



HENRY'S FORK FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

Planning and cooperation key to healthy fishery

By Steve Trafton
HFF Executive Director

After finishing 2007 with a hectic fall and early winter, the pace has slowed enough at the Henry's Fork Foundation to pause and consider in the wake of a remarkably successful few months:

Drought management planning: When we met with the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District (FMID), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), Bureau of Reclamation, and others in September the water outlook was bleak. Island Park Reservoir was still being drawn down by heavy irrigation demand, and although there was still hope at that point that the reservoir level would not drop past 20,000 acre feet (out of a total capacity of 135,000) the drawdown did not, in fact, stop until about 16,000 acre feet. The entire upper Snake River watershed, from American Falls Reservoir to Palisades to Jackson Lake, was heavily depleted; indeed, by the time demand trailed off in early October, 2007 was on the books for having been the second highest level of demand for storage water on record.

In the simple arithmetic of traditional reservoir operations, the smaller the amount of water that remains in the system's storage facilities in the fall, the greater the pressure to store as much water as possible over the winter months. Until recently on the Henry's Fork, a water situation like this fall's would have led to Island Park Dam's gates being closed completely until the reservoir was nearly full. In 76 percent of the winters (November 1–March 1) between the dam's 1939 completion and 1972, flows were completely cut off for at least 30 days; in 12 percent of those winters the figure was at least 90 days. More

recently, flows were choked back to under 100 cubic feet per second (cfs) for the duration of the winter, a management philosophy that endured into the 21st century and undoubtedly played a major role in the dramatic decline noted by many anglers in the quality of fishing in Harriman State Park.

As Foundation members know, that situation changed in 2003 with the advent of the drought management planning process that the HFF played a leading role in bringing about. The planning team met again in October 2007 and, although the system-wide storage picture was still far below what the agricultural community would have liked, the decision was made to maintain low flows below the dam until the first week of

January (with the option to increase those flows temporarily in the event of a prolonged cold snap), and then to increase flows to at least 180 cfs for the mid to late-winter months that are so critical to juvenile wild trout survival.

On January 2 the FMID board met to vote to ratify the October decision. By that time, good fall rains and a solid snowpack had made the local outlook less dire, but system-wide storage levels were still only one third of capacity,

inflow to Island Park Reservoir had been less than hoped for in the month of December, and the most critical winter precipitation months were still ahead of us. Nonetheless, the FMID board voted to uphold the October drought management planning decision. I would suggest that none of the voters that evening, each of whom depends on irrigation for his livelihood and represents dozens of others who do, probably wanted to vote to release more water from Island Park Reservoir. Legally, they did not need to do so. But they did, and in

(Continued on page 3)



A young moose was feeling trapped by the deep snow in the parking area behind the HFF office in Ashton recently.

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parentheses)**

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A note from the chair

By the time that you are reading this, I will have spoken to the Canterbury Fly Fishing Club in Christchurch, New Zealand about the Henry's Fork drainage and a number of rivers in and around Yellowstone National Park. Do I talk about the two hundred casts and eight fly changes it took to hook that humongous rainbow on the Ranch last October? How about the ant fall that brought huge fish to the surface that we had not even known were there? What about the green drake spinners that resulted in ravenous risers well after we thought that the hatch was done for the season? Yeah, I can talk about that.

But, I'd rather discuss our challenges, our successes, our evolving watershed-wide approach and the continuing efforts to fulfill our mission to conserve, restore and protect the unique fishery, wildlife and aesthetic qualities of the Henry's Fork watershed. One thing that we have learned is that our fishery, indeed any fishery, does not exist in a vacuum. A robust fish population and resultant angling experience is the product of a great deal more than the spot at which the angler casts her fly.

The Henry's Fork and its drainage are affected by winter flows, summer flows, irrigation calls for water, pesticide usage, grazing patterns, housing developments, road construction, fences, lack of fences, angling pressure, and a host of other human factors. The Henry's Fork Foundation board and staff have embraced the notion that what happens off the river can have major implications on the river. For example, unfettered development has the potential to result in more roads being created. More roads equates to greater storm water runoff, often with pollution consequences to nearby streams. More roads and more homes in the wrong places result in loss of wildlife migration corridors. The irony is that the fiscal demands for infrastructure and services often exceed the tax revenues from increased population.

