

Volunteers are “Hands On” with Habitat Enhancement at Lake Gaston



The Lake Gaston Weed Control Council has been working for over thirty years using drawdowns, herbicides, and triploid grass carp to control invasive vegetation (primarily hydrilla) at Lake Gaston. As recent as 2006, hydrilla infestations were found on 3,000 acres. Control measures are now proving successful with recent surveys showing hydrilla to be found on approximately 100 acres.

State biologists see the need for placement of native vegetation to fill the void left from hydrilla control and help prevent invasive plants from taking hold again. Fenced in areas, called enclosures or cages, are constructed to protect and develop colonies of native vegetation. The cages protect the newly planted vegetation from being eaten by herbivores, such as turtles and grass carp. Once the native plants take hold, the cages can be removed. Native vegetation provides habitat for fish and waterfowl, reduces shoreline erosion, anchors sediment and improves water quality.

Volunteers from the Lake Gaston Association (LGA) once again got “hands on” to enhance habitat on Lake Gaston, a 20,300 acre reservoir on the Roanoke River located on the Virginia-North Carolina border. Since 2013, volunteers have been working with NC State University Department of Crop Science, NC Wildlife Resource Commission and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to enhance native aquatic vegetation on Lake Gaston.

This June, 17 volunteers contributed 203 hours to repair previously constructed cages, harvest and replant native vegetation, remove unneeded cages, and construct a new cage in upper Poplar Creek.

As in years past, Brunswick County provided a pontoon work boat for transportation of materials and personnel. LGA provided lunch over the three day event. The Lake Gaston Weed Control Council and the Sport Fish Restoration Program provided funding for materials and supplies.

