

## Officials developing plan to address return of invasive hydrilla

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PHOTO BY: Jack Ganley

An invasive aquatic weed has returned to Smith Mountain Lake. Hydrilla, considered one of the world's most invasive aquatic plants, has been reported in some areas of the lake.

"We had some people bring it to our attention," said [Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission \(TLAC\)](#) Executive Director Kristina Sage. "To my knowledge, most of the areas affected are in the Penhook area."

Sage said the patches of hydrilla were encountered by the [Scruggs Volunteer Fire Department Dive Team](#), which supports the [Smith Mountain Lake Association \(SMLA\)](#). SMLA will conduct water surveys in October.

"The surveys will confirm the length, width and depth of the infestation," added Sage.

Hydrilla can crowd out native species and impede irrigation and cause issues for boaters and swimmers. During an outbreak in 2013, Sage said sterile grass carp were released to address the problem. "It's the most preferred course of action because it's economical and has the least negative impact on water quality," Sage noted.

Next steps include obtaining the final water survey results and determining how much aquatic acreage is affected. "TLAC's Environmental Committee is going to meet with the [Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources](#)," Sage added. "We will consult about what's the best treatment, and if that is carp, we will take their advice on how many carp are needed per acre and where they are needed to be released in the lake."

Hydrilla will die back during the winter months but can start growing back in spring. The invasive aquatic weed is the preferred diet of sterile grass carp, so introducing the carp in the spring will help take care of it. "It's not advised to introduce carp to the lake in the winter months because they may not acclimate, resulting in a loss of the carp," said Sage.

Anyone with concerns about aquatic vegetation should call TLAC at 540.721.4400.