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Pete Deschenes Lake Gaston Stakeholders Board meeting
March 10, 2026 13:00 to 15:00
Lake Gaston Lions Club, Henrico, NC 27842

Attendees: Matthew Towson, **Aqua Services**, Dixie Daniel, Leslie Weddinton, Reggie Owens, **Brunswick County**, JJ Ferris, **Cygnit Enterprises**, R. Josh Simpson, **Dominion Energy**, Dia Denton, **Halifax County**, Lori Medlin, Halifax, Rich Lithgow, Halifax, Amanda Briggs, **LG Chamber**, Mark Matthews, LG Gazette, Jim Nold, **Strippers Club**, Drew Goodwin, **LG WSC**, Chris Fitts, Elton Brown, John Zubrod, Lynnwood Little, Morris Aycock, Wally Sayko, Wyatt Andrews **LGWCC**, Alex Gottschalk, Tina Morgan, **Mecklenburg County**, Jessica Baumann, Robert Richardson, **NCSU**, Rob Emens, **NC DEQ**, Mark Fowlkes, Kirk Rundle, **NC Wildlife Resource Commission**, Julian Phillips, Derek, Kelvin Edwards, **Northampton County**, Tacy Thompson, **PLM**, Barney Watson Roanoke Valley **REALTORS**, Deb Pulgencio, John Dyckman, **US Coast Guard Auxiliary**, Crystal Smith, Desiree Brooks, Matthew Garner, **Warren County**. Dick Collier , Derrick Bennet, **Northampton County**, Jeff Zimmer, Scooter Boham, **LGA. (Stakeholder Organizations represented)**

The meeting was called to order at 12:58 pm by Jeff Zimmer Acting President of Stakeholders with proxy from Pete Deschenes. Jeff asked all represented organizations to think about what is changing in the plant community, the future and listen to TAG recommendations.

Motion to approval of minutes from March 11, 2025

John Zubrod and Barney Watson. Passed unanimously with no changes

Motion to approve Pete Deschenes Lake Gaston Stakeholders Board meeting agenda March 10, 2026. Moved by John Zubrod and Barney Watson. Passed unanimously with no changes.

Jessica Baumann, NCSU Extension Associate, provided highlights of the 2025 Aquatic Vegetation Survey & Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Recommendations. See slides for further details.

- Jessica introduced herself and areas that she will cover in her presentation.
- How management decisions are covered. Jessica walked through steps TAG takes to make recommendations. The flow process: Survey results> NC State research and analysis > TAG> recommendations to Stakeholders> Weed Control Council
- These are science-based decisions.
- Fall Volunteer survey
 - Conducted +/- 6000 intersect points.
 - Survey time frame August to October.
 - The survey contains 86% vegetation.
- Top 5: Water Willow, Lyngbya a cyanobacteria, Hydrilla, Naiads (increasing), Chara,
- TAG recommendation is to continue monitoring and fund annual survey.
- Survey shows Hydrilla 468 acres, a slight increase over the past 5 years. An additional 120 acres is in shallow water areas (from kayak surveying) that is hard to reach and manage.
- Treatment recommendations are based on vegetation survey
 - Tubers bank survey key for hydrilla situation. There has been no major increase with tubers
 - Treat up to 408 acres and stock 1341 Sterile Grass Carp

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- Lyngbya shows a reduction/decreasing trend over the last 2 years.
 - 5th most abundant. 818 acres
 - Benthic Mat Densities are decreasing in size.
 - TAG recommends treating up to 500 acres
 - TAG recommends continuing revegetation (habitat enhancement HE)
 - Some potential research topics were discussed, continue funding research
 - Continue partnerships and collaborations: survey, HE, NCSU associate

Discussion on vegetation – removal of one species will be replaced by another in the lake/reservoir system. Expansion of natives continues as invasive and noxious cyanobacteria is reduced. Ell Grass increase is an example. Research to better understand how species competing can benefit management.

Motion was made to accept and forward these TAG recommendations to the Lake Gaston Weed Council. After discussion- Moved by John Zubrod and Barney Watson. Passed unanimously.

