

Environmental Impacts and Ecological Utilization of Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) in the Niger Delta Fresh Ecosystem

Authors : Seiyaboh E. I.

Abstract : Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) was introduced into many parts of the world, including Africa, as an ornamental garden pond plant because of its beauty. However, it is considered a dangerous pest today because when not controlled, water hyacinth will cover rivers, lakes and ponds entirely; this dramatically impacts water flow, blocks sunlight from reaching native aquatic plants, and starves the water of oxygen, often killing fish and other aquatic organisms. In the Niger Delta region, water hyacinth is considered a nuisance because of its very obvious devastating environmental impacts in the region. However, water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) constitutes a very important part of an aquatic ecosystem. It possesses specialized growth habits, physiological characteristics and reproductive strategies that allow for rapid growth and spread in freshwater environments and this explains its very rapid spread in the Niger Delta freshwater ecosystem. This paper therefore focuses on the environmental consequences of the proliferation of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) in the Niger Delta freshwater ecosystem, extent of impact, and options available for its ecological utilization which will help mitigate proliferation, restore effective freshwater ecosystem utilization and balance. It concludes by recommending sustainable practices outlining the beneficial uses of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) rather than control.

Keywords : environmental impacts, ecological utilization, Niger Delta, water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*

Conference Title : ICESE 2015 : International Conference on Environmental Sciences and Engineering

Conference Location : Los Angeles, United States

Conference Dates : September 28-29, 2015