



HENRYS LAKE FOUNDATION

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Fall 1995

Notice to all readers from Richard Prange, Newsletter Coordinator.

From time to time we may have articles of a controversial nature in this newsletter. It will be our policy not to censor or edit the content of the articles without the consent of the authors. However, the opinions and statements made are those of the authors and are not necessarily the views and opinions of the Henry's Lake Foundation and Board of Directors.

President's Message

Henry's Lake continues to be the finest trout lake in the U.S. The lake is the best prospect for catching that lifetime trophy you've been fishing for. If you want your line really stretched, work Henry's in '96. The hybrids size and numbers seem to be in good shape. Fourteen and a quarter and thirteen and three quarter pounds hybrids were caught and weighed at Staley Springs this past summer, other big fish were reported. Many told stories of hooking big fish but they weren't landed.

We can debate the ultimate mix and numbers of fish that should be in Henry's Lake, but the fishing was great in '95 and will be in '96. The number of brookies is low, but the fall spawn in '95 should have been good due to the lake being full and the streams running well. The Idaho Department of Fish & Game is going to increase the number of brooks stocked in '96 which will help. In a few years the brooks should be in better shape. IDF&G has worked hard to keep the fishery in great shape and we all appreciate and should recognize their efforts.

In 1996, the Henry's Lake Foundation will help fund a fish ladder over an irrigation diversion dam on lower Howard Creek. This dam is 1/2 mile up from the lake and blocks most spawners from the upper 1 1/2 miles of the creek. We hoped to have the ladder this fall but it is going to be in '96 now. In '95 we funded part of the riparian fence on the Diamond D Ranch.

Members who would like to leave a bequest in their will to the foundation are encouraged to do so. We are a non-profit organization recognized by the IRS and will be glad to furnish your legal advisor the information they

need. Any gift will be put into projects that benefit the lake's fishing. Contact me at (208) 366-2528 or at this address below.

See you on the lake in '96. I am still looking for my 14 pounder!

Hats and Decals

We have a new batch of baseball type hats with the original Henry's Lake Foundation logo. Size is adjustable. We also have Foundation decals just like the old ones. The hats and decals are available by mail from me at my home address. The colors are green, black, tan and maroon. The hats are \$15 each postpaid. The decals are two for \$5 postpaid.

Mail your check to: Robert Hall
Rt. 1 Box 103
Glenns Ferry, ID 83623

Bob Hall

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A Most Peculiar Summer at Henry's Lake

We arrived at Staley Springs in our Minnie Winnie the afternoon of June 5th. The first thing we noticed was that most of the RV's were covered with something black. On closer inspection they were very small insects which we learned were snow flies. "Pesky but they don't bite." We settled into site 44 with its magnificent vista of snow filled mountains and increasingly grey sky. At supper time a thunderstorm hit, rocking us with gale force winds and hammering us with a steady downpour all night. Welcome to Henry's Lake in 1995!

When the weather broke, we walked over to the shore line where we usually launch our tubes and found the water level much below what is expected in early June. After seeing record high waters all the way from California to Idaho this was a surprise. "To accommodate for the expected run off," we were told. The fishing was very slow except for those expert boat fishermen in our midst who caught regularly from the holes by the cable, very early in the morning, using very small peacock flies and light leader. Some said the fishing was slow because of the weather and others said the fish had filled themselves on those minute snow flies.

While waiting for the weather to improve, Claude Ledgerwood and his crew worked each day at affixing name plates on the memorial marble at the shoreline. It snowed for six straight days and when the sun finally shone our spirits lifted, but that state was short lived as another storm rolled in. Carl Yates was heard to say, "This is the most consistently poor fishing ever." We all said this would

change when the damsels came.

June was almost over, and the storms persisted. Some days there were no tubes or boats to be seen on the lake. Bob Hall did, however, manage to catch an 8 pounder at the cable on a very small Henry's Lake Snow Fly nymph on a 4 pound tippet! Our leader was very proud! The damsels still hadn't surfaced at Staley Springs, but there was action at Pintail Point, the Stump Hole and Duck Creek for a few days.

By the sixth of July, there were still no damsels, but the weather was warmer and we caught fish on a variety of flies. Mike Brickner was the champ of the tubers one day with a catch of 24 fish in the Channel and Glory Hole, ranging up to four pounds on a Beaver and Tan without a tail, and Bill Hayes was busting his buttons after catching a 14 pounder on very light tackle.

By the tenth of July, a summer pattern finally set in with clear, hot mornings followed by afternoon thunderstorms. The change in the weather, however, didn't really change the catching pattern. The fish still were taking a variety of flies for short periods of time: Henry's Lake Renegade, Marv's Shrimp (George Close's variation), Bill Shies's Hot Chocolate, to name just a few. To balance out some of the fishing disappointment the wild flowers continued to bloom like spring with an ever changing dazzle of colors, the snow capped mountains were gorgeous, and we witnessed a moon filled evening with the clouds dancing in front of the full moon across the sky all night.

