

Summary of Public Comments, Responses, and Plan Modifications to the Draft 2024 South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Positive: 4

Negative: 64

Neutral: 17

Comments:

From: D. D.

Subject: Problematic Weeds in The Cooper River

Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 3:25 PM

Please consider treatment in the Cooper River. I've fished the Cooper since 1976 and the weeds are the worst I've ever seen. From hwy 52 towards the coast as deemed necessary. Thank you

From: R. V.

Subject: 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Plant Draft

Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 3:49 PM

To whom it may concern. After careful perusal of the draft, I can for see one potential problem. In conduction the required surveys, you propose to provide these surveys to entities and enterprises for completion. These public and more the private entities and enterprises may in all likelihood, falsify information for their benefit in both permissible use and financial gain.

Perhaps it would prove to be more diligent and prudent for these areas of concern to be physically inspected without the inclusion of these users, by state and/or federal water quality inspectors.

The question raised by allowing these entities and enterprises to "self inspect and report" is this: will they provide honest and accurate data and information? With South Carolina being a state that relies heavily upon our natural resources, such potentially erroneous and inaccurate data and information could prove to be disastrous to our waterways and our states economy.

Therefore, I highly recommend that policing these entities and enterprises in some physical manner during their collection of data to ensure accurate data and information is presented to the state. The alternative to this would be for the state or an authorized agency/service to perform the data and information collection, ultimately removing this responsibility from the entities and enterprises.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of my comments.

Most sincerely,

R. V.

Summerville, SC

From: D. S.

Subject: Draft 2024 South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 3:57 PM

I fully disagree with the implementation of above average carp stocking.

The lakes should retain at minimum 10% hydrilla coverage for its massive benefit to Wildlife and Fisheries.

Respectfully,

D.S.

From: C. B.
Subject: GRASS CARP
Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 4:55 PM
Hello,

I am writing in regard to the new proposal to add 17,000 new grass carp to the Santee Cooper lakes.

I strongly disagree with the decision to stock any new grass carp. I have hunted and fished the lakes for the last 30+ years. I thought that we were on the right track with the reemergence of eelgrass and many of the other natural grasses in the last 2 years. Just this past November I stood with my 13- & 16-year-old sons and watched an otter hunt baitfish just steps away from where we were standing. It's obvious for any outdoorsman that life is returning to our lakes in a big way. Migrating birds, fish, as well as amphibians and crustaceans are all currently thriving. I hate to think that we are going back to the days of barren sand bottoms and a fraction of the wildlife that is there today. NO NEW CARP.

A concerned Sportsman,

C. B.

From: J. S.
Subject: Weeds
Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 5:03 PM

Ever since y'all started, killing the Hydrilla in Lake Murray and Santee, the duck hunting, has went to crap. Also, the fishing. The only thing it helps as far as I can see. Is these pleasure, boaters, and JetSki take up the whole lake so you can't even fish anymore. Hadn't read your report just my opinion along with every other Hunter and fisherman in this state.

From: J. R.
Subject: Why Plan?
Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 6:34 PM

DNR has been "planning" to treat areas in the Cooper River for several years, and it hasn't happened yet....

Just spray whatever you feel like.

From: J. S.
Subject: Elimination of aquatic plants
Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 6:47 PM

I am against eliminating aquatic plants in our lakes and waterways. Wildlife need these plants to thrive.. juvenile fish..waterfowl....our drinking water comes from these lakes ..We don't want to be like camp lejeune.

From: J. W.
Subject: Grass Carp
Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 7:24 PM

I strongly disagree with the restocking of the grass carp into the Santee Cooper lake system. Santee Cooper lakes should have a minimum of 10 percent of hydrilla and other grasses, which are beneficial to lake wildlife and fisheries

From: G. W.
Subject: Problem Plant Species-Prestwood Lake (Darlington County)

Date: Thur. 1/25/2024 10:03 PM

As a resident of Hartsville as well as living on Prestwood Lake, I thank you for including our lake in your control plan. Your efforts do not go unnoticed.

From: C. F.

Subject: weeds

Date: Fri. 1/26/2024 8:59 AM

east branch cooper river taken over .

From: D. H.

Subject: ACE Basin Region Phragmites

Date: Fri. 1/26/2024 9:58 AM

Historically there have been pockets of phragmites located in the tidal marsh along the Edisto, Ashepoo, and Combahee rivers. In past years the SCDNR teamed with partners to conduct surveys to identify areas of phragmites on the river systems and treat those areas.

I suggest SCDNR include phragmites surveillance and control in the ACE Basin River systems as part of the 2024-2025 Plan.

Thank you,

D. H.

From: A. C.

Subject: Grass carp

Date: Fri. 1/26/2024 12:14 PM

Good afternoon,

I have some concerns with the proposed 17,000 grass carp being stocked in the lakes. In realtors I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp along with the general sportsman populous. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries .

If weeds around docks and landings are an issue this can be controlled with spot spraying and pellets. In my years of observations, when triploid grass carp or tilapia have been released into large ponds with good bass and bluegill populations they immediately start to plummet.

These weeds are the exact protection and breeding grounds for micro fauna and bait fish that support our game fish. In addition to this the weed cover provides shelter for game fish from the massive population of cormorants that we still are not allowed to help control.

The releasing of carp in our lakes not only hurts fishing and bio diversity, it directly affects migratory waterfowl that use our lakes as a stopping point when headed south. Millions of dollars are poured into the SC economy every year for our hunting and fishing. Carp are not a game species and water sports do not pay the bills. Please consider other options that would allow everyone to exist cohesively on the lakes while still enjoying their passions.

Sincerely,

A. C.

From: D. C.
Subject: 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Plan Comments
Date: Fri. 1/26/2024 2:26 PM
Thank you for allowing me to comment on this plan.

I live on the shores of Lake Marion and as such fully support the 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. Of particular concern is the increase in hydrilla. I've seen what it can do when left unchecked and think the proposed increase in sterile carp is warranted and much appreciated.

Thank you for all you do keeping our waters safe and usable by boaters and fishermen alike.

D. C.

From: R. S.
Subject: SAV
Date: Fri. 1/26/2024 8:00 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries .

From: C. H.
Subject: NO MORE CARP
Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 3:13 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries .

Benefits were seen this year as higher numbers of waterfowl used areas of the lake holding vegetation. There has to be a balance between recreational usage and vegetation that benefits wildlife and fishes.

Sincerely,
C. H.

From: C. W.
Subject:
Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 6:17 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries .

From: J. F.
Subject: Stop the removal and spraying of aquatic vegetation
Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 6:52 PM

There is no need for the removal and spraying of aquatic vegetation in our SC lakes and rivers. These aquatic plants serve as precious habitat and vital food resources for both various wildlife and aquatic life. If the homeowners that own lake front property do not like this vegetation they should have considered it before buying the property, we shouldn't kill native plants and hurt wildlife habitat to meet their needs. I personally have seen the terrible negative effects this spraying has had on lakes, there was 100s of thousand of fish killed in lake Bowen due to these chemicals. STOP THE SPRAYING!

From: D. D.

Subject: Aquatic management

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 7:11 PM

To who ever pretends they read these:

It's become blatantly obvious to SC residents who actually hunt and fish in SC that the SCDNR cares less about fish and waterfowl than the USFS cares about turkeys and deer fawns they burn to death every spring. The SCDNR has intentionally overstocked carp and sprayed poison into our water bodies to kill every bit of fish and wildlife they can possibly kill. The DNR strategically used the grass carp and poison to remove the bottom link of the food chain. Once all the vegetation was gone from the water, the smaller fish have no where to hide. They've all been eaten or starved to death. Once those smaller fish are gone, the larger fish starve to death. The same with ducks, that vegetation was a large part of their diet but they would have also eaten invertebrates that have died off with no vegetation. What is left? A giant bowl of water. It keeps the wake boarders and power companies happy but what of the people that actually pay for the DNRs budget? Well to shut the fisherman up, they've invested a pile of money into stocking fish that should have been here naturally. Money they could have been used elsewhere if they hadn't killed off all the food chain. What about the duck hunters? We the DNR just ignores them completely. The only group that made out alright is the gator hunters since the gators cant hide in the weeds now. But to get a gator tag takes years of buying into points so they gain the money they were after anyways.

