



Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority Puts Fish to Work

Over 600 Triploid Grass Carp were released into the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir on April 23, 2011. RWSA purchased the sterile herbivorous fish to combat the hydrilla plant that has covered approximately 90 acres, or almost 30% of the reservoir, based on a field survey conducted in Fall 2010. The potential problem associated with the growth of hydrilla in the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir was one of many issues specifically addressed by the South Fork Rivanna Stewardship Task Force in their report to community leaders in January 2009. The Task Force was established in 2008 by joint action of the Chairmen of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors, the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, the Albemarle County Service Authority and the Mayor of the City Council of Charlottesville. In their final report the Task Force recognized that "the recent onslaught of hydrilla has created problems for rowers, paddlers and fishermen and has the potential to affect fish and water quality" and called for monitoring and management of the invasive plant.



Hydrilla is increasingly found in freshwater systems from the Potomac River to Lake Gaston, and is listed as an invasive in Virginia. Hydrilla is adapted to low light levels for photosynthesis, which allows it to outcompete native vegetation. Vegetative growth of hydrilla usually begins in early spring and once it

colonizes at deeper levels, it then takes up the entire water column. Upon reaching the water surface the plant branches out and forms a dense mat of vegetation at the surface which then blocks out sunlight for other submersed plants.

Hydrilla can provide good habitat for fish and it is often cited as a benefit by fishermen. Small populations of hydrilla can provide food and habitat for forage fishes and the mats of hydrilla provide cover for the large predators such as bass and other fish. Studies show, however, that hydrilla may start becoming less beneficial when it encompasses more than 25% of the area.



Based on the extent and density of the hydrilla growing in the Reservoir, RWSA obtained a permit from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to stock the Reservoir with 635 grass carp

The carp can easily grow to 30 pounds or more, and have a life expectancy of 5 to 9 years. RWSA will monitor both the carp population and the locations and density of hydrilla in the next few years to assess the effectiveness of the fish, and additional carp may be added if needed.

For additional information read the [full report](#) prepared by RWSA staff or contact Tamara Ambler at tambler@rivanna.org

