

Minutes for the Aug 3, 2016 LGA Meeting (Approved)

The meeting began at 9:30 AM. The President, Bill Heflin, called the meeting to order and led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. He then called for a moment of silence. In attendance were Directors Al Potter, Don Carson, John Cataldo, Carol Warfel, Jeff Dowhan, Wally Sayko Bill Lindenmuth, Tony Moran and Jack Saunders, and VP Mozine Lowe, Nominating Chair Clarence Drumgoole, and Exec. Dir. Moira Underwood. The thirty-six persons in the audience introduced themselves.

Wally opened the program by thanking all the members who participated in the revegetation efforts for their contribution. He also noted the extremely helpful efforts of the staff from the NC Wildlife Resources and NC DNR and Virginia DGIF. He then introduced Steve Hoyle of NC State, Crop and Soil Science for the main presentation.

Steve reviewed the past out of control infestation of the invasive species hydrilla to the present “control” status of hydrilla presence amounting to no more than 300 acres. As has been observed before when one species of plant becomes less dominant and becomes controlled, something else fills the void. Lyngbya, actually a prehistoric bacteria, is growing in concern, if not in volume and is the current mystery escaping control. It is being treated for control in a manner similar to how an algae would be attacked.

There was at one time, pretty widespread concern that a bacterial disease associated with coots eating hydrilla and becoming lethargic and good feeding for eagles. Although, there were reports of eagles killed in the Southeast as a result of eating infected coots, none was identified on the waters of Roanoke Rapids, Gaston or Kerr. If anyone sees evidence of affected eagles, please contact local wildlife officers.

Steve discussed the evolving success in combating hydrilla and gave credit to recent success to the patient application of consistent planning for increasing the understanding of the hydrilla growth and adaptive treatment for successfully controlling hydrilla. The Technical Advisory Group recognized over time the value of year to year application of systemic treatments in areas where the chemical treatments had best opportunity in concert with introduction of sterile grass carp. These actions with the volunteer surveys, the sonar surveys and tuber surveys have led to adjustments in treatments and their location. The population of grass carp was also carefully adjusted to a level where the fish became effective without eliminating all vegetation.

The treatment of Lyngbya has proven far harder than lyngbya due to its physical characteristics. With its extremely long development, it has adapted to attacks of nature by protecting itself with layered walls in walls to preserve itself. Solutions in one area do not necessarily work in another body of water with different chemical makeup, flow or clarity. Records show that this bacteria has been in Lake Gaston for at least the last two decades. Among the suggestions Steve presented were that boaters should take care to not move the bacteria from one location to another. The a mat is caught in the prop of the anchor, put the residue in a bag and put it in the garbage or burn it. There are five series of chemicals that have yet to be tried; those tried to date are not effective.

In summary, Steve reiterated that there has been a fairly effective activity to control hydrilla, but cautioned that with increased population there may be increased runoff. We as a group need to address nutrient management, and watershed management (permeability percentage per residential or business acre) and determine how best to bring the issue to the forefront. The problem locally is like the Chesapeake Bay in the 1970's and 80's. The watershed's health is in question with far less money or political power to influence public awareness and action. This makes our challenge more daunting.

In answers to questions it was pointed out that the revegetation activity was very important to insuring that non-invasive species did not take over the lake. There was discussion about the life span of grass carp and Steve explained that there were table developed to predict the population per hydrilla acre. He was asked if NC State was working the nutrient issue or if there was a list of nutrients to be concerned about. He cited the lack of adequate buffering at construction sites as an issue, but indicated there was little correlation between buffering and lymbya presence citing Pretty Creek as an example.

Bill thanked Steve for his presentation, and moved on to the associated report by Al Potter regarding Secchi Disc clarity measurements. There was a fairly consistent track between storm runoff, heavy boating traffic and water clarity.

Al also reported on the ecoli sampling to date indicating that earlier in the season ecoli reading had been higher (but below reporting levels for health concerns).

Bruce Johnson then reviewed plans for the upcoming Volunteer Vegetation Survey set to start in Sep 1 lasting to Oct 31. He pointed out that the comfort level of being on the water finishing survey areas in late October was not comfortable. The importance of the survey is significant as the reports go to NC State and are reviewed and plotted for study by the Technical Advisory Group to adjust the annual vegetation treatment plan. Training will be at Bruce's house (184 Squirrel Trail, Henrico) on Aug 25 and 27 starting at 9 AM.

Tony Moran made a report on membership indicating we now have over 2,100 members and everyone is invited to help build our membership by inviting neighbors and friends to join.

Jack Saunders presented a new idea suggested by Al to have members take action to honor first responders with small actions (soft drinks, cookies, etc) to show support with those activities.

Jeff Dowhan addressed the Education Cmte actions to consider expanding events to Warren County and asking for interested persons to volunteer for Career Overview briefings to student groups.

Clarence led the discussion of nomination and election of officers for July 2016 to June 2017. Bill, Mazine and Jack were reelected and the Secretary position is still vacant with no volunteers.

There was a motion to adjourn which carried and the meeting ended at 11 AM.

Reported by Jack D. Saunders