In conclusion: the 14 coments you've cherry picked to show in the 2023 survey shows that you did not want anyone to see more than 1 hunters comments so I'm positive I will be ignored. Just know that one day, the hunters and fisherman of SC will grow sick enough of the leadership to finally do away with the DNR all together. I for one have already pulled any funding i possibly can and will continue to speak out against these actions and lead others towards pulling theirs. I will not fish or hunt another day here when i can travel for a similar price and actually find success in states that are not ran by liberal anti hunters.

Thank you,

D. D.

From: unknown

Subject:

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 7:38 PM

I am totally against releasing any more grass carp in our lake systems of Santee Cooper

From: S. L.

Subject: Santee Cooper

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 7:49 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries .

Regards,

S. L.

From: C. P.

Subject: Spraying weeds on public lakes

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 8:03 PM

As a true outdoorsmen that cares about wildlife conservation. I believe it is important to our wildlife in South Carolina to let these resources grow and to not spray them off. They provide so much for the animals around us why you would want to take that away from them beats me. Instead of spraying and killing it why not plant recourses for the wildlife to feed off of. Year after year it provides cover for ducks and fish food for the deer. Why are y'all not planting some lakes with food for waterfowl to advocate people spending time in the outdoors making the lakes prettier. It blows my mind to who ever thought it was okay to spray ever. The amount of things that would changed if y'all stopped spraying. I believe yall should let the people of the state decide I guarantee 70% of people would say to leave it alone. Not that my email will do anything for this but the spraying is hurting a lot for the wildlife and the outdoorsmen. Waterfowl is a huge one we do nothing in my areas of the upstate and we have 4 lake chain system russle and Clarkhill lake being an awesome lake to try and preserve waterfowl there's no refuges why we're in a prime spot. I have stopped hunting around here for waterfowl and started going out of state to hunt because it's gotten so bad. If it's funds say something the amount of waterfowl hunters there is now would be glad to raise main to pay to have implements put in to help with waterfowl. But waterfowl have no food here on the lakes especially puddler ducks so they don't ever come here.

From: N. R.

Subject: Aquatic 2024 plan

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 8:03 PM

I as well as the majority of sportsman's in the state DO NOT SUPPORT any new release of grass carp or the spraying of any Aquatic vegetation. It is crucial to the waterfowl population as well as other wildlife if anything we need more natural vegetation available for waterfowl and other aquatic wildlife. I cannot understand why SCDNR would not be on board with the sportsman's and outdoorsmen/women of this state our waterfowl population/habitat is atrocious in this state. The "leaders" of this plan and many others in SCDNR would rather listen to the non sportsman's. Half the time I hear and see people notice any type of vegetation in any body of water and automatically assume it's hydrilla. It's time for a change lookout for the Sportsman's of the state it's crucial to the youth and hunting traditions that will hopefully be continued to be passed down for years to come.

From: E. F.

Subject: Waterfowl Hunting Related/ Food Source

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 8:05 PM

I want to start off by saying thank you to each and every one of you! Yall do alot of great things in our beautiful state!

My comments related to aquatic plants are as follows:

Years back before the boom of the control of aquatic plants. South Carolina was a meca for waterfowl! There were so much more ducks staying and feeding instead of just hitting the water to roost only to leave out and move for food!

I feel we do need to control it in some aspects but I do not feel they need to be eradicated!

One example is Lake Murray when it had hydrilla, one it was an amazing fishing lake but not only that it HELD WATERFOWL! PLEASE STOP KILLING OFF ALL AQUATIC PLANTS WE NEED NATURAL WATERFOWL FOOD IN SC !

Thank you again for listening/reading my regards!

Thank yall for all you do as well !

From: J. C.

Subject: Aquatic Plant Program

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 8:29 PM

To whom it may concern,

As an avid outdoorsman here in the upstate of South Carolina, I would like to offer my opinion of the Aquatic Plant Program.

Over the years I grew up hunting and fishing on mainly lakes Clarkhill, Hartwell, Russell and Greenwood. Within the Past ten years especially I, along with other have noticed how the spraying of the lakes and also the addition of grass carps have altered the Waterfowl numbers and fishing on those lakes.

As for the waterfowl, I am limited to only hunting on the weekends due to my work schedule. However, I can remember seeing 100s of diver ducks like Redhead, Ringnecks, Scaup, coots and Canvasback whenever the lakes held hydrilla. Clarkhill used to hold over 10,000 waterfowl and those numbers are down in the hundreds now if I'm not mistaken. I understand something should be done to control the grasses in the lake but I believe there could be designated areas where the grasses should be allowed.

As for the fishing, I have noticed that within the past 10 years of bass fishing, the fish have developed some sores on them. Rumors that I have heard say that the sores on the bass and other species are from the chemicals used to spray for the grass. Those grasses that are killed offer food and shelter for all types of fish.

If I could offer some added advice. I would love to see the state turn Lake Russell in to a sportsman's lake. There are no houses on the lake for the most part. There are trees all over especially in the upper part. It would be easy to lower and elevate the water levels due to the lake needing to be at full pool at all times. It would be nice to lower the lake in late summer and plant it for waterfowl in the winter months. It may also be beneficial to just let that lake have the hydrilla and other grasses that benefit both wintering waterfowl and create a different type of fishery on the Savannah River chain.

If you have made it this far, thank you for what you do! Please help make SC a great place to hunt and fish again!

Thanks,

J. C.

From: M F.

Subject: Don't spray!!!

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 9:13 PM

Let the number of waterfowl increase in this state! So many people want this.

From: unknown

Subject: Grass carp

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 9:17 PM

I Fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper Lakes should have, at least a minimum of 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both wildlife and fisheries

From: W. T.

Subject: PLEASE STOP KILLING ALL THE VEGETATION

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 9:28 PM

I've seen more ducks in SC this year with the vegetation thriving vs lowering the lake and killing it off for pleasure boaters. Hunters and fishermen generate 3 times the revenue than pleasure boaters ever will. Please quit taking this away from us

From: C. M.

Subject: Invasive weed control

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 9:36 PM

As a duck hunter, I would like to see my well earned money being spent on something to help duck hunting in the state. Less grass carp, less destruction of the hydrilla, less giving into the duck impoundments, less LEGALIZED baiting or either allow EVERYONE to bait. It is pathetic that a lawyer is allowed to, plain as day and legally, plant a cornfield with zero intentions of using it as a cornfield, only to flood it for ducks but we can't dump a bag of corn in a beaver pond.

From: D. S.

Subject: Invasive weeds questions

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 9:54 PM

I'm just curious if you disclose the problems that these "problem weeds" are causing to the lakes. I'm just confused as to how eelgrass which was purposely planted in the lakes is much different than some of the problem weeds.

From: R. R.

Subject: Appreciating the Ecological Benefits of Hydrilla for Waterfowl and Fish

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 10:10 PM

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to bring attention to the ecological benefits of hydrilla in our aquatic ecosystems, particularly in relation to its positive impact on waterfowl and fish populations. Hydrilla, despite being considered an invasive species in some regions, plays a crucial role in providing habitat and sustenance for waterfowl. The dense underwater vegetation created by hydrilla serves as ideal nesting and feeding grounds for various waterfowl and fish species. The structure adds to the aquatic environment contributes to the overall biodiversity, supporting a healthier ecosystem for these birds. Additionally, hydrilla's growth pattern and structure provide excellent shelter for juvenile fish, offering protection from predators and creating favorable conditions for their development. The presence of hydrilla enhances the overall fish habitat, promoting increased spawning and recruitment of fish populations.

I understand the concerns related to hydrilla's invasive nature and potential impact on recreational activities, but it is essential to recognize the ecological balance it brings to our water systems. A comprehensive approach that considers the positive aspects of hydrilla alongside management strategies may lead to a more sustainable coexistence.

I encourage the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to explore alternative perspectives on hydrilla management, taking into account its role in supporting waterfowl and fish populations. Collaborative efforts that balance environmental conservation and recreational interests will contribute to the long-term health and resilience of our aquatic ecosystems.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I appreciate your dedication to preserving and managing our state's natural resources.

