

Summary Comments

by

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Currently, there are approximately 30 States that permit the use of the grass carp. A lot has changed since the 1970s when only a few States were actively involved in grass carp stocking. The "bottom line" concern in those days was reproduction. Fisheries people wanted a nonreproducing fish—everyone wanted guarantees—both ways.

They finally got their wish when the triploid was developed, and guess what? The "bottom line" changed! It shifted from wanting a guarantee of nonreproduction to a guarantee that every fish in the population is a triploid. Well, they've almost gotten that wish! Finally, the concern has shifted to a broader ecological element—that of habitat destruction. While everyone might argue that this was really the concern behind their respective demands, I would argue that it was certainly not at the forefront, where it should have been all along. Are we finally arriving? Have we found the enemy?

Someone used the phrase, "we cannot guarantee." Someone else made reference to "a silver bullet." The only silver bullet I know of is marketed by the Joseph Coors Brewing Company—and I'm not sure exactly what it guarantees! Sometimes, without realizing it, people state that they want a guarantee when they have reached the point of being inadequately informed to pursue the argument at hand.

Based on several of the presentations, it is obvious that we have now begun to study removal techniques. For emergencies and extenuating circumstances, this is good. The basic question, however, is why? Why do we want to remove them? Without a rationale that stands on its own merit, we incur the risk

of admitting to overstocking. We should continue to explore the development of methods for removing the fish. It should not be done to develop a "secondary management" step or a "safety net" to make up for a lack of adequate consideration during the prestock planning.

We should constantly remind ourselves, and those that we advise, that we are using the fish to manage the plants—we are not managing the fish any more than we manage a herbicide after it's placed in the water. Using the grass carp for plant management requires that you anticipate the result you want to achieve, and based on a knowledge of the fish and the system interactions, determine what "amount" of fish will provide that result. You then apply the correct "amount," at the optimum times and places, monitor the initial system response, and if necessary, at some appropriate later time, supplement the application. This supplement is additive—not a reduction. If this process sounds familiar, it's because it's what happens regardless of the control method. With the exception of a mechanical harvester, you do not remove a control agent from an aquatic system!

We should not stock grass carp because we can remove them—and we should not avoid stocking them because we cannot remove them. Both of these cases are the wrong reasons for stocking or not stocking.

In my opinion, this is a diversion to avoid having to rationally deal with the complexities of managing a natural system.

From an overall perspective, as environmentally sensitive aquatic plant managers operating in our respective roles as stewards, we should not be a proponent of any one control method. We should only be a proponent of

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the proper use of the appropriate method, given a clear, and as complete as possible, assessment of the conditions in which we must operate.

In that context, I would submit that nearly everything you have heard here during these 2 days could have been said about the use of any other type of control.

I would like to share a perspective that we should all embrace now and more importantly, for the future. The reason we are in business should be obvious! We are trying to restore man's valued uses of the water bodies by controlling a plant population that has interfered with those uses. It is not the population of the plant that is the problem—it's simply that it is occurring at some level, in some place, that we want to use for our particular purposes. There are, however, trade-offs that must be made, and therein lies the perspective.

If we are to manage and not just control; if we are to be judged to do our business in an environmentally compatible manner, then we must recognize that we are, in fact, managing habitat.

The use of the grass carp is not a question of considering available technology. Nor is it a consideration of viability. It is simply a consideration of acceptability.

When the challenge is presented, if we spend our time trying to make a case based on lack of technology or viability, we will not be making an investment to find a solution to the problem at hand. Coming to this recognition won't suddenly provide us with additional control methods, but it won't take any from us either.

It can, however, commensurately cause us to rethink and restructure our objectives. This will begin to influence the way in which we apply the knowledge at our disposal and will subsequently change the way in which we select and apply the methods we use. That will have to take place in order for us to manage and not simply control.