

Session C: General Session

Presidential Address: Bruce Kidd, Dow Agro Sciences

### **Presidential Address: Toward a Renewed Vision and Mission**

*Bruce Kidd, Dow AgroSciences*

It's a pleasure to welcome you all to the 55<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the California Weed Science Society in Santa Barbara, which is certainly one of the best meeting locations California has to offer. I hope all of you had a good holiday season and are ready to get back to work.

First thing, on behalf of the members I want to recognize and thank all the people who worked together to design and present the 2003 conference. It would not be possible to name everyone who pitched in, but in particular I want to recognize Program Chair Pam Geisel, who overcame a serious bicycling accident last Fall and still got the speakers and agenda together. I also want to recognize Local Arrangements chair Elaine Hale, who sweated out the details with the hotel so that we would have a place to meet, with technical support plus food and refreshments. And I certainly need to recognize our new Business Manager Judy Letterman, who handled the society's business, the newsletters, the registration process, and much more.

The Weed Conference is typically the first big meeting of the new year, and represents a gathering of the weed clan from all parts of the state and all parts of the discipline. The CWSS is proud to be a "big tent" organization that includes anyone and everyone concerned with weed and vegetation management. The CWSS is the oldest organization of its kind in the country, predating even the Weed Science Society of America. In its 55 years of existence, the CWSS has provided a unique forum where regulatory, business, farming, recreational, governmental and environmental interests can meet to exchange information, confront issues in weed management, do business, and enjoy the educational benefits of a strong professional society.

The work of the CWSS goes far beyond the annual conference. For instance, we have just published the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Principles of Weed Control*, a textbook authored by members of the society. *Principles of Weed Control* was created as a college level textbook and as a study guide for the California Pest Control Advisors' exam. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition has been completely updated with new chapters added, and is available for purchase through Thompson Publications. Every year, the CWSS also publishes a conference proceedings from the papers given at our meeting. The Proceedings are available in print form, on CD-ROM, or online through our website at [www.cwss.org](http://www.cwss.org). Our First Wizard of Technology, Jerry Schmierer, is currently leading a project to scan in the entire 55 years of CWSS Proceedings so they will be available to anyone via the website. As part of your registration, the CWSS is proud to have sponsored the gorgeous calendar for 2003, "*Weeds of California*" which all of you received in your registration packets. And finally, the CWSS is proud to be a sponsor of two extraordinary weed identification books currently being produced by another member, Dr Joe Ditomaso of UC-Davis. The first of these books, *Aquatic and Riparian Weeds of the West*, is due for publication in 2003 and can be ordered at a pre-publication discount at this time. The second book, *The Weeds of California*, is intended to replace the venerable *Growers Weed ID* manual that many of us have depended on for years. Joe's book is a mammoth undertaking that will define the art of weed identification for generations to come and bring worldwide attention to our society. As members of the California

Weed Science Society, every one of us shares in these accomplishments, and I congratulate all of you.

Looking to the future, the CWSS faces all of the challenges that we face personally as individuals, as workers, and as citizens. The pace of technological change is unrelenting. Many of us feel pressured to do more in less time than ever before. Every day, we hear of new cutbacks or layoffs, in business and in government alike. As we enter 2003, the state of California is up against a budget shortfall estimated as high as \$35 billion dollars, which will force staff reductions and cripple key programs for management of invasive and noxious weeds. The agricultural chemical industry is beset with a flood of issues created or driven by consolidation within the industry, changing technologies, loss of patent protection on key chemistries, lack of new products in development, and constant environmental scrutiny driven by negative public perceptions. Growers are being challenged by commodity prices that are down on many crops, and public weed management applicators are having to deal with increased regulation, heavier work loads, reduced budgets, and fewer people to do the work. Of course, no one knows whether the stock market will go up or down or whether our nation may soon be at war again. But it's not all bad; at least we're here in Santa Barbara for a few days, eating lunch in the sun, with the beach right across the street, and it's never gonna snow here!

As President of the CWSS, I'm here to tell you today that the CWSS does not intend to be buried by these problems, but instead plans to surf the wave of change and emerge as a stronger organization. Recognizing the need for evolution in our own organization, and to assure that our society remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the members, this year the Steering Committee embarked on a special project. On your tables at lunch tomorrow, you will see a proposal for a new Vision and Mission statement for the CWSS, and suggestions for structural changes that will produce a more robust support network for expanded activities by the CWSS. This is not a task that can be accomplished in a single meeting, nor can the improvements be implemented within a single year. At the Business Lunch on Tuesday, Steering Committee chair Carl Bell will briefly review the process taken by his committee this year, and summarize the basic objectives that were agreed on. We will then put the proposals to a vote by the members, and if approved, begin to implement the improvements in 2003. I won't try to get into the proposals at this time, but I will share with you that the future of the CWSS is up to each and every one of us here today. As a volunteer society, we need volunteers, people who care about weed science, and who value being part of an organization like the CWSS. If you would like to work on a committee, or be part of the program, please check with me or any of the Board members sometime during the conference. We need your help, and the discipline of weed science needs your help. Retirements, cutbacks, and job changes have severely impacted the old guard. Things have changed and the future will be only what we make it.

Is it worth the effort? More than ever. As an example, I'd like to share a little bit of personal history with you about my own first exposure to the CWSS. I attended my first conference in January 1985. During my Master's studies at the University of Arizona, I'd read numerous research papers including a number from that great generation of weed workers from the University of California extension service and University system. I'll never forget what a thrill it was to attend my first weed conference and meet people like Harry Agamalian, Clyde Elmore, Harold Kempen, Bill Fischer and others. Although I was majoring in weed science, I'd never before been to a big conference with so many like-minded weed people. I was amazed at the

quality of the program, and the spirit of the people. Right then and there I developed a love for the California Weed Science Society and what it represents. One of our most important functions is to hold onto the good things and improve the rest for future generations. I hope we all share a sense of responsibility for ensuring that future generations of weed workers have the opportunity to experience that same sense of community and discovery. I never dreamed I might someday be President of the CWSS, but it happened anyway and I just want to tell you all what fun it's been and how much I appreciate the opportunity to have participated in the work of this group. With all that said, let me say again it's a pleasure to welcome you all to the 55<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the California Weed Science Society, and I hope you have fun, and get all that you wanted and more over the next three days. And again, let me invite you to join in as an active participant in this diverse and dynamic society and make your contributions to a great cause that benefits us all.