Sincerely,

R. R.

From: B. D.

Subject: Lake Marion/moultrie

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 10:24 PM

To whom it concern, I live in Summerton and frequent these lakes very often weather it be riding/fishing in the spring and summer or hunting in the cold months. To me the invasive plants are a double edged sword. Plants like smartweed and hydrilla and other plants of that nature are more beneficial to me than harm. They improve hunting tremendously. They provide great food value for ducks and are also good for fishing. I would love to see these types of plants to thrive within reason. On the other end plants like giant salvina don't provide the equal food value and do nothing but clog usually hunting spots and make it hard to even walk through. Thankyou for allowing my thoughts and I hope you will take them into consideration.

From: T. B.

Subject: Aquatic Vegetation

Date: Sat. 1/27/2024 10:43 PM

Hello,

I am writing in response to the Facebook post regarding public response to the states aquatic vegetation program. Although I am not a citizen of the state, I live in Georgia, bordering SC in the region around Clark's Hill and the Savannah River. The damage that the US Corps has done to Clark's Hill is nothing short of disgusting. I just want to voice my opinion, so that hopefully something similar does not happen again

I grew up duck hunting Clark's Hill and made some amazing memories along the way. However, that has stopped due to the removal of aquatic vegetation. I also know that the overwhelming majority of hunters and fisherman in the area feel the same way. While I do understand that hydrilla is an invasive species and can be hard to control, the removal has completely depleted an entire ecosystem. I want to see these memories come to life again for me, my children, and my children's children. I hope that my words can be used to help control damage done.

T. B.

From: C. S.

Subject: Spraying the lake

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 5:09 AM

Spraying the lake needs to stop. It is not good for the fishery or the wildlife. Eliminates food for ducks and can not be good for fish. I have caught fish in specific spots very well and when those spots get sprayed it immediately turns them off. I am no biologist but that can not be good for the fish. This probably won't make a bit of difference because y'all will do what y'all want because you "know better" than all of the people that will tell you to stop, but if this is what I can do I've got to try. Please stop spraying our lake across all of Santee. It has far more hurt our lake than it will ever benefit and there's no way yall can prove it hasn't.

From: M. E.

Subject: NO MORE CARP

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 9:22 AM

Please do not release any carp in santee cooper. Also let hydrilla come back to the lakes. There are power producing lakes all over the country that have hydrilla and they do just fine. There is no good reason for making our lake a under water wasteland.

Date: Tues. 2/13/2024 5:45 PM (response to ANS reply)

Hydrilla should be left alone on santee and moultrie except in populated areas. The excuse that it can't be controlled is a myth. Plenty of lakes across the country have hydrilla and they are just fine no need to wipe it out. All fish species thrive in it. Just my two cents y'all will do the complete opposite of what is good for the lake. When we had a lake full of hydrilla santee and moultrie where one of the top fishing destinations in the United States.

From: A. P.

Subject: Santee!

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 9:57 AM

Please for the love of the sportsman stop the spray!

From: S. H.

Subject: Comments on 2024 DRAFT S.C. Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 10:01 AM

Hello, my name is Sal Hodson I'm a long-term Duckhunter and resident of South Carolina had 100 all over the country and have seen weed control management done a lot more effectively. I want to propose the idea of reduced spraying, and instead trying to drive out some of the nuisance species with native species by implementing/transplanting them to try to take over/compete with the nuisance species.

From: J. C.

Subject:

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 10:07 AM

Me as a farmer do understand how grass can get out of control but also understand the needs of wildlife and their should be no grass carp add as you can not control them. The grass should be controlled by spraying and this should be done after bedding and hacking so that it all has cover for protection . I deal with this every year as I plant and step out my back door looking at a 6 acer feel with 70 head of deer and only 3 of them are buck and the other are does and I ask myself why is there a limit on does right now so do we have to many or is that just mother nature taking them all to the only food around here . Today the scdnr is become like all of sc its about the money and the computers and they forget about the people how don't have one and most of all the wildlife they are to protect . So a check to see if anyone reads this email me back protect . And I'll keep this for a meeting if I don't hear back

From: Z. P.

Subject: Killing the wildlife

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 11:05 AM

To whom it concerns,

The spraying of grasses and other aquatic vegetation is driving out and killing the wildlife in South Carolina. As an avid hunter and outdoorsman it disappoints me to see SCDNR cater to the everyone except the the hunters and outdoorsmen that they so call are trying to help out. The more vegetation the you spray and kill drives out wild life like all forms of waterfowl. Waterfowl use the grasses and a huge food source. Killing it all drives them out or to a corn pond around the state. Those which are privately owned or you have to pay to be a member of and 85% of people that live in SC cannot afford to be apart of. The vegetation on the lakes also serve as great cover and food source for fish. You are also destroying tons of habitat for fish as in largemouth bass and bream. SCDNR does not care about the wildlife or conservation of the state only the money that they can bring in and the make and use of recreational lakes, discouraging hunters and outdoorsman to go to those fisheries and land to do something they enjoy. I hope this act comes to a stop and the lakes in SC be returned to the former glory

they once were. Unfortunately until SCDNR starts caring more about the outdoorsman and less about the money things will not change.

Great regards,
Z. P.

From: W. S.

Subject: Stocking of carp

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 3:16 PM

I oppose any further introduction of grass-eating carp into the lakes of S.C.

W. S.

From: E. G.

Subject: Invasive weed - Lake Marion

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 6:12 PM

I have been fishing, hunting and boating on lake Marion for the last 45 years. Both hunting and fishing has decreased in value as the vegetation has been sprayed and limited.

I oppose constant yearly spraying, as wildlife needs several years to have a chance to recover. Duck hunting has especially been severely limited to anyone that hunts public waters because of limited vegetation. So please stop spraying!

E. G.

From: K. W.

Subject: Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 6:27 PM

Please, please stop spraying the lakes of SC.

From: T. M.

Subject: Santee Cooper aquatic vegetation

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 8:18 PM

Please don't kill any of the vegetation on lakes Marion and moultrie please!!!!

From: A. B.

Subject: Make duck hunting good again

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 10:37 PM

Dear scdnr, my name is Andrew Brunson and I have a lifetime combination hunting license for South Carolina. One of my favorite things to do is duck hunt and y'all spraying is ruining that. Me and my buddies work really hard to get on ducks and all we hear are stories from our dads or other older fellas about how good the duck hunting was back in the day. Please stop spraying the lakes and taking away natural food for the ducks. I would hate to give up on something I love just because y'all ruined it. Every other outdoorsman I know agrees with me so if y'all really care what the people want y'all would actually do something to help make duck hunting better in South Carolina.

Sincerely, A. B.

From: B. S.

Subject: Hydrilla and the santee cooper lake system

Date: Sun. 1/28/2024 11:39 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries further more I know it may never be like the golden days my father or grandfather tell us stories about but I sure would love for my kids to have the opportunities to tell their grandkids stories of hunting on these beautiful sc lakes if it keeps trending in the direction it was trending in eventually the traditions of duck hunting in these lakes will soon die off

Thanks

B. S.

From: J. B.

Subject: Santee cooper aquatic vegetation

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 9:23 AM

Please stop killing the grass and other vegetation types in lakes marion and Moultrie

From: C. H.

Subject: Aquatic vegetation santee cooper lakes

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 9:55 AM

Hello,

I want to express my concern for you all killing the grass. Please please do something about this.

C. H.

From: A. H.

Subject: No more grass carp

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 10:42 AM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp and the continued spraying of aquatic plants that are beneficial. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10%-20% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries.

From: W. M.

Subject:

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 11:02 AM

Dear SCDNR,

All of my freinds, family, and colleges hunt and fish and are active conservationists of South Carolina. Every person who discusses the invasive plant issue has been screaming at the biologist to stop spraying for aquatic plants. Between the comorants, and the spraying you will hardly be able to catch a fish anymore. The ducks have no food on the lake. The grass carp so not help and you are killing more good stuff than invasive plants. Please put a stop to this nonsense and just do things to better the environment.

From: T. B.