Yet growth can be effectively managed if well-intentioned people work collectively to mitigate these untoward effects. By broadening the scope of activities to include land use, we have committed ourselves to more work and, in many instances, more difficult work. As members and supporters of the Henry's Fork Foundation you would be disappointed in us if we had not made these choices. Surely there are costs associated with these decisions and we strongly feel that the costs of inaction are far greater in the long run. We also believe that, you, our members will appreciate these needs and continue to support us with your generous contributions.

It's going to be fun talking to the Christchurch Fly Fishers. I can point to our recent successes in completing the Outlet Project, to our agreement with the Chester Hydro applicant and to 200 cfs winter flows from Island Park Reservoir. I may even sneak in a remark about those great fish I hooked on a size 20 emerger last fall.

Tight lines.

Bob Rosenberg

(Trafton...continued from page 1)

doing so they demonstrated that the *status quo* can change. It has; the change started in the winter of 2003-04, the first year of the drought management planning process. The rebounding fish populations below the dam (reported in previous newsletters) are tangible evidence of this change.

Henry's Lake outlet project: After five years of planning, research, heavy equipment work, and controversy, the construction phase of the project was finally completed in November. For the first time in more than 80 years, the Henry's Lake outlet once again flowed through what has been, for the past two years, one of the most heavily-scrutinized half-mile-long section of stream anywhere in the state of Idaho.

The work consisted of two related parts. First, the still-intact historic channel was excavated (dredged) to remove as much of the eight decades worth of accumulated fill material as possible prior to flows being returned to it. At the same time, streambanks were reinforced, where necessary, with transplanted willows and sod mats. Second, a rock and fill channel block was constructed at the head of the artificial channel, recreating the old streambank and redirecting flow back into the historic channel. This second step required two attempts, as test flows released from the dam at Henry's Lake demonstrated that the channel block was not initially high enough.

When we negotiated our memorandum of understanding with FMID and the North Fork Reservoir Company, the HFF agreed to monitor flows, at a variety of levels, for three years following the completion of the project, to test how effectively the restored channel moves irrigation water and, ultimately, whether the site gains, loses, or has no effect on the volume of water moving from the top of the project reach to the bottom. The US Geological Survey has set up a monitoring site at the project to take the necessary

measurements. It is our belief that we will have the evidence, three years from now, to demonstrate that we took the outlet out of an eroding artificial ditch that almost certainly lost water and returned it to a wetland channel that may well add to the volume of water moving through it.

Chester hydropower project: In late October the HFF, joined by the IDFG, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Trout Unlimited, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and the US Forest Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service signed a settlement agreement with Symbiotics LLC, the hydropower developer proposing to retrofit the Chester Dam with a hydropower facility. Under the terms of the settlement, the developer will construct the project with fisheries mitigations that include fish screens on both the Cross Cut and Last Chance canals, a screened turbine intake, and a fish ladder to provide upstream fish passage. When it is completed, these fisheries facilities will collectively represent the most significant positive step for the lower Henry's Fork's fisheries since the dam building and diversion era laced the river with barriers and fish-killing diversions decades ago. A hydropower proposal is cause for serious concern, but it is also an opportunity – probably a once in the lifetime of a dam opportunity – to bring about the sort of positive changes for the river that the HFF and its partners achieved. We must wait for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to issue its final license before we can consider the deal to be complete; that said, we are confident that five years of close involvement with this proposal will come to fruition shortly. We will write about this project in greater detail soon. ♦

HFF STAFF

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 Office: 606 Main St., Ashton, ID
 208-652-3567
 www.henrysfork.org

R & R Raffle

Look in your mailbox soon for tickets to participate in the HFF's annual R & R Raffle. The much-coveted grand prize of a "Fall Week on the Fork" includes arrival and departure stays at the Ameritel Inn, Idaho Falls, and guided fishing of two days each with TroutHunter, Three Rivers Ranch, and the South Fork Lodge, including overnights at these establishments. This year the week will extend from September 28 through October 5.

Second prize is a two-day, all-inclusive, guided trip for two on the South Fork at WorldCast Anglers' Cottonwood Camp. Third prize is a week during the Ranch opener (June 15-June 22) at a private cabin owned by Jim and Joan Lansche on the Henry's Fork. Fourth prize is a two-night stay (July 12 and 13, 2008) at historic Elk Creek Ranch. Fifth prize are a Sage fly rod and reel. Sixth prize is a two-night stay at The Nature Conservancy's Flat Ranch near Henry's Lake, and seventh \$100 in retail items from the HFF office.

