

## Aquatic weeds in Lake Gaston - Part III

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Editor

In parts I and II, we discussed what weeds were in our lake, and where they came from, as well as a partial history of their spread and efforts to treat them. More of the history follows.

1991 – The Lake Gaston Task Force was created by N.C. Division of Water Resources (DWR) and NCSU, to provide technical expertise and guidance to the Weed Council in weed control methods.

The first meeting of the Task Force took place in South Hill, Va. on April 17, 1991.

Those present were Dr. Elton Brown, President of the Weed Council, and experts from USCOE, VEPCO, N.C. & Va. Inland Fisheries Depts., N.C. Division of Environmental Health and NCSU.

These experts had already been in touch with their counterparts in other States, (who had been fighting hydrilla for several years), to ascertain what was considered effective and environmentally acceptable to both State and Federal authorities.

1992 – The Task Force was expanded to include Jack Berry (then President of the LGA). Jack got together with Chet Rogowicz and a group of volunteers to form the LGA Weed Monitors to be available to help the Weed Council with part-time assistance. Jack and Chet divided the lake into 20 areas (routes) and proceeded (with assistance of wives in the LG Ladies Club) to enroll a monitor for each route, plus a back-up. Of the 560 acres found in the fall survey in 1991, 200 were treated with contact herbicides.

1993 – Two licensed applicators, one from South Carolina, and another from Florida treated 425 acres. The fall survey showed 1,425 infested acres still remained. The Task Force had been recommending the addition of Triploid (sterile) Grass Carp to assist in trying to get control of the hydrilla. The State of N.C. was by now budgeting \$100,000 toward Lake Gaston Weed Control.

1994 – The Weed Control Council, Va. Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries and NC Division of Water Resources entered a three-way agreement to share hydrilla costs on Lake Gaston. Some one-time federal funds were obtained through the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and funneled through DWR. 809 acres were treated. According to the fall surveys by Va./N.C. Power, the infestation had grown to 2,535 acres. The five counties increased their funding to \$28,000 each per annum.

1995 - 647 acres were treated with herbicides, and 20,000 triploid grass carp were purchased and stocked in the lake. The fall survey showed 3,100 infested acres. Two public information “question & answer” meetings were held--one in Littleton N.C. in May, and the second in South Hill, Va. in Aug.

1996 – The Weed Council signed a five year contract with Aquatic Nuisance Plant Control (ANPC), a multi-state licensed applicator, with local facilities. The City of Virginia Beach, Va. contributed \$100,000 toward the purchase of herbicides. 690 acres were treated.

The fall survey showed a total of 1,315 infested acres. The reduction from the previous year is credited to a combination of treatment, grass carp and, to a large extent, the results of severe weather and poor growth conditions.

1997 – Again, an inclement growing season, poor weather, etc. 860 acres treated with herbicides and the grass carp were increasingly active. There were 1,000 acres of infestation showing as a result of the fall survey.

1998 –The opposite growing conditions – drought ! - sixty-plus days above 88 degrees and clear water – ideal growing conditions! 775 acres were treated, but the fall survey showed a major increase to 3,260 acres. Hydrilla was found topped out in 18 ft. depth, and Dr. Kay of UNC estimated that there are at least 5,000 acres of shoreline in the Lake with that depth!

1999 – Based on the increased acreage in 1998 over 1997, the Weed Council was able to obtain a permit from Va. Inland Fisheries (via VEPCO), to purchase 5,000 additional triploid grass carp. These were input to the lake in July. The fall survey showed 3,000 acres of hydrilla after another strong growth summer. Mike Stewart & Kurt Getsinger from the ACOE Waterways Experimental Branch in Vicksburg Miss., made several visits to Lake Gaston to assist with surveys, and made recommendations to the Council, and to ANPC.

2000 – Although the fall surveys showed a small reduction in total acreage to 2,850, and most areas showed good control, hydrilla continued to infest new coves and main lake shorelines. Many complaints were received (mainly from recently infested north shore residents) at a public forum held by the Weed Council at Bracey, Va. on Dec. 27, 2000. Another forum was scheduled in La Cross, Va. in May 2001.

2001 –The fall surveys showed a further reduction of total hydrilla acreage to 2,450. There were still more complaints at the May forum. The LGA President together with the members of the Weed Committee, met later with Dr. Elton Brown to see what they could do to be of more assistance. As a result of an LGA newsletter survey, members were asked to submit fund raising ideas, which were passed to the Weed Council, and discussed at their meeting on Dec. 6, where “weed fees” were debated.

2002 – Drought conditions (started in 1998) continued. Heat and sunshine plus low water levels equaled rampant Hydrilla growth! Budgeting problems forced two of the N.C. counties to reduce their contributions to Council Funding. The available funds were concentrated using systemic herbicide Fluridone, and homeowners were requested to foot the bill for treatments to their own areas. A total of 1,000 acres were treated with Fluridone, plus an excess of 700 acres were treated with contact herbicides privately. The fall surveys, despite these treatments, showed an estimated 4,000 acres of Hydrilla, plus increasing acreage of Elodea and Millfoil. The increased Hydrilla should result in additional triploid Grass Carp being permitted!

Next week in Part IV, we will bring the history up to the moment, as well as review basic treatment methods. Preliminary plans for the 2004 season will also be reviewed, if available.