Subject:

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 5:31 PM

The spraying needs to stop!!! Just go look at the trees that are dying I know that the chemicals used can not be good for them also for the animals fish birds alligators ducks... everything that makes our lakes beautiful it's a shame that my kids and their kids will not get to see the lakes the way I saw them growing up please if you care quit with the spraying and figure something else out help make our lakes great!!

From: W. H.

Subject: Aquatic vegetation

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 6:06 PM

In my opinion I'd say stop spraying and killing the aquatic vegetation, it's making hunting on public land on Marion and Moultrie almost impossible I myself and a bunch of hunters would like to see the santee lakes hunting go back to what it once was. The duck hunting majority doesn't have 10 plus thousand dollars to lease a blind at a duck club with impoundments. Not to mention if the hunting got back to what it once was on the lakes the amount income it would bring to local businesses when it comes to lodging, food, and other accommodations. I know killing the aquatic vegetation isn't the only cause for the decline of waterfowl on the santee lakes but I feel like it would be a good first step into getting the hunting back to what it was before.

From: D. G.

Subject: Santee Cooper Grass

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 7:49 PM

Please do not spray the grass or put grass carp in lake to control it. For the fish and ducks Thanks, D. G.

From: J. R.

Subject: Please don't spray

Date: Mon. 1/29/2024 10:37 PM

I have duck hunted all over the country and no offense SC DNR is really good at doing the very minimal for waterfowl in this state. Please keep that tradition alive and not spray the the lake(just leave it alone like anything else in this state) . Let it be. There is also no way possible the chemicals being sprayed are healthy. On a side note why are farm raised ducks still legal.? There is so much data out there stating the farm raised mallard is terrible for the flyaway. Why can I go kill ringnecks, teal and wood ducks but the mallard went from the king to almost non existent in our state? You hear stories of mallards flying from the refuge to the swamp all day. Hotels being booked up, Arkansas people coming to our state to hunt. It just makes you wonder.....leaving grass on the lake would be one factor that would help everything get back to "normal". If you ever need a in person representative on this topic from someone that has spent a lot of time on SC public land and other states I would gladly sacrifice my time to discuss this topic further!!!

Date: Wed. 2/14/2024 8:53 PM (response to ANS reply)

Thanks for replying Julie. Some of that 15% of native vegetation would never be looked at by a duck for consumption. Yes, I will agree there is more vegetation now than there was in years past. 15%, that's pretty weak.

From: T. B.

Subject: Aquatic grass management

Date: Tues. 1/30/2024 7:37 AM

Good morning,

Do not spray chemicals into our lakes to kill grass as it provides crucial habitats to our state's fish species. Every sportsmen who invests in fishing/hunting licenses the CORRECT way, the ones who respect the laws/limits surrounding our fisheries and game animals is AGAINST your agenda. Also need to crack down on enforcing the current regulations instead of becoming a tax collection agency.

Sincerely, a tax paying citizen who cares deeply about his states incredible ecosystems and resources.

From: U. P.

Subject:

Date: Tues. 1/30/2024 7:47 PM

I Fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper Lakes should have, at least a minimum of 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both wildlife and fisheries

From: A. H.

Subject: Cooper River invasive species

Date: Wed. 1/31/2024 8:18 PM

Thank you so much for the information. I realize resources are extremely limited on certain projects and it is understandable. However, living on the Cooper River, I spend double the money allotted for the Cooper in our rice fields fighting these species. Hopefully with all of us working and trying, we will at least achieve a positive outcome!

Thank you,

A. H.

G. M., Gippy.and Lewisfield Plantations

From: C. D.

Subject: Aquatic Plant Management Plan Comment

Date: Wed. 1/31/2024 5:11 PM

To whom it may concern,

As a concerned resident of Bonneau, SC in Berkeley County I wanted to share my input on the 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Plan. I enjoy using the Santee Cooper Lakes throughout the year be it from duck season in the winter, to family boating in the summer, and deer hunting in the fall. I strongly suggest the restriction of releasing anymore grass carp in this lake system. A grass carp is a destructive animal to a lot of aquatic vegetation including non invasive species of aquatic vegetation. I also strongly disagree with the use of wide range "spraying" herbicides as it causes destruction to a wide range of aquatic vegetation in our lakes. Site specific spraying for certain invasive plants is more reasonable in areas that pertain to passage or such but is not at all needed in the entirety of the lakes. I would love to see our lakes flourish again with an abundance of wildlife and fish that benefit from a lot of these aquatic plants. I would hate to see our lake system turned into a worse state of desert like lake bottoms that do not support or benefit many animals. Migrating ducks have long enjoyed our area until the use of these tactics have become more prevalent and common. Fish life of all different stages greatly benefit from allowing more aquatic vegetation as well. I hope we can work together to come to a better conclusion than spraying and releasing grass carp. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

C. D.

From: N. W.

Subject: Aquatics control of Santee Cooper Lakes including Santee National Wildlife Refuge

Date: Wed. 1/31/2024 7:47 PM

I have always seen Giant Cutgrass included as a nuisance species but have never seen any treatment other one year in a small section of the Blackbottom area of the Refuge. for years Cutgrass has invaded black water ponds and spawning areas which are now totally filled in and becoming dry land. Fish populations, primarily bass, throughout the lake have declined because of loss of spawning habitat and/or mucky bottoms. In addition, Cutgrass continues to incircle and enter areas which then collect silt and then contribute to water too shallow to navigate.

Final thought, hydrilla is very hard to selectively control but we need to only concentrate in residential areas, give the grass 4-5 years to promote good spawning habitat and greater survival of fry . We have seen better results just from 1 year of eelgrass. Thanks, N. W.

From: J. P.

Subject: Aquatic plant management plan

Date: Thurs. 2/1/2024 8:41 AM

I oppose the 2024 aquatic management plan for the Sante Cooper lakes releasing grass carp and spraying vegetation this year as well as all other bodies of water.

From: H. C.

Subject: Aquatic weeds

Date: Thurs. 2/1/2024 9:14 AM

Now that duck season is officially over, I can say we seen more birds in open water feeding on hydrilla seeds than any year in the past 5 years. I say balance it out so we're not took over by invasive weeds. I say take the invasive weeds that are no good out of our lakes. Leave what's good for our natural resources. Our fish and our waterfowl. South Carolina is already behind in the waterfowl industry. We need more ducks!!! Keep the weeds!!!

From: C. F.

Subject: Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Date: Fri. 2/2/2024 12:34 PM

To whom it may concern:

I want to start by saying that I was fortunate enough to grow up in South Carolina and experience living on Lake Murray and in the Midlands. I love this state and have made it a point to build my dream home and start my family in Chester county.

My goal is for my children to grow up in an outdoor environment with an abundance of wildlife. As a child I grew up catching fish off the hydrilla on Lake Murray. The eradication of these weeds severely degraded our ability to catch fish on our home lake thus made us fish less often.

Lake Murray used to be a Waterfowl hunting destination for the state. I used to see Mallards in droves across the lake when the aquatic plants were more prominent. Since these efforts to remove these plants began, I have seen far less birds migrate in and mallards become a rarity in a Waterfowl hunters take. In 2022, the aquatic plants in lake Murray flourished and with that we saw a migration like I haven't seen in many years. We saw rafts of Readheads, Scaup, and buffleheads in abundance across the lake. However, the energy company decided to drain the lake to kill the plants and this winter not even the coots migrated in their normal numbers.

I was fortunate enough to draw a hunt on the Santee coastal preserve this year and I saw duck numbers unlike anything else in this state. Those were cultivated not with rice impoundments and flooded corn fields but with natural grasses and proper habitat management. All of the impoundments, private and public, in the state are a drop in the bucket compared to the main reservoirs. Spraying the Santee lakes and Lake Murray has done a massive disservice to all that call this state home.

I believe that it is very important to prioritize the management of natural resources in this state and that includes our wildlife. From a perspective of a waterfowl hunter and a fisherman, it perplexes me how the State Department of Natural Resources is spending millions to degrade the natural habitat of the wildlife that call this state home. I ask you to please compare the budgets for improving wildlife

management areas habitat to the budget you have for actively destroying habitat and reconsider what is your job and your responsibility is for the wildlife in this state.