Return your contribution and tickets in time for the May drawing.

Henry's Fork Foundation Project Updates

By Jim De Rito
HFF Conservation Director

Research and restoration fieldwork was ongoing through the end of 2007. The relatively mild autumn weather assisted with data collection and restoration work in the upper parts of the watershed, and made it much more enjoyable being on the lower river:

Trout Telemetry in the Lower Henrys Fork—As a continuation of this project, brown trout were radio-tagged (the first time for the species in the Henry's Fork watershed) on September 26. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) used their electrofishing drift boat to capture adult brown trout, and 20 fish were tagged between Chester Dam and the Fun Farm. After tagging, these fish were tracked about every four days through the beginning of December, in the process documenting some interesting movements and spawning areas. Two of the radio-tagged brown trout were caught and harvested by anglers. Most browns have not exhibited much movement since their spawning migrations. Pictures of the tagged brown trout, their locations on Google aerial maps, and photos of some fish location sites, are available at: www.henrysfork.org; click on the picture of the brown trout in the left hand bottom corner. Brown trout will be tracked through the end of 2008. A summary to date of this project will be presented at the annual meeting of the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society this February. Thank you to those who sponsored a radio-tagged brown trout. Additional funding support for this project was received from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Mr. Robert Bardin.

Henrys Lake Outlet Restoration—Construction work for this project was completed in November (details in Steve Trafton's article in this newsletter). Post-construction monitoring of the project by the HFF commenced shortly thereafter with the establishment of over 100 photo points throughout the newly re-watered historic channel. These photo points will be monitored over the next several years to document stream channel and vegetation changes. Numerous channel cross sections that were established in the project area in 2003 and 2004 will

be resurveyed in 2008 to quantify the dimensions of the restored channel and to establish a baseline from which to measure future geomorphology changes throughout the project. Also in 2008, The Nature Conservancy will take the lead in an intensive vegetation reseeding and restoration program throughout the project area.

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Restoration and Evaluations—Cutthroat trout surveys and restoration evaluations continued into November, bolstered by the relatively mild autumn. Some of the farthest headwater reaches in the watershed were visited to complete this work in cooperation with the IDFG and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest (CTNF). The HFF, IDFG, and the CTNF will compare notes on the creeks assessed in 2007 to determine the best options for restoration of cutthroat trout in headwater creeks in 2008 and beyond. The work completed by the HFF in 2007 was funded by the Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Conservation Partnership.

Sheridan Creek Restoration—Harriman State Park hosted, and the HFF assisted with, a celebratory tour of this project on August 22, 2007. Several dozen individuals visited three representative restored sites of the creek within Sheridan Ranch and Harriman State Park. The restoration project was completed in 2006 after about ten years of work on over 15 miles of stream that included the repair, replacement, or removal of ten irrigation diversion structures, thousands of willows planted, and the installation of miles of riparian fencing. The stream, which was previously chronically dewatered,

now is able to perennially flow through a more stable and shaded channel from the Yale-Kilgore Road to Island Park Reservoir. A historical synopsis of the restoration project will be completed by a HFF intern in 2008. Also in 2008, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality will review the "water quality limited" status of Sheridan Creek during an update of the Upper Henrys Fork Subbasin Assessment. The HFF will participate in the Subbasin Assessment process as a member of the Water Quality subcommittee of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council. ♦



Henry's Lake outlet once again flows through its historic channel.

Interns reflect on their summer experience with the Henry's Fork Foundation

Every summer the Foundation is assisted with field work and data collection by college and high school students interested in the Henry's Fork. Internships are made available through three donor funds: the Don C. Byers memorial scholarship, the A. Paul Knight memorial scholarship, and the Rear Admiral James Green scholarship. This year's summer field crew included Salley Gould and Balam Tomlin, both recipients of the A. Paul Knight memorial scholarship from Washington and Lee University. Following are thoughts they would like to share with readers on their HFF experience.

