

President's Blog

February 2022

Ahoy NCD!

I hope everyone is staying healthy and happy. The pandemic has recently hit South Dakota and SDGFP in a big way. So much so, I went 5 weeks without seeing my supervisor (Fortunately? Unfortunately?). The last couple months have been a whirlwind of filling in for other departments as needed, battling and recovering from the plague, and in all the mix, trying to analyze, write, preparing for the NCD business meeting, and finishing up what we would consider "winter work".



The 2022 NCD business meeting will soon be here. It sounds like attendance will be similar to pre-pandemic times, and I am excited to see many of you in-person (Finally!). With that being said, I was recently struck down and sick for quite a while. While you are at the meeting, please be diligent with how you interact with your peers. Wash your hands, distance when appropriate, wear a mask when appropriate, and for pete's sake, don't interact with people if you are feeling unwell. I don't wish being sick on anyone and am now more aware of my behavior having been through the ringer!

So, to the blog – a day in the life of a fisheries biologist:

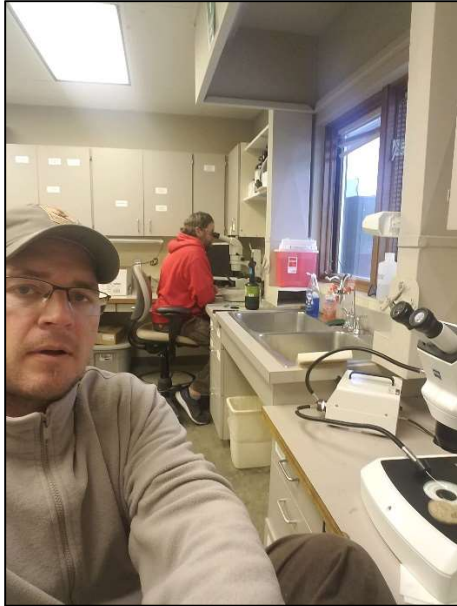
In central SD, December, January, and February are the long months. The days are short and you get to work before the sun rises and leave after it sets. It is quite dreary. The winter is a time to age fish, analyze data, write, and dream up new and exciting research questions. The latter is definitely the most enjoyable of the endeavors. This year the office had a couple thousand otoliths to age – it made for some very boring time behind a microscope. But, it does provide an excellent opportunity to catch up on some crucial hunting/fishing podcasts. This year, we aged otoliths from walleye and smallmouth bass. In past, we have aged sturgeon, shad, panfish, etc... It all depends on what projects we are currently working on. This year we took otoliths from our cisco population in Lake Oahe but have yet to crack the best way to mount and section those little buggers. I swear if you look at that otolith sideways, it shatters into a thousand pieces! It is definitely a work in progress. If anyone has any guidance, please let me know!

I hope to see many of you at the Midwest meeting and don't forget the business meeting will be held February 14th at 10³⁰ CT. The business meeting will be available virtually as well and I will be sending out those meeting links prior to the meeting. No excuse not to attend 😊! Until next month, enjoy the ice fishing and daydreams of warmer months!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Fincel'.

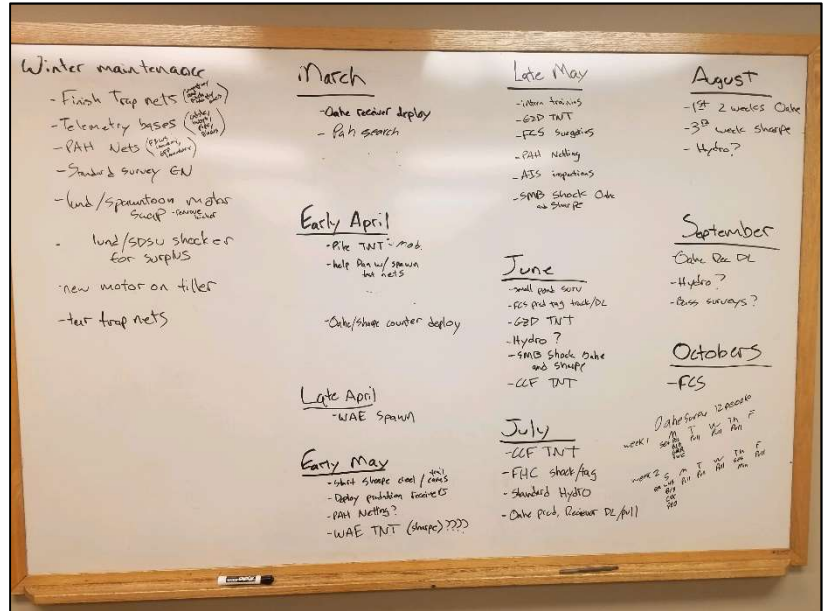
Mark Fincel

President NCD-AFS



Left: The microscopes are lined up in the lab. All the biologists take turns ageing otoliths and each otolith is seen by at least 3 readers. It is a tedious endeavor but one of great importance. Plus, it gives some mandatory 1 on 1 time with your fellow biologists to talk about work and life. So kick on the Gordon Lightfoot, set the ambient light to “mood”, and start counting tree rings.

Below: Scheduling out next summer’s activities. A well laid plan is all fine and good – until field season (and weather) happens! Then it’s a mad scramble!



LEFT: When the office door is open, I am often seen deep in thought determining the research paths that the MO River crew may wander in the coming years

RIGHT: When the door is closed, that deep thinking is best done with the eyelids shut!