Thank you for your consideration.

C. F.

From: J. B.

Subject: Fwd: SCDNR: Draft 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Plan available for public review until Feb. 27

Date: Sat. 2/3/2024 8:51 AM

Couple general observations/comments for your review are enclosed.

Thank you,

J. B.

Comments and questions imbedded in Part 1 ("Text" followed by comments):

1. "Plants must interfere with at least one intended water use before a problem can be considered to exist." Is this defined somewhere? What does "one intended water use" mean? or maybe clarify "water use" in the sentence?
2. "This survey will be in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix C) mailed to..." Is this survey made publicly available besides mail? Posted on DNR, DHEC,
3. "Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) protocol" Where can I find out more about EDRR? How is this different from the Appendix C survey?
4. "monitored by field inspection" who is required to complete field inspection? Is this documented and reviewed by some agency?
5. "The need for evaluation of environmental effects of the program will be determined by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control." Isn't evaluation of short and or long term program effectiveness and evaluation of adverse impacts always conducted?
6. "may require that the entity applying the control agent conduct routine water quality monitoring during and after the control application" Is the monitoring plan requirements outlined and reviewed prior to control application?
7. "The Department of Health and Environmental Control will notify the Department of Natural Resources of such adverse impacts." Communication between Departments should be routine and frequent. Adverse events such as fish/bird kills likely occur before water monitoring results are received.
8. "National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit requirements" Does the control applicator apply for a NPDES permit to perform aquatic control?

From: J. A.

Subject: Grass on santee.

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 10:16 AM

Killing the grass on santee is absolutely destroying the panfish, panfish live and feed underneath this grass and also have a little protection from predators. If you want to see how bad our lake is, go to Florida for instance. Grass everywhere and it's probably safe to say 10x the fish, maybe more! If y'all keep spraying the good grass on santee it will be good for absolutely nothing but a waste water plant! No ducks, no panfish.

From: G. H.

Subject: Invasive Weeds

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 11:11 AM

The killing of all the grass and weeds in lake Marion is ridiculous. I understand that it can get out of control with growth but that takes years. All types of fish live in and under grass beds and weedbeds. It also provides protection for fish from other predator fish. Over the last several years the fishing especially in upper end of lake Marion has went downhill. Constant spraying and killing weeds and not considering the effect the decomposing matter has on fish. I often fish in other states in grass and weedbeds for crappie. The fishing is phenomenal and the quality of fish you catch is unreal. Santee could be like that again if you let the grass and weedbeds grow. Also you need to up the size limit of Crappie to 10 inches minimum.

From: A. S.

Subject: Invasive Weeds

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 1:57 PM

Let the invasive weeds grow nature will cull what not needs to be there and the wildlife will be more abundant during seasons

From: A. E.

Subject: Invasive Weeds

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 3:24 PM

I think the state should double the invasive weed control plan. Water hyacinth has all together choked out every bit of open water in the upper Combahee river. All of my impoundments and rice fields adjacent to the river are loaded. We spend \$25,000 annually to control on this private property. But if the state doesn't control them in the river it is a waste of time.

A. E., Cherokee Plantation

From: H. C.

Subject: Recommendations for Upper Lake Marion

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 4:11 PM

I have read the proposal for the control of invasive weed in Lake Marion. I understand the importance of trying to eliminate or reduce the amount however some effort should be done to kill it where it multiples. In the upper part of lake Marion (Stumphole Area) large sections of the swamp are covered with the invasive weed and the airboats used to spray can not reach those parts of the swamp. Only when the wind or high water causes the some of the weed to be pushed into open water that airboats can spray to kill it. The problem is they are fighting a losing battle. The same areas where the weed finally is in the open are constantly sprayed numerous times. This is a constant problem with people that are trying to fish since the spraying does cause the area to be "fish less"! In addition the weed that is sprayed dies and sinks to the bottom. This has the effect of build up of dead weed that is causing some of our coves and banks to become shallow. In addition the "fish beds" are destroyed. The cove I live on was sprayed over 8 times last year.

If you really are trying to eliminate the invasive weed then you need to get smaller boats that can get back into the "woods"! Invasive weeds are growing there that have never been sprayed. Airboats are great for open water but they are useless in the wooded swamp.

If you have any questions I will be glad to provide any feedback. I don't dislike the spraying I just think it can be done more efficiently and effectively!

Thank you!

H. C.

From: Z. T.

Subject: Lake Grasses

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 6:05 PM

Please leave the vegetation in the lakes alone and please do not add any more grass carp. The grasses provide habitat for many of the freshwater fish species as well as waterfowl.

The idea behind spraying herbicide into the states water systems is just criminal. I've been an avid outdoorsman my entire life and I've seen nothing but steady decline in the wildlife numbers since the early 2000s (especially waterfowl) so instead of spending our tax dollars further driving the decline of wildlife in our great state. Instead use those funds to properly maintain WMA and public lands and water resources.

I know I'm not alone in my opinions just check out your facebook post comment's.

Sincerely, Z. T.

From: T. B.

Subject: Grass Carp

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 8:34 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper lakes should have, at minimum 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries .

Sincerely

T. B.

From: W. K.

Subject: Aquatic management plan comments

Date: Mon. 2/5/2024 9:48 PM

I recently read through the annual aquatic management report. Based upon what we have seen in the past from the stocking of grass carp, and based upon the fact that our neighbors are finally waking up to the negative affects of the stocking (and subsequently removing, not restocking triploid grass carp), I am very disappointed that the plan recommends further stocking.

I fully disagree with continued stocking of grass carp. They feed non-selectively on invasive and native aquatic plants plants. They remove vital native grasses which provide effective nurseries for fish, and feeding grounds for wintering birds. Hunters and fishermen alike know that our lakes are most productive when a minimum of 10% of lake acreage contains aquatic vegetation. Our lakes are healthier and stronger that way.

There is no reason why we can't more efficiently target invasive hotspots by spraying.

Grace and peace,

W.

From: M. R.

Subject: 2024 SC Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Date: Tues. 2/6/2024 10:54 AM

Good morning,

Please mark this down as a NEGATIVE response. Please, please, please stop spraying. Please quit catering to the tourist/summer lake activity. These people want to kill the natural grass habitat all so they can drink and party and, 90% of the time, litter trash on the lake without having to worry about some grass getting in their motor. All to only step foot back on the lake the following summer while outdoorsmen have to live with the consequences 12 months out of the year. Please put the wildlife first

and not the crowd that cares nothing of the wildlife and only uses our natural bodies of water a handful of times a year.

M. R.

From: W. O.

Subject: aquatic plant management

Date: Tues. 2/6/2024 11:06 AM

The mass praying of vegetation is killing our public land's ability to kill ducks. Yes the brazil weed doesn't have any benefits but we need the hydrilla back. Back when the hydrilla was thick we had a lot more birds. Without the supplementation of food in the public waterways the poor man has no chance to draw birds legally. The corn impoundments draw all the birds and don't give anyone else a fair chance. If yall dont kill all the vegetation that the ducks like they'll come back to public waterways and give everyone better hunts.

From: H. H./W. H. (exact message from two email addresses)

Subject: Disagree Grass Carp Stocking

Date: Tues. 2/6/2024 5:22 PM, Wed. 2/7/2024 11:24 AM

SCDNR, Julie Holling,

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp on santee cooper and other lakes, our santee cooper lakes should have a minimum of at least 10% of the lakes acreage open to hydrilla, eel grass, and other grasses which are hugely beneficial to both lake wildlife and fisheries.

I started duck hunting when I was 12 back in 2006 on lake murray. This was post hydrilla eradication/grass carp stocking. There were very few ducks when I started hunting lake murray and I have noticed such a decline since to where I do not even bother to hunt Murray anymore.

The many stories and people that I have talked to that had the privilege of hunting Murray and Parr Reservoir in the late 90s and early 2000s make me wish today was still that way. I firmly believe the eradication of the water vegetation on murray has made the duck population of the midlands area where I live suffer greatly on Parr reservoir and Lake Murray. I would hate to see the same thing continue or get worse on the Santee Cooper lakes.

