions. After a short discussion between the board members Mrs. Eidson moves to accept the 113th meeting minutes with the changes requested and Mr. Hutto seconds. The motion to accept the 113th meeting minutes with requested changes carried by unanimous vote.

4. Review of 2013 Aquatic Plant Management Activities

A) Review of Santee Cooper Applications

Mr. Chip Davis presented Santee Cooper’s aquatic plant management totals for 2013 to date. 5,302 acres of aquatics have been treated on Santee Cooper lakes for a total of \$841,440. 114,000 grass carp were stocked in the Santee Cooper lakes during 2013 for a total of \$568,860. Total expenditures on the Santee Cooper lakes for control of aquatic species totaled \$1.4 million. Three invasive species: water hyacinth, crested floating heart, and hydrilla accounted for 94% of all herbicide applications performed by Santee Cooper. Approximately 4,600 acres of water hyacinth

have been treated at a cost of \$530,000; 308 acres of crested floating heart were treated, and 64 acres of hydrilla were treated. Mr. Davis briefly discussed some of the factors that controlled the amounts and types of aquatic plant control implemented by Santee Cooper in 2013 including: environmental factors, budget shortfalls, and vegetation which was not treated in previous years.

B) Sterile Grass Carp Certification Fee

Mr. McCord shared his thoughts on the \$1/fish fee charged by SCDNR for triploid grass carp certification. Mr. McCord's comments were greeted by a brief discussion with Mr. Page, concerning: viewpoints on the fee; where the revenue is and can be spent; and modes through which the revenue could assist aquatic plant management programs. Mr. Page made comments on SCDNR's assistance to Santee Cooper through the WMA work performed around the Santee Cooper lakes. Mr. Page then opened the floor to Mr. Hook for an overview of SCDNR's aquatic plant management activities during 2013.

C) Review of SCDNR Applications

Mr. Hook reported SCDNR had treated a total of 1,337 acres during 2013 for a total of \$238, 337. Mr. Page pointed out that the total of \$238, 337 spent by SCDNR represented both herbicide applications as well as grass carp stocking in several locations. Sterile grass carp were stocked by SCDNR in five locations including: 850 fish in Goose Creek Reservoir, Goose Creek; 750 fish in Lake Monticello Recreation Lake, Jenkinsville; 2000 fish in Lake Prestwood, Hartsville; 200 fish in Mountain Lake, Chester; and 200 fish in Lake Bowen, Spartanburg. Mr. Hook reported that SCDNR has taken on the Santee Cooper WMA's leased by SCDNR, and thanked Mr. Davis for his advice regarding the treatment of these new areas. DNR took on another lake in 2013, Lake Prestwood, located in Hartsville, SC. Lake Prestwood received granular and foliar herbicide work, as well as a stocking of sterile grass carp. Only 4 acres of phragmites was treated in 2013, and no helicopter application was conducted. SCDNR was proud to report that the Woodstock area treatments

appear to have had a large impact on numbers of nesting pairs for treated areas. Island apple snail treatments continued during 2013, showing similar results as years past. Mr. Page reports that island apple snail populations were only removed in ponds that were otherwise maintained for vegetation and water quality. Mr. Hook made note that Back River Reservoir was the main area of work during 2013 due to high water levels, backwater flushing, and large amounts of water hyacinth.

D) Overview of Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathyn (AVM)

Mr. Page detailed the history and effects on avian vacuolar myelinopathy (AVM) with regards to Lake Thurmond and its local decline of bald eagle population. Mr. McCord drew correlations between the Corp of Engineers' refusals to treat the hydrilla or algae growing on it that cause AVM and the die off of bald eagles around Lake Thurmond. He pointed out that in most other areas where AVM has been documented; treatment of the hydrilla has put an end to its effects.

5. Preliminary Plans for 2014

A) SCDNR Goals for 2014

Chairman Page began the discussion of the preliminary plan for 2014, mentioning the proposed 1,100 sterile grass carp to be stocked in the lake and the possible public opposition that the stocking may face. Phragmites will be a major target beginning in the spring of 2014, since much of the necessary treatment areas were missed in 2013 due to a lack trained personnel. The goal for the next year or two, is to have phragmites at a manageable level for local property managers to treat it on a local need basis. Mr. Page mentioned that he has sent a revised version of title 50 to the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries section of SCDNR for consideration. The revisions are to include water lettuce, crested floating heart, giant salvinia, and phragmites on the invasive weeds list.

B) Suggestions for the 2014 Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Chairman Page asked the council for suggestions on how to streamline the annual plan for 2014. Mr. McCord suggested that details of treatment rates within label recommendations may not be necessary for general public knowledge. He did suggest that a listing of which herbicides were used to treat specific species of plants, should remain as a useful aid to the general public. Mrs. Eidson suggested that an appendix section be added with average rates based on species, so that no specific rates need to be listed in each section. Mr. Hutto and Mr. McCord suggested that an appendix be included with information on reference sources for herbicide application rates, based on label recommendations for specific environmental conditions and species. All board members agreed that detailed treatment rates for each site and species may not be necessary to include in the plan, however; a reference appendix should be included to provide managers with a source for specific rates based on species and environmental conditions. Mrs. Eidson suggested that in addition to a label resource appendix, contact information for the Aquatic Nuisance Species Group should also be included for specific rates used within each site.

C) Record Keeping and Information Available to the General Public

Mr. Page discussed SCDNR's system of record keeping for herbicide application with Mrs. Eidson. He explained that all of DNR's application information is stored and compiled in ARC GIS documents. Mrs. Eidson suggested that all of this information should be made available to the public, and Mr. Page explained that the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program does not have administrative control over changing or adding information to DNR's webpage. Mr. McCord briefly outlined the hosted site that Santee Cooper uses to maintain and make their application records public.

D) Grass Carp Stocking on Santee Cooper Lakes for Management of S.A.V.

Mr. McCord discussed the increase in water flow and turbidity during 2013 and its apparent negative effect on hydrilla as well as native submersed vegetation. Mr. McCord also stated that with regards to the 2014 and future annual plans, grass carp stocking in Santee Cooper should never be listed as zero, so that a maintenance level of carp can be maintained despite changing environmental variables. Mr. Page reinforced Mr. McCord's statements by recommending that the council show caution with the verbiage used in the plan so that Santee Cooper and SCDNR are not prevented from making the necessary adjustments to maintain control of hydrilla. A board wide discussion of sterile carp stocking and mortality regression followed the discussion of Santee Cooper's 2014 stocking plan. McCord mentioned that the agreement between DNR and Santee Cooper pertaining to the management goal of aquatic vegetation in the Santee Cooper lakes may need to be renewed.

6. 115th Meeting

Chairman Page expressed that he will contact board members concerning the dates of the 115th and 116th meeting. He indicated that the required amount of time for public comments on the 2014 plan must elapse before the 116th meeting can take place. Mr. Page stated that changes to the plan discussed in this meeting will be made to one section of the plan for board review then, upon approval, be made to the remainder of the plan within the next couple of years. Board members Mrs. Eidson and Mr. McCord agreed that because of the major changes proposed for the plan and the narrow time frame by which this years' plan must be published, the changes may have to be gradually made over the next year or two.

7. Call for Old and New Business

No old or new business was brought before the board.

8. Adjournment

Mr. McCord moved to adjourn the 114th meeting of the aquatic plant management council, Mrs. Eidson seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous vote. The 114th meeting of the South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Council was adjourned at 12:38 pm.