

# General Session

## Presidential Address

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Ladies and gentlemen of the Southeastern Association, I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as President and I am grateful to have a few minutes this morning to share a few perspectives with you.

I am also delighted to have the chance to publicly thank Bob Miles and his fine staff for hosting this 45th Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Many of you were in attendance at the most recent International Association meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas. At that meeting, we thanked our outgoing President, Mr. Steve Lewis of Oklahoma, for his excellent leadership during his tenure as President of the International. We also welcomed and pledged our full support to our incoming President, Mr. Peter Duncan of Pennsylvania. Peter will need our full support and cooperation, as will the staff of the International in Washington, D.C. They are a hard working and extremely capable staff, but they simply cannot handle the many things that are happening in our profession these days without your assistance.

I have been a career employee with the Missouri Department of Conservation since 1958—the year I graduated from the University of Missouri. I came up through the ranks of the Department of Conservation as a professional forester, and have only been serving as Director for approximately 4 years. I have had the opportunity during my professional career to be involved in some wonderful professional organizations and meet some highly qualified professional people, but I am not sure that any of my previous associations are equal to those I have made during my tenure as Director of a Fish, Forestry, and Wildlife agency.

The Southeastern Association and our parent organization—the International—have had some wonderful successes in accomplishing the goals and objectives of our organization, but we still face some formidable challenges in the 1990s. In the next few minutes I would like to highlight some emerging and ongoing issues that I feel the International must strongly focus on in the coming year.

One emerging issue that I believe we must watch very closely is that of biodiversity. At the meeting of the International in Hot Springs, we quickly came to the conclusion that the International must quickly decide on a reasonable definition

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of biodiversity. Already, through the legislative process, biodiversity is being addressed at both the state and national level. I am fearful that natural resource management efforts will be subjected to additional review and mandated processes that are expensive, burdensome, time consuming, and perhaps—depending on what mandates emerge—impossible to accommodate.

Another important issue is funding for nongame and neotropical birds. Under the very able leadership of Herb Doig from New York and other members of his Committee, we are close to implementing strategies that hopefully—if successful—will provide funding for this very important element of our wildlife resource. I would urge each and every one of you to cooperate with and support Herb and his committee's efforts.

It appears that wetland issues and the need for some flexibility in negotiating 404 permits could—within the next year or so—escalate into even more polarized viewpoints and additional conflict from everyone that has a strong interest in these issues. Some wetland interests apparently feel that they have the opportunity to facilitate their positions on these matters. I hope that we can prevent wetland issues from escalating into a major confrontational issue. We need to continue with our work in developing a data-base for migratory birds. Several states, including my home state of Missouri, have agreed to start pilot projects in this area. This is a very important project, and could provide an extremely important data-base for the future management of migratory birds. I would urge other states to participate within this project as the opportunity arises.

We must continue to protect the Wallop-Breaux funding base. We must continue to work on our Proactive Strategy effort and our North American Waterfowl Management Plan. We must continue our focus on Alaska National Wildlife Refuge legislation, completion of the Environmental Impact Statement for Federal Aid, and work for reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act. Finally, we must keep our International Association and the Southeastern strong and viable which means—particularly in the case of the International—provide adequate funding for our entire operation so as to guarantee we will always be ready to address any emerging issue.

No doubt I probably have overlooked some issues that many of you may well feel are either more important or equally important than some I have just mentioned. Many times issues are emerged on either a regional or state basis. To quote Bob Miles in his address to the 43rd Annual Conference to the Southeastern Association, he said “the value of our Association is that we are able to select those issues of most importance, and deal with them in a rational, effective, and professional manner. By pooling our knowledge, experience, and political contacts our collective efforts are many times greater than those of any of us acting alone”. I don't believe that I could close my comments by any better statement.

I welcome you again to the 45th Annual Conference of the Southeastern, and I wish you the very best for a successful and prosperous meeting.