I have also noticed personally the effect it has had on bank erosion of the islands and shores on Murray, there are several islands on the lake that I have seen 15-30 of shoreline erode away over the last 20 years due to the lack of the "buffer" from water vegetation.

I want SCDNR to care about the wildlife and fisheries habitat on our SC public waters by showing habitat improvement and proof with increase in wintering waterfowl numbers.

Thanks,

H. H./W.H.

From: T. A.

Subject: Comment on SCDNR Aquatic Plant Management Plan

Date: Wed. 2/7/2024 12:57 PM

Hello,

I'd like to submit some comments/feedback on SCDNR's 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Plan.

I don't know if this is the proper place to address this, but I believe there has been a recent outbreak of *Phragmites australis* in the brackish regions of the South Edisto River. I work for the Edisto Island Open Land Trust and monitor all our conservation easements. This invasive reed has suddenly cropped up on three of our private conservation easements on Little Edisto Island within the last 3 years. This outbreak appears to coincide with the most recent round of USACE dredging and spoil site work immediately nearby in Watts Cut off Jehossee Island in the Intracoastal Waterway. I think it would be wise for SCDNR to look into these spoil sites and the surrounding areas to see if USACE may have accidentally introduced the plant into the area and inadvertently created a population that is distributing seeds into the waterways along Edisto Island.

Thank you for your time,

T. A.

Edisto Island Open Land Trust

From: W. W.

Subject: Spraying

Date: Thurs. 2/8/2024 7:42 AM

Please allow aquatic weeds to grow. This gives ducks an actual place in sc to stop and eat

From: D. G.

Subject: Aquatic Management Plan

Date: Fri. 2/9/2024 9:23 AM

I support the 2024 proposed plan.

D. G.

From: A. D.

Subject: SAV's

Date: Fri. 2/9/2024 2:04 PM

I fully disagree with the stocking of any additional grass carp. Our Santee Cooper Lakes should have, at least a minimum of 10% of lake acreage open to hydrilla and other grasses, which are hugely beneficial to both wildlife and fisheries.

From: R. I.

Subject: 2024 aquatic plant management plan

Date: Sun. 2/11/2024 12:48 PM

We do not need additional grass carp released into our lakes - especially the Santee Cooper lakes. Some aquatic vegetation is making a comeback and along with the spraying would be destroyed by these carp.

Santee Cooper and DNR need to work on the giant salvinia and cut grass that have taken over wintering grounds for waterfowl.

I have personally - 2 years ago - taken a group from the Santee Cooper aquatic weed division into Sparkleberry swamp and shown them the cutgrass problem. I was promised something - spraying - would be started and here we are 2 years later and nothing has been started. I know it's not these employees fault, but upper management and DNR tying their hands - not many people see the affected areas so it's not a priority.

Wildlife - waterfowl and fish - should be - and are required by law to be - shown the same attention as power production.

Stop taking the easy ways out - do not release anymore grass eating carp and concentrate on the giant salvinia and cutgrass on the Santee Cooper lakes and swamps.

Sincerely,
R. I.

From: G. B.

Subject: Invasive weeds

Date: Tues. 2/13/2024 7:41 AM

The management of aquatic vegetation in the public waters of this state have been an absolute disaster. As an avid waterfowler and bass fisherman I have seen firsthand the state organization responsible for preserving wildlife and their habitat actively destroy it. Growing up fishing and hunting on Clark's Hill and Lake Murray it hurts to see how these bodies of water have been managed. Ten years ago there was an abundance of food for waterfowl, and a wide array of waterfowl to be had, along with plenty of structure for fish to hide in and exciting fishing that came with it. Now both lakes are nothing but red clay banks and a few blown down trees and docks for fish structure and absolutely no food to hold ducks for longer than it takes for them to rest and keep moving south. If a nonnative aquatic plant (hydrilla) provides so much food and shelter for wildlife why kill it? If you must kill it why not make an effort to replace it with something native. And, let's call a spade a spade here, a bald eagle is nothing but a glorified buzzard so arguing that the eradication of all aquatic vegetation in an entire lake is somehow beneficial to an already plentiful animal is lost on me. Find a happy medium if you must. In my opinion, and in the opinion of many other sportsmen you have failed to protect our interests and the interests of wild game animals in this state.

From: C. F.

Subject: Please Don't Spray!

Date: Tues. 2/13/2024 11:01 AM

A lot of people would love for the population of waterfowl to increase in this state, taking away their main food source would take our already small number of ducks and geese away.

From: M. C.

Subject: 2024 proposed aquatic plan

Date: Wed. 2/14/2024 1:24 PM

I am writing in opposition of the 2024 proposed aquatic management plan. I do not support the release of any additional triploid grass carp into the Sante Cooper lake systems.

We have all seen the massive destruction that these carp have done to our lake's native SAVs over the years. The overstocking of grass carp by the management council has caused the eradication of all beneficial native SAVs in previous years.

Despite the carp, the beneficial SAVs have made a rebound this past year in particular. It has taken over a decade for the SAVs to thrive to the level that we outdoorsman witnessed this past year. Even the anglers that competed in the Bassmasters Elite Series were suprised to see all of the beneficial SAVs, and spoke in favor of protecting it on Santee Cooper.

Other public waterways like Lake Mattamuskeet have witnessed the destruction that triploid grass carp can cause when introduced to an ecosystem. The State legislators have passed legislation to remove these carp that aggresively attack beneficial SAVs and destroy the native ecosystem.

We have also observed the destruction of SAVs in some of our waterfowl designated WMAs. All beneficial SAVs have been eradicated within the Potato Creek Hatchery WMA. There is no reason for the eradication of the SAVs in this area, and there are private landowners that surround this impoundment that benefit from taking all of the food sources out of this WMA. The public hunters lose another area that could potentially be one of the most successful public areas on Santee.

In my opinion the total hydrilla coverage of that was observed on Santee does not warrant the release of additional triploid grass carp. The risk to our native SAVs is to great, when other strategies could be implemented to managed the hydrilla. The triploid grass carp will attack native SAVs when hydrilla is not present, as witnessed by outdoorsman on Santee.

The native SAVs provide protection for fish, food for waterfowl and other birds, and help filter the nutrients on our Lakes. We must protect it!

M. C.

From: J. S.

Subject: Santee-2024 Aquatic Plan

Date: Wed. 2/14/2024 2:28 PM

I trust this message finds you well. I am writing to express certain concerns that have been observed over the past decade regarding the decision-making processes within the Department of Natural Resources. My intent is to address these matters with a constructive and solution-oriented approach, without allowing frustration to impede the discussion.

It has become apparent, from a top-down perspective within the DNR, that there may be a misalignment with the interests and perspectives of individuals who are avid participants in outdoor activities such as duck hunting and fishing. Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable shift away from prioritizing the needs and concerns of license holders in favor of considerations for lake residents and individuals relocating from northern regions.

In order to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of our decision-making processes, it is imperative that we reevaluate our current approach. This includes a more thorough examination of the research methodologies employed in addressing various topics. At present, the term "research" is used, yet it appears that the findings lack substantiation from credible sources, both within our own state and among neighboring southern states with similar ecological conditions.

We have to stop taking the easy way out, like we do with every issue at hand. Including the wild turkey (a shame).

Furthermore, it has come to my attention that individuals within our own organization, who work closely with the DNR, express a sense of disappointment and embarrassment regarding the current leadership and decision-making practices. This sentiment among our colleagues emphasizes the urgency of addressing these issues promptly.

NOOOOOO need for more CARP. A BIG Need for proper management.

From: P. T.

Subject: Aquatic Plant Management Council Comment

Date: Thurs. 2/15/2024 2:57 PM

Hello Julie,

I hope you are doing well!

I want to go on record that I am still adamantly opposed to the stocking of non native invasive grass carp in any of our lakes! The rebound of native submerged aquatic vegetation has been incredible to see especially in the Santee Cooper lakes and Lake Murray. We need more submerged aquatic vegetation to help filter our waterways, not less! Hydrilla is not the devil now that we have giant salvinia, that truly is the devil. Glad to see the introduction of weevils and I hope these mild winters help on weevil survival!

