



ARIA BRAATEN

My Most Vivid Memory Concerning Water

Water has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I have been exposed to many different areas of water through my mother, someone who works with me all the time. One of the most memorable activities that involved water was when I went with my mother to collect algae samples from Homme Dam near Park River where my mother worked at the SCD a few years ago. I remember it always being toward the end of June through August when my mother would ask me to come with her to collect samples. We would ride in the 2011 black Malibu car that we would drive to the SCD office. We would then fill up the SCD pick-up with different kinds of supplies. There was a long meter stick with an empty clear bottle, several clear bottles with caps, and a cooler with an ice pack to put the samples in. She and I would hop in pick up and drive to Homme Dam. From my years doing water sampling, Homme Dam is notorious for having horrible algae outbreaks that got noticed because of my mother. There's always that recognizable blue-green splotches floating on the water that are by the coast.

My mom and I would carefully take samples from the water and send them to labs to see if it had any blue-green algae. There were times when it was obvious that the algae would cover the water's surface, but then there were times when you didn't know if there was any algae in the water or not. No matter what, there were still samples taken.

Although sampling blue-green algae days are over for my mom and me, I am still connected to water in some way. A lot of it comes from studying water erosion. In 2023, I had an agriscience fair project on how water erosion affects different types of plant roots. Although the results were inconclusive, it still was an impactful experience for me. I was doing this project to learn more about water erosion. My mom has dealt with water erosion too while working at the SCD and now my dad deals with water erosion in the spring as the highway superintendent for Walsh County. There would be some days that we would drive by bridges and see how the river had gotten wider and how much erosion had happened, which can cause problems for bridges. My mom discusses a lot about drainages and how she tries to help people with their water-related issues throughout the county. Hearing all of these water-related issues, helped me with my agriscience fair project in terms of knowing what the purpose was. Through this project on water erosion, I was taking all of the knowledge that I have learned from both of my parents on water, including my earlier years in water, and I applied it to my project. I presented my project at my school and at the North Dakota State FFA Convention in June of 2023. At the state level, I received the high individual award in the Agriscience Fair Projects contest in Category Environmental/Natural Resources in Division IV. Not only did I receive that title, but I competed on the national level with my paper that I wrote about this project, which placed bronze on the national level.

While water erosion and sampling blue-green algae are different, they have helped me in my life as someone interested in helping agriculture. Water has been a part of my life ever since I helped my mom with blue-green algae samples at Homme Dam. I want to give the experience that I've had with water to my future students when I complete my college education and become an agriculture teacher. I want to teach the next generation the importance of water and soil, especially in the Red River Valley of North Dakota.