

EROSION CONTROL



COURTESY OF N.C. WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The N.C. Wildlife Federation has planted water willows along island shorelines to create vegetation, enhance wildlife habitat and help prevent erosion.

Volunteers plant water willows

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Volunteers with the N.C. Wildlife Federation have planted water willows along the shoreline of some of Lake Norman's islands, in the hopes that the plant will provide wildlife habitat and prevent shoreline erosion.

Lake Norman, a man-made lake, has very little natural vegetation to provide habitat for fish, said Tim Gestwicki, director of the regional office of the N.C. Wildlife Federation.

"It's not a very fertile lake," he said. "Around the islands, which is where this initial phase of planting has occurred, there's substantial erosion problems."

The plants should stabilize the shore and prevent further erosion, he said. No riprap or sea walls are necessary.

Water willows are native to the Catawba River basin, which means they're safe to plant, Gestwicki said.

The lake has had problems with hydrilla, a non-native plant. Exotic plants can grow out of control because nothing eats them. "It is planned on purpose with the guidance of scientists," Gestwicki said of the water willow plantings. "It was not a willy-nilly let's go do this

Island Habitat Program

The water willow planting is part of the N.C. Wildlife Federation's Island Habitat Program with Duke Energy. The federation's goal is to enhance wildlife habitat through hands-on volunteer projects. Details: Tim Gestwicki at 704-332-5696.

on our own."

On June 1, volunteers, along with Duke Energy senior biologist Hugh Barwick, harvested the willows from Lake Wateree, a Catawba River lake in South Carolina. They collected them in 27 bundles, then took them to McGuire Nuclear Station, where other volunteers picked them up.

Volunteers took the bundles to the islands, where they were placed parallel to shore in about a foot of water and secured with metal stakes and rocks, in the hopes they would take root. So far, it looks like the willows are growing and spreading, Gestwicki said, and the group may do more plantings. Water willows grow in up to 3 feet of water.