

Highlighting River Guardians

HFF's Approach is the Crucial Difference

George Borkow

River Guardian

Like many anglers filled with reverence when landing a wild trout, George Borkow is reluctant to discuss that moment of “grace and beauty.” Too mysterious and exalted to interpret adequately he says demurringly. A threshold too personal to explain.

But admiring words flow easily when you ask George how the Henry’s Fork, while called upon extensively to serve agriculture and hydropower, is enduring as one of North America’s healthiest fisheries while many famous trout streams struggle. Initially a cautious supporter, he gives full-throated credit to the Henry’s Fork Foundation:



“The approach they’ve taken is not only practical; it’s genius. Why not collect enough data, verify it, and present it to describe what’s at stake and how the river can be positively affected? Make it possible for more thoughtful and better decisions to be made to advance multiple benefits.”

George points out that HFF has earned a seat at the table with multi-billion-dollar giants. Impressed by the organization’s sound data, respectful communication, and genuine interest in their interests and needs, Ag and Power have seen their way through to modify practices so that a working river continues to supply what wild trout need.

George fishes many legendary rivers that are deeply troubled. He says they lack the early-warning radar and productive relationships that HFF has built empathetically and tirelessly and to a higher level on the Henry’s Fork.

“The Beaverhead, Jefferson, Madison, and my local river, the Big Wood, have all suffered from drought as the Henry’s Fork has. But talk to fishermen and they will tell you the Henry’s Fork is healthier and more resilient. What’s the difference? I think it’s the Henry’s Fork Foundation.”

“And let’s give credit, it’s Ag and Power. Thanks to the data collection and dialogue, everyone knows when something is happening to the bug population, the water temperature, the spawning population. When you know, you can take timely action.”

George believes the Henry’s Fork Foundation is bringing to life the conscientious consideration of important human and natural relationships that Aldo Leopold urged. He says of his support as a River Guardian: “I like these people. What they’re doing. And how they’re doing it.”