

Lake Gaston Stakeholders Board Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2022

Attendance (12 voting members):

Brian Goldsworthy (President, Lake Gaston Association), Pete Deschenes (Chairman, RWF Fire Tax Board), Rob Emens (NC DEQ), Mark Fowlkes (NCWRC), Wyatt Andrews (LGWSC), Rob Richardson (NCSU), Kirk Rundle (NCWR), Wally Sayko (Brunswick County), Jeff Zimmer (Lake Gaston Weed Control Council), Cory Chamberlain (Dominion), Robert Hendrick (Mecklenburg County), Barney Watson (Lake Gaston Realtors),

Also present:

Jessica Baumann (NCSU), Andrew Gay (NCDWR), Tracy Thompson (PLM), Rory Roton (SePRO Corp), Troy Goldsby (Aqua Services, Inc.), David Belkowski (NCWRC)

The 17th meeting of the Stakeholders Board was held on February 11, 2021 via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Chair, Pete Deschenes at 9:30 am.

Revegetation....Mark Fowlkes

Mark gave a summary of the Revegetation Program which began in 2006 with a demonstration project initiated by the Army Corps of Engineers. In 2014 a five-year project to establish native aquatic vegetation was begun with the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council purchasing the materials. North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and North Carolina State University provided guidance and manpower. Although not part of the original agreement, the Lake Gaston Association provided volunteers to establish vegetation.

In 2021 maintenance was done on existing cages and 13 sites were planted/replanted with native vegetation. The ultimate goal is a self-sustaining, diverse population of native vegetation.

The partnership is developing another 5-year Habitat Enhancement plan (2022-2026) to maintain existing cages and expand plantings. The plan will formally incorporate other partners like the Lake Gaston Association, North Carolina BASS Conservation and Virginia Division of Wildlife Resources. It will also incorporate at least 2 integrated fish attractors per year and add a drone survey (2022 and 2026) to document the extent of expansion. The estimated cost for the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council is \$3829/year for materials and supplies and \$10k for drone survey (2 yrs). This does not include the in-kind contributions from the different partnerships. Dominion Energy has agreed to purchase materials for the integrated fish attractors.

In 2022 we will determine how best to manage hydrilla encroachment at Beechwood Flats, maintain existing enclosures, continue planting outside cages, and remove 3 cages.

*Mark's presentation can be found as an attachment to these minutes

T.A.G recommendation... Jessica Baumann

The fall survey showed 154 acres of hydrilla, mainly in the Beachwood Flats area. Low standing acreage of hydrilla combined with low tuber bank densities resulted in a recommendation of treating a maximum of 154 acres of hydrilla with herbicide applications and to not stock Grass Carp in 2022. A new application method and company was utilized for the 2021 lyngbya treatments. The new method targeted herbicide application to the bottom section of the water column. Evaluation of a subset of treatment sites showed those that did not received treatments experienced a spike in mat height during the months of June, July and August. However, that spike was not reported within sites that received treatment. Treatment sites also showed a

significantly lower amount of viable cell material after treatments when compared to untreated sites. The treatments using Captain XTR and AMP showed greater control than sites treated with Cutrine Ultra and AMP. There was a concern of native mussel mortality in areas where mussels were located in shallow, sandy shoreline habitat and within the treatment area. Continued treatments avoided any areas that were less than 5 feet in water depth and no additional mortality was reported. The 2021 fall survey reported a total of 1,317 acres of lyngbya within Lake Gaston. Lyngbya was distributed throughout the lake and at varying benthic mat densities. Due to the yearly increasing acreage estimates for lyngbya and the successful treatment of 2021, the recommendation for lyngbya is to expand the treatment program but to treat no more than 500 acres.

TAG Recommendations

Hydrilla

- Treat no more than 154 acres – treatments to cages need to minimize impacts to native species
- Do not stock grass carp

Lyngbya

- Expand treatments but treat no more than 500 acres
- Minimize treatment impact to Tidewater Mucket
- Monitor DO/temp levels during planned application week
- Moving forward with treatment expansion using Captain XTR and AMP

Vegetation Project and Volunteer Survey

- Continue funding and supporting volunteer survey and native vegetation planting
- Manage hydrilla at Beachwood cages
- Complete 5-year management program including drone surveys of cages

Future Research Needs

- Identify research that will further explore potential negative human health impacts of lyngbya and cyanotoxin
- Identify research that will reduce potential negative impacts of lyngbya treatments to native mussel populations.

*Jessica's presentation can be found as an attachment to these minutes.

Questions:

- Why not treat 400 or 600 acres of lyngbya instead of 500 acres– it is an affordability issue
- Will the airboat be used to treat lyngbya in the future – that will be determined by the LGWCC
- How does the copper product in both Captain XTR and AMP affect the mussel population – the AMP has trace copper and is used to increase the adhesion of Captain to the lyngbya
- Would Dominion fund the fish attractors since there are no grass carp recommended – Cory will check with Dominion
- How did the impact of treatment on the mussels come to the attention of Jessica and her team – Jeff Zimmer was contacted by many concerned citizens
- What will happen going forward – no treatment in shallow areas to avoid mussel beds and continue monitoring with the help of NCWRC.

The group agreed that the T.A.G. recommendation should be given to the LG Weed Control Council without reservation.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 am.

Respectfully submitted

Susan Deschenes, Secretary