Salley Gould

My internship this past summer with the Henry's Fork Foundation has been

one of the best experiences of my life. The hands-on experience and field training I received were invaluable. We worked on three major projects: long-term monitoring, cutthroat trout restoration, and Sheridan Creek restoration. We began the summer by going to each of the long-term sites, and after locating the benchmarks we electrofished and took bug samples. To make locating the benchmarks easier we cemented the benchmarks and transect points. Some of my favorite memories from the summer stem from my work on the cutthroat restoration project—having the chance to explore streams well off the beaten path. We hiked along numerous streams for several miles to evaluate their suit-

ability for use in cutthroat rehabilitation. Our last big project of the summer was evaluating the Sheridan Creek restoration project. We were able to work alongside Tom Herron (senior water quality analyst and fisheries biologist, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality) for several days, learning so much from his expertise as he walked us through the Rosgen approach to monitoring the condition of stream banks. Over the summer I learned much about stream conservation methods and techniques, but the biggest lesson I learned was the importance of curiosity and determination in finishing the job.

Balam Tomlin

Working this past summer with the Henry's Fork Foundation was a wonderful and enlightening experi-

ence. Learning about the complexity of the Henry's Fork watershed and the issues it faces has taught me about the importance of environmental stewardship. I enjoyed learning the different surveying and collection techniques used to monitor the watershed. Interning with the Henry's Fork Foundation gave me the opportunity to take advantage of everything the area offered. There is so much to see and do I may need to come back for another summer! It was truly enjoyable to work and interact with so many people who care about the Henry's Fork. I want to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome and giving me so many opportunities. ♦



Salley and Balam collect macroinvertebrates from the long-term monitoring site on Sheridan Creek.



Harriman State Park manager Keith Hobbs points out restoration features on Sheridan Creek during the August project tour.

HFF Wish List

HFF needs the following office and field items to help accomplish our work. Items are tax deductible as allowed by law.

- Minitab statistical software
- Computer—no more than 3 years old
- Ladder capable of reaching 12 feet
- Drift boat cover
- Snorkeling dry suit

For more info call Jim De Rito at 208-652-3567

Thanks to Albert Knight for donating a 8'x5' trailer

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The list covers the period July 1 through December 31, 2007.**

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Jack Denim Overalls
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Yes, I support the work of the Henry's Fork Foundation. Ac-
 cept my contribution for your efforts to understand, restore
 and protect the outstanding aesthetic, fishery and wildlife
 qualities of the Henry's Fork watershed.

- \$35 / year
- \$100 / year
- \$250 / year
- \$500 / year

Green Drake Giving Levels

- \$1,000 / year
- \$2,500 / year
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The Green Drake Society is comprised of HFF
 supporters who contribute \$1,000 or more
 annually. Society members receive a pin and
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 fleece vest by Simms, embroidered with the
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Return this form with payment to: Henry's Fork Foundation
 PO Box 550
 Ashton, ID 83420

See the HFF website www.henrysfork.org for more
 clothing items, plus we have pins, patches, decals, access
 maps and posters.
 Order online or call 208-652-3567 for prompt service.
 Thank you for your support.

They Had a Field Day

As part of the HFF's education and outreach efforts, staff members Jim De Rito, Anne Marie Emery Miller, Susan Steinman and Melanie Sessions hosted a field day for the North Fremont High School biology class. The class braved a cold, blustery day to come to Warm River campground east of Ashton to learn about the HFF's long-term monitoring program in the watershed and in an electrofishing lesson: capturing fish, identifying and measuring them, and releasing them back into the river.

Robin Jenkins of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest introduced students to the major orders of insects found on the Henry's Fork and their life cycles. Students then practiced collecting insects with nets and learned to identify stoneflies, mayflies, and caddis nymphs.

At the end of the session students gathered around a campfire with hot cocoa to discuss their experiences and share their enthusiasm for the river.

Thanks to North Fremont biology teacher Laura Allen for her efforts and cooperation in making the day successful.



North Fremont High School learn the techniques of sampling fish with electrofishing gear.



Anne Marie Emery Miller explains how to collect and identify some of the numerous insect species that live in the Henry's Fork.



Jim De Rito, HFF conservation director, tells students about the HFF long-term monitoring program and the importance of a healthy river.

Salt Lake City Reception February 29

The annual Henry's Fork Foundation reception for members and friends takes place Friday, February 29, at the Willow Creek Country Club in Sandy. The event begins at 6:30 P.M. and will feature a silent auction. A cash bar and buffet dinner are available. If you would like to attend RSVP to the HFF office at 208-652-3567 or email to joan@henryfork.org.

The Henry's Fork Foundation
P.O. Box 550
Ashton, ID 83420



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