

My Most Vivid Memory Concerning Water



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During the summer after my eighth-grade year, I participated in the Women in Water Camp held at the Minot State University Bottineau Campus. While I had always had interest in the outdoors, science, and water systems, all previous experiences had been recreational. I have always enjoyed exploring water, its inhabitants, and its role in the ecosystem, but this camp brought to light a more intentional purpose to studying water that could continue throughout my life and possibly career.

At the Women in Water Camp we worked to find the water quality of the stream behind the campus using methods such as pH testing, turbidity testing, and, my personal favorite, something I like to call “panning for organisms.” When panning for organisms the other campers and I put on our water shoes and waded into the water to collect organisms using our hands, nets, and plates made of thin netting that we could use to sift through the sandy bottom of the stream. The organisms living in the stream hinted towards the quality of the water. For example, if we were to find only worms, then the quality was probably low. One of my favorite activities from camp was sitting along the shore, toes still cold from their time in the water, identifying all of the organisms we found and discussing what their presence in the water could mean. These investigations helped me better understand the balance of the water and its inhabitants.

We also visited a local, state-funded fish hatchery and got to learn about the critical role they play in maintaining fish populations in North Dakota and surrounding states. We even got to participate in a bit of fish seining, to collect samples of the young fish from the hatchery, these fry were then examined to make sure that each group of fry was healthy, and growing at an expected rate. Afterwards we watched the fertilization of the Pallid Sturgeon, a group of sturgeon which is said to have only one hundred left in the wild. We watched how the people at Garrison Fish Hatchery helped the female Pallid Sturgeon spawn, which only occurs once every two years, and the ways they made sure that each egg was fertilized, then we witnessed the millions of eggs from the females single spawn during their latest stages of incubation, within the Hatchery’s massive fish egg tumblers. These Sturgeon will grow up in the hatchery and then be sent to repopulate Upper Missouri and hopefully, someday, be reintroduced to Lower Missouri and other waters they used to inhabit.

Lastly, we got to visit a local aquaponics farm in order to understand how the systems work and build our own aquaponic garden. The local aquaponics farm was located in the Turtle Mountains, and used the fish from the nearby pond to nurture their produce, which was all contained in a single greenhouse using shelves to stack the plants, wasting no space. On our last day at the summer camp we constructed our own aquaponics farm, with power tools in hand we went to work, first making a standing garden bed with room on its underside to hold water, then the tank for our fish, which we connected to a flood tank where the waste from the fish could flow. To finish, we attached all of the components together, added the soil, seeds and fish, and let it flow.

My experience at Women in Water Camp has not only shown that I can go into a career in water, but that a career in water is what I want to go into. It has helped me foster and grow my love for the environment and further my curiosity in subjects similar to what I did at camp. I have always loved the environment but with this experience I found that the environment was exactly what I wanted my future career to center around.