

Justen Barstad
Southcentral District Fisheries Technician
Fisheries Division
North Dakota Game and Fish Department



Hello everyone. I was born and raised in Devils Lake, North Dakota and with the shores of Devils Lake nearby I naturally developed an early childhood interest in the outdoors. My entire family consists of many avid anglers who helped grow my interest in the outdoors and especially towards fish. This led me to pursue a career in the fisheries field.

I graduated from Devils Lake High School in 1997. I attended MSU-Bottineau for two years and received my A.S. in Fish and Wildlife Management. I then transferred to SDSU in Brookings where I received a B.S. in Biological Science. In May 2001 I was a seasonal fisheries aide for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at Riverdale. After graduating college in 2002 I worked as a long-term seasonal fisheries aide out of Devils Lake until July 2005. At this time I was hired on as a full-time fisheries technician for the Southcentral District located in Bismarck.

As a fisheries technician I assist with fisheries management and research in about 50 district lakes and reservoirs in the southcentral portion of the state including the Missouri River from Stanton to the South Dakota state line. A typical field season starts in April and includes assisting with spawning operations, fish tagging and trap and transport of various species. During the summer months I am involved with population netting surveys, electrofishing the Missouri River and a few small reservoirs. I also monitor water quality at district lakes and occasionally haul fish from the hatcheries. In the fall I assist with reproduction netting surveys and maintenance and repair to equipment. The winter months consist with net repair and collection of age and growth information from otoliths, jaws and fin rays collected from various species of fish.

Recently we have been floating the Missouri River from the Garrison Dam to the South Dakota state line in search of paddlefish within the Garrison reach. We are learning about seasonal movements of these fish, age structure and estimated size of the population. Between the paddlefish and seeing the huge variety of fish species within the Missouri River System this is my favorite part of the job. If any of you want to talk about fish in the southcentral part of North Dakota or take a tour of the new Southcentral District office feel free to contact me.