General discussion/question on what our long-term goal is, now that we consider hydrilla to be at a controlled level (200-500 acres). Suggestion was made to have a Task Group address this. Discussion. TAG is now tasked to identify our long term/end state aquatic vegetation goals, i.e. acreage of invasive and noxious, % of total vegetation, native vegetation being % of shoreline vegetation

R. Josh Simpson, Dominion Energy (DE) Reservoir Program Manager, Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)

- Revisions to Appendix E Aquatic Weed Control have been submitted to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).
 - Three pieces of the pie – LG Weed Control Council/ State Regulations / FERC
 - Between Dominion boundary lines and lake floor is managed by DE
 - DE answers to FERC. Funding Grass Carp is how DE contributes. DE is a Stakeholder.
- SMP not approved yet but does include:
 - 10 ft perimeter around a licensed primary structure excluding the access walkway can remove vegetation (including native/Water Willow)
 - Chemical applications must be performed by licensed applicator. Covers both VA and NC.
- Submitted to FERC in January and may hear a response by end of May.

Mark Fowlkes, NC Wildlife Resource Commission Piedmont Watershed Enhancement Coordinator

- Mark discussed:
 - Categories of Aquatic Vegetation. See slides
 - Focus on floating and submerged
 - Benefits to water quality and habitat enhancement
- Community participation and education are important
- Project History covered
- 5 year management plan 2022 – 2026
- Partners LGWCC, Dominion, LGA, NCWRC, NCSU LG Coordination, VDWR, NC BASS

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- Volunteer hours are critical
- Revegetation progress: 14 sites middle to upper lake, and some sites no longer need cages.
- Recommendations:
 - Conduct Spring Assessment survey in early May -June
 - USACE and some older partnership need to be removed
 - Continue to encourage partnerships
 - Work tentatively scheduled for June 22 – 24
 - Drone survey to determine expansion of vegetation in coves. Second survey.
- Partners are the only way to accomplish this.

Business Session – Jeff Zimmer

- Discussed impact of invasive control and native species expansion. Influence of SMP revisions will take time to determine.
- Stakeholders Mission Statement and Governance
 - The Stakeholders provide input and maintain a focus on aquatic plant management (see process flowchart).
 - Jeff crafted mission statement
 - Historically we operated under 3 purposes (see handout)
 - Jeff proposed mission statement going forward:

Provide a process for input from all interested parties and science-based technical guidance into Aquatic Plant Management on Lake Gaston.

- *Motion was made to accept and enact this as our mission statement going forward. No further discussion. Moved by John Zubrod and John Dyckman. Passed unanimously.*
- Jeff discussed the need for succession in this organization. The need for a stakeholder group who has a strong vested interest.
 - Dominion was approached but has declined.
 - Jeff questioned if the LGA or the Weed Council were the best organization to lead. Point was made that there is a conflict in that the Weed Council receives recommendations from the Stakeholders.
 - Suggestion was then made that the three stakeholder groups who benefit the most from successful Aquatic Plant Management are the LG Chamber of Commerce, LGA and Weed Control Council.
 - Other discussion regarding Leadership of Stakeholders
 - Form an Executive Committee and rotate– LGA, Chamber, Realtors, Weed Control Council
 - LGA President Scooter Boham stated he would take back to the LGA board
 - Amanda Briggs Chamber President recognized the need for other stakeholders to step up when needed
 - It was suggested that B.A.S.S. Bill Frazier’s involvement be included
 - *Motion by Wally – A succession committee be formed (being a minimum of 3 individuals from three stakeholder groups, LGA, Chamber, Realtors, BASS) to address leadership succession. **Wally Sayko moved and Mark Emens, DEQ second. Passed unanimously.***
- Jeff recommended a boat tour on the lake for County Commissioners/Managers as an educational tool.
 - Will need help with boats

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- Benefits to help educate on lake environment, aquatic plant management, and collaboration
- Jessica to draft education on management and habitat enhancement

*Motion to adjourn meeting at 2:43 pm by Wally and Barney
Approved unanimously.*