From: C. C.

Subject: Food for ducks

Date: Thurs. 2/23/2024 2:56 PM

Please help maintain the growth of hydrilla grass and eel grass on our lakes. The future of waterfowling in SC is already at risk for our kids. Please help the lakes maintain the proper balance of food to encourage wintering waterfowl to stay in SC

From: Rachael Rosenstein on behalf of Brandon Jones

Subject: Aquatic Plant Management Comments

Date: Tues. 2/27/2024 4:01 PM

Catawba Riverkeeper is a member-funded environmental nonprofit that educates, advocates, and protects the Catawba-Wateree River and all its tributaries. Our organization represents over 7,000 active members who rely on the watershed for drinking water, recreation, and electricity. Lake Wateree is a major reservoir in the watershed which supplies hydroelectric power, recreational access, municipal drinking water, and is a regional economic driver. The lake also has a history of nuisance aquatic vegetation. We appreciate SCDNR and the Council's work to control hydrilla in the reservoir and the opportunity to comment on the draft 2024 SC Aquatic Plant Management Plan. We make the following recommendations:

1. Fund a pilot *Microseira wollei* (lyngbya) treatment.

Since 2014, SC DNR has recognized the presence of filamentous algae in the reservoir and listed copper based herbicide as a control, yet allocated \$0 for application. Although Duke Energy could not complete a survey at Lake Wateree in 2023 due to the drawdown, upstream reservoirs experienced increases in *M. wollei*, including Lake Rhodhiss, Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, and Lake Wylie.

During the last Wateree survey (2021) Duke Energy found *M. wollei* at 117 sites. It is widespread across the lake and can cause numerous adverse impacts such as toxin production, harboring fecal bacteria, devaluing property, impeding recreation, and degrading wildlife habitat. Nearby NC reservoirs are piloting different treatments including chelated copper formulations (Lake Gaston and Norman) and ultrasound (Badin Lake). Research by NC State at Lake Gaston suggests that eradication of *M. wollei* populations may require individualized treatments.

Duke Energy's 14 month drawdown for dam modifications shifted submerged habitat and possibly rates of *M. wollei* growth. Successful treatments could be of enormous value for the 2024 and 2025 summers when lake levels return to full pond and the shallow habitat is restored. We recommend that the agency fund a pilot study with various control methods to begin searching for an effective treatment.

In DNR's response to our similar comments last year, it was noted that "...without locating the source of the excess nutrients in the system, any treatments will only provide short-term relief..." We agree and are happy to inform DNR of DHEC's Lower Catawba Nutrient TMDL (nearing completion) and the Lake Wateree 9- Point Watershed Plan which will be addressing both point and nonpoint sources of nutrients into the Lake. Although outside the scope of this Management Plan, we encourage DNR and DHEC to work with stakeholders to implement the recommendations in the Wateree Watershed Plan and mitigate this problem.

2. Plan the introduction of desirable native plant species for 2025.

Since 2002, the long term management strategy for Lake Wateree has included cultivating and introducing desirable native plants. In addition to habitat enhancement, desirable submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) has been used to limit the growth of nuisance species including *M. wollei*. In 2022 Catawba Riverkeeper applied for a Duke Habitat Enhancement Program grant to pilot the introduction of SAV but did not receive funding due to concerns of species suitability. We are still interested in this type of project if DNR recommends plant species to assuage concerns from the HEP review committee.

There is significant interest and resources available from the Lake Wateree Association, Lake Wateree WaterWatch, researchers at USC, Duke Energy, and our organization to support a SCDNR plan for *M. wollei* treatment and SAV introduction in Lake Wateree.

For the River,
Brandon Jones
Catawba Riverkeeper

From: Randy Kelley
Subject: 2024 SCDNR Draft Aquatic Management Plan
Date: Tues. 2/27/2024 4:35 PM

Water Watch of Lake Wateree Association would again urge DNR to add funding for treatment of filamentous algae on Lake Wateree. You have said that Duke is responsible for funding for treatment. But for the second year, DNR has allocated money for treatment of hydrilla, which we applaud. But isn't filamentous algae at least as big a threat as hydrilla? This is a great opportunity for Duke and SCDNR to combine their initiative and jointly fund an action plan.

As you are aware, lyngbya/microseria are increasing in presence on Lake Wateree. It's not unusual to see smaller, shallow coves with heavy infestations of mats. The Dutchman Creek, Wateree Creek, Lake Wateree State Park, White Oak Creek areas are all good examples of a significant and growing presence of algal mats. Duke's invasive plant species reports do an excellent job showing the locations.

The current drawdown may temporarily slow the spread of filamentous algae on the lake. But with the increasing inflow of nutrients from upstream in the Catawba River basin, the trend is for this problem to continue to worsen. It will not get better on its own. Recent advances in chemistry and application methods have made chemical treatment safe and effective for water and wildlife.

We work closely with the Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation, and we concur and support their response as well.

Thank you for posting the draft plan and allowing public input!

Randy Kelley
Chair, Water Watch of Lake Wateree Association

From: L. C.
Subject: Proposal for the Santee Cooper system
Date: Tues. 2/27/2024 5:23 PM
Dear SCDNR,

I am sending in my comments on the proposed grass control on the Santee Cooper system.

I do not agree with the proposal outlined here for those system.

I do not agree with the release of any more grass carp into the system. Also do not agree with the spraying of all of this grass. We have a very valuable resource here that can be managed to suit everyone. We have a fishery here that is on the verge of a fish explosion of all species. We need this habitat in the lake to provide thousands of more usable acres of habitat and populations of fish.

I feel that the spraying that is proposed will take out all of this grass as we've seen in the past. I also feel that you can control quite a bit of this grass with water levels in the cold months and not wiping it out.

I would say in the few residential areas that it would be ok to treat this with spraying as it becomes a problem but certainly not the majority of the lake where it's so beneficial.

The grass is certainly not a problem now and Mother Nature will do her thing with the fish and duck populations if we will give her a chance. As everyone knows, you will only have a population that you can support. Having thousands more acres of usable habitat in our system will make the 5 county area and the state a destination for the outdoorsman.

L. C.

Date: Tues. 2/27/2024 5:31 PM

My apologies as I accidentally hit the send button in error before finishing.

I agree the water hyacinths need to be treated and cut grass in problem areas.

I strongly disagree with any spraying on the hydrilla, elodea, milfoil, eelgrass or water willow. Also disagree with the grass carp being stocked with concerns of being sterile and actual numbers released. Also their life span.

Please consider only controlling in problem residential and marina areas and let the remainder reach its potential of a world class fishery. There is a way we can all win in this situation and revisit from year to year Thanks L. C.

Response:

1) Objections to grass carp stocking in the Santee Cooper lakes.

At the Council meeting to approve the draft plan, Santee Cooper reported a total of over 24,000 acres of native vegetation in the system, which is 15% of the system. The native vegetation has been increasing over the past few years. The goal of the Council and Santee Cooper is to have enough grass carp in the system to limit the expansion of hydrilla while minimizing negative impacts to native submerged aquatic vegetation.

Also at that meeting, the Region 4 fisheries biologist reported on the status of striped bass, blue catfish, and largemouth bass, all of which have been sampled and studied for decades. He noted that these sport fisheries on the Santee Cooper lakes are in a good place. The crappie fishery is starting to be studied, but not enough work has been done to warrant any conclusive findings.

The state waterfowl biologist, who is a duck hunter, toured the Santee Cooper lakes a little over a year ago and was very pleased with the amount of native vegetation that supports waterfowl. Waterfowl numbers throughout the eastern flyway are down. Research is being done to determine the causes and find ways to improve the numbers.

The primary objective of Santee Cooper aquatic plant management program is to foster a diverse native aquatic plant community by controlling invasive and nuisance aquatic plants throughout Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie while ensuring all lake user group's interest are considered.

