

Presidential Address

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Welcome to the ninth annual meeting of the Hyacinth Control Society. I am glad that you are able to be here. If this is the first meeting that you have attended, let me extend to you a very special greeting. Our society has a reputation for being both informal and friendly. By Wednesday afternoon you probably will have met most of these people and we hope you will have made many new friends.

Frequently a presidential address consists largely of what we have accomplished during the past year. I would like to mention one of the things that was almost accomplished; the passage of an Aquatic Weed Control Bill by the Florida Legislature. This bill was passed by the senate but during the last week had calendar troubles in the house. The proposed bill would have set up a system whereby state funds would have been available on a matching basis to local tax supported agencies for aquatic weed control. This bill has been prefiled in the house to be considered next session. A companion bill must be reintroduced into the senate. We, as an organization and as private citizens have the obligation to discuss the aquatic weed problem with our legislators. If each does his part, an aquatic weed control act will be forthcoming during the next session.

Forty years ago, Florida had very few large concentrations of people. Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, Orlando and Jacksonville were all cities without suburbs. We had waste waters to dispose of but the volume involved could be satisfactorily diluted by the rivers and streams of each area.

Today we have six million people in this state. In addition to an increase in population, our way of life has increased the amount of waste water produced by each person. All of our various waste waters such as sewage and industrial effluents, storm drainage, and runoff from fertilized areas have one common factor, they contain the plant food elements nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. When these waste waters are dumped into lakes or streams the plant nutrients they contain add to the fertility of our native waters. We call this process eutrophication.

We have many native aquatic plants. Through the process of evolution these plants live together. Various biological factors have developed that tend to keep these populations balanced under normal conditions. However, we have changed "normal" by our waste disposal methods which are constantly increasing the fertility of our lakes and streams. Aquatic plants have responded to this environmental change by rapid growth. In many cases this increased growth has interfered with man and changed a plant species from the category of aquatic plant to aquatic weed.

To further compound the problem, several of our major pest plants have been introduced from other parts of the world. Unfortunately, their biological checks and balances were not brought with them. These introduced plants when placed in fertile waters grow at fantastic rates and constitute our major aquatic weed problems. Water

hyacinths (*Eichhornia crassipes*), hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), and eurasian milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) are three examples.

Thus far I have been discussing a very abbreviated history of why our aquatic weed problems have developed. It is now time for each of us in aquatic weed control to ask ourselves "Where are we going?" and to foresee some of the developments that will happen in our field.

Predictions are very tricky. There is only one that we can make with the complete assurance that it will occur. This is *change*. Things will not be the same next year or even next month. We can plan on change. Operations do not remain static. Another prediction we can make is that those of us who are here twenty years from now will be able to look back and talk about how simple our problems were in the 1960's. Our operations will be much more technical and complex in the 1970's and 1980's.

We can look forward to a much greater degree of supervision by regulatory agencies. Our operations and methods will be closely supervised. Commercial applicators will be licensed.

Most of us tend to look at our weed control problems solely from the viewpoint of whatever function we are associated with. Frequently in solving our problems we create problems for other agencies. If you are the Director of a control program you can plan on spending a much larger percentage of your time in liason with other agencies. In Florida, the Florida Air and Water Pollution Control Commission is a group that you will want to know.

For many years conservation has taken a back seat. Our attitude as a nation has given the dollar precedence. In most cases wildlife and natural resources have suffered. We are entering a period where emphasis is being shifted to conservation. This is evident in the increased responsibility being placed in the various States Board of Conservation and the Fish and Game Commissions. This change toward conservation will see an increase in interest for biological controls. Stringent regulations will be developed for all pesticides used in water. Research will lean more toward chemicals and methods that are highly selective. The use of broad spectrum herbicides will be discouraged. Aquatic Weed Control will become more important in the economy. Submerged aquatics will be a major factor in establishing waterfront real estate values. Every control program will have to cope with hydrilla and most areas of Florida will have infestation of eurasian milfoil.

Most agencies will have major labor problems. We will have to follow the trends set by industry, and use more, better and possibly bigger equipment so that one good man can do the work of several laborers. The use of aerial application for aquatic weed control will increase. The use of helicopter in aquatic weed control operations will become common-place.

These predictions are, of course, no more than an educated guess. Most of them will probably occur. Chemicals, methods and equipment will change. Are our aquatic weed programs flexible enough to adapt to these changes?