Santee Cooper's current program utilizes integrated pest management (IPM) principles. IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to manage pests. Through continuing education, cooperative university-level research, and professional training, Santee Cooper lake managers are well versed on the latest methodology and product availability. With this knowledge and various control methods, Santee Cooper manages nuisance and invasive aquatic plant species by the most effective means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Santee Cooper currently utilizes annual boat surveys, drone surveys and multispectral imagery surveys collected by satellite to monitor aquatic plant populations on Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie. Utilization of satellite imagery began in 2019. Since then, Santee Cooper began reporting acreages detected and analyzed by the third-party vendor to The Council. Boat and drone surveys are used to verify detected species and survey areas where satellite imagery cannot be utilized. Acreage estimates from boat and drone surveys are not added to total acreage reported. This decision was made by Santee Cooper lake management staff to utilize the most consistent data available. While satellite imagery does have limitations and can be impacted by environmental conditions, it provides a higher level of consistency than boat and drone surveys. Lake users also report nuisance and invasive species to Santee Cooper lake managers through website forms, email and phone calls. All reports are documented in a database. These surveys and public notifications allow lake managers to identify problematic species, prioritize treatment areas and select the best management tool. Santee Cooper's aquatic plant management tools include biological control, chemical control, educational outreach, and mechanical removal when applicable. Grass carp are a biological tool used to target the invasive species *Hydrilla*.

If there is not a sufficient population of grass carp in the system *Hydrilla* can grow rapidly and outcompete native vegetation. If that occurs, larger stockings of carp may be needed to effectively control the *Hydrilla*. Large reactive stockings are a detriment to native vegetation. The Santee Cooper grass carp stocking program goal is to reach a true maintenance stocking protocol. A true maintenance stocking is replacing the annual population mortality. Santee Cooper lake management staff utilize all available data and their direct experience with invasive species management to estimate the correct grass carp population to control *Hydrilla* while limiting negative impacts to native vegetation on the lake system. Santee Cooper lake management staff prefer balanced management strategies over reactive management strategies and seek to avoid large scale stockings.

The Council approved stocking 10,000 grass carp annually from 2017 through 2022 in the Santee Cooper lakes. These stockings did not replace annual mortality and effectively lowered the grass carp population while maintaining a diverse age structure. Having multiple ages classes in the system takes advantage of the higher feeding rate of the younger fish, which can also access shallow water to consume newly sprouted *Hydrilla*. The goal was to have multiple age classes in the system with an overall coverage of 1 triploid carp for every 5-6 surface acres of water, if those numbers were sufficient to adequately control the *Hydrilla*. In 2023, a true maintenance stocking of 11,025 was done to maintain the population at 1 carp per 4.64 surface acres of water (160,000 acres) in hopes that it would keep the *Hydrilla* under control.

The 16,580 triploid grass carp scheduled to be stocked into the Santee Cooper lakes this year will bring the total population back to 40,000 fish, which is a ratio of 1 carp for every 4 surface acres of water. This was recommended because of the 6,700% increase in *Hydrilla* acres detected by the satellite multispectral survey, 79 acres in 2022 to 5,232 acres in 2023. Santee Cooper staff wishes to increase the grass carp population to attempt to control *Hydrilla* without harming the native vegetation. This decision is more favorable than introducing hundreds of thousands of triploid carp

into the system periodically as a reaction to increasing numbers of hydrilla. We realize that making large, periodic stockings are a detriment to the system by reducing natives and reducing habitat for fish and wildlife.

EPA approved aquatic herbicides continue to be used to control localized growth in priority use areas. These types of treatments are very expensive, and the resources are not available to do on a broad scale.

2) Objections to grass carp stocking in Lake Murray.

After discussions between staff in DNR's Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) Division and Aquatic Nuisance Species Program (ANS), a resolution was made to stock 3,200 carp. This would increase the total carp population to 10,000, which is a ratio of 1 carp for every 5 acres of water. During this year, a survey of the vegetation will be done to determine the total acreage and what species are present. That information will be discussed with the WFF staff to guide future stocking of grass carp. A report will be made to the Council regarding the survey and the recommendations of the WFF and ANS staff.

3) Stop spraying / don't eliminate aquatic plants.

We do not wish to eliminate all aquatic plants in our lakes and waterways. Our goal is to control the invasive aquatic plants, while trying to promote the natives and allow them to grow unimpeded by the invasives. Those natives provide a more diverse habitat and food source for fish and wildlife than monocultures of invasive plants. When we can, we try to use biological control but there are only a few instances where that is possible. When herbicide is used, the application targets the species that we wish to control. All the herbicides used are EPA approved for use in aquatic environments and are safer than most of the ones used in terrestrial environments. Applications are made according to the labels, including restrictions around commercial and municipal water intakes. Both Santee Cooper and DHEC do water quality testing. There are a few aquatic herbicides that have the potential to cause fish kills if done improperly. When fish kills occur, DNR and DHEC investigate to determine the cause, the value of the fish and, when appropriate, fine those responsible.

4) Cooper River issues.

The ANS program does work on the Cooper River and gets some cost share from Berkeley County, but funding is limited.

5) Lake Wateree Lyngbya issues.

Lake Wateree is under the control of Duke Energy. Per their FERC license, they are responsible for vegetation control. DNR assists them as they request with consultations, treatments, and sterile grass carp stockings on all their lakes in SC. DNR will cost share with Duke on treatments and carp stockings if they request assistance with those actions.

Lyngbya is not on the prohibited plant list, which is one of the requirements under Duke's FERC license to initiate treatment. Treatments can be done to help control the algae, but treatments will only provide short-term relief and will have to be retreated on a very regular basis, possibly multiple times per year. Potential resolutions would require the cooperation of various user groups of the lake and would need to be led by them.

6) Lake Greenwood issues.

Lake Greenwood is under the control of the Greenwood County Lake Management Department. DNR assists them as they request with consultations, treatments, and sterile grass carp stockings.

DNR will cost share with Greenwood County on treatments and carp stockings if they request assistance with those actions.

Vallisneria is a native species that DNR encourages lake owners to allow to grow. However, we understand that it can become problematic. In the cases where it is growing in areas that create issues with navigation and access, we do recommend that it be treated, while allowing it to continue to grow in areas where it is not causing issues or adjacent to undeveloped areas on the lake. The untreated areas provide important fish and wildlife habitat.

7) Savannah River Lakes (Hartwell, Russell & Thurmond/Clark's Hill).

These lakes are under the control of the Army Corps of Engineers. We would be happy to work with them if they are interested in a partnership.

8) Add ACE Basin phragmites.

Many years ago, some phragmites treatments were done in the ACE Basin using grant funding. Our program has not requested any grant funding for phragmites in at least the last 8 years. Because most of the property lines extend all the way to the river channels and the laws regarding our program only allow the funds to be used on public waters, we cannot treat phragmites unless it is adjacent to the rivers or creeks accessible by boat. We would be willing to work with landowners in the ACE Basin and other areas of the state to control phragmites if funding can be secured.

9) Cutgrass at Santee National Wildlife Refuge.

We are aware of the issues that cutgrass can cause. Santee Cooper has done some work on cutgrass in Lake Marion above I-95 as part of a joint project to create open water for waterfowl. Vegetation control on the Santee NWR is limited by their small staff and the complexity of the federal herbicide approval process. Santee Cooper has assisted with work on the Refuge.

10) Water hyacinth on Combahee River.

The ANS Program is aware of the water hyacinth issue on the Combahee River and has been working to address it over the last two years.

11) Giant salvinia in upper Lake Marion.

The Santee Cooper staff is aware that giant salvinia is growing in many backwater and hard to reach areas in the upper part of Lake Marion and in other similar areas of the lakes. Santee Cooper staff, as well as contracted herbicide applicators, work to treat areas that are accessible by airboat. However, many of the giant salvinia infested areas are inaccessible. They are planning to make use of the giant salvinia weevils, a USDA approved biological control agent, to help control this species in those areas.

12) Concern of contractors doing surveys.

Vegetation surveys are generally done by ANS Program staff or by staff within the agencies or organizations in charge of the lakes. The satellite survey done for Santee Cooper is a paid contract. This contract procures satellite imagery and analyzes the multispectral data. Trained Santee Cooper staff perform ground-truth surveys by boat and drone to verify the species present corresponds with the satellite imagery analysis. There is no financial incentive for those involved to misrepresent the findings of their surveys.