On July 13th a fierce wind blew all night and into the morning. The lake looked like a raging ocean. Bill and I packed up and headed for the Blackfoot Indian Reservation, the wind was blowing there too!

Pat Pothier

Henry's Lake Foundation Auction

The annual picnic and silent auction at Staley Springs The annual picnic and silent auction at Staley Springs Lodge on July 1, 1995 was once again a success, with net receipts of \$4,327. Mary Hall, Mike Horton and the crew did a fine job organizing the barbecue. A video (courtesy of Rex Day) depicted a recent fencing project on Kelly Springs Creek and played continuously throughout the afternoon.

Thanks to the increased participation of local businesses, nationally known companies and friends of the HLF, the tables were filled with a variety of items for the eager bidders. The cash table also displayed numerous items, notably Doris Woodall's chocolates. As the silent auction drew to a close, the bidding became quite heated on a number of items, such as the popular HLF silver belt buckle and an HLF engraved Buck Knife, new this year.

A special THANK YOU to the solicitors and auction helpers.

Barbara Day

List of Donors for the 1995 Auction

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At the Dedication of the Henry's Lake Memorial

Staley Springs, July 1, 1995

I am grateful that Mike Brickner invited me to say a few words at this dedication. As an Episcopal Clergyman one of the greatest challenges in thirty-five years since my Ordination has been to find ways to comfort persons who are overwhelmed with grief when a loved one has died.

Last year at the **Book Peddler** in West Yellowstone, I purchased a book titled To Heal Again: towards serenity and the resolution of grief. The complete text of this 62 page book is 26 sentences which provided me with a powerful profound statement to assist me with my grief ministry. In sharing the words from this book with grieving persons during the past year, I have received an immediate positive response.

The author, Rusty Berkus, after addressing "the dark night of the soul," anguish, denial, anger and moving through the bleakness of winter to springtime-some of the stages of grieving to be negotiated, concludes with the following sentence. "Behold you will sit in the radiant

sun without sorrow, no longer seeking, searching for the magic that will make the pain go away; ready to love, to smile, to sing, to give, to heal again, and you will stopped asking **WHY?"**

The monument we dedicate today is another way of grieving families to continue toward serenity in the resolution of their grief. There are monuments at cemeteries, usually stones erected in lonely places. I am reminded that those who request cremation also designate where their ashes are to be scattered. They usually request a site like this one. A site where as families they have refreshed themselves, celebrated and enjoyed each other as in no other place. I so enjoy seeing three generations, even four, fishing together, granddads riding bicycles with grandkids on the handle bars, playing games with the children, and the children reciting verses or otherwise entertaining the adults.

This is also a site surrounded by images of stillness where serenity is restored, a site filled by God's breathtaking creativity, majestic mountains that heal and give us energy to refresh the spirit within each of us.

So today we stand here in the radiant sun sharing in the dedication of this unique monument that should make each of us who sojourn here very proud and grateful to two men: first, Mike Brickner who had the vision for such a monument; and, Claude Ledgerwood, whose engineering and management skills and access to resources provided the marble and other materials to complete our memorial. Thanks also to the Hortons for their support and assistance. And, finally thanks to those families who have loved ones whose names are inscribed here, who have hallowed this ground, and thanks to so many others who have contributed generously to making this monument a reality, because they understood its importance and potential for healing through its spiritual dimension.

Rev. Bill Pothier

James T. Brittingham

The Henry's Lake Foundation has lost another stalwart member, James T. Brittingham of West Columbia, South Carolina. For many seasons Jim and his wife Evelyn have come to Henry's Lake, Island Park Reservoir, Hidden Lake and many other waters.

Although he had fought off a dread disease for three and a half years and was losing the battle, he and Evelyn did manage to make the trip in 1995, enjoying some good days on the lakes. His condition worsened in the fall, and he succumbed on November 8.

Messages can be sent to Mrs. Evelyn Brittingham, 3096 Sunset Blvd., West Columbia, SC 29169, and the family would welcome memorial gifts to the Henry's Lake Foundation.

John and Pat O'Neall

Henry's Lake - How Healthy Is the Fishery?

One of the pleasures of managing fisheries in eastern Idaho is knowing firsthand the variety of outstanding trout waters concentrated in our corner of the state. From the famous (South Fork Snake River, Henrys Fork Snake or Henrys Lake) to the lesser known (Big Lost River, Fall River or Island Park Reservoir), we have some of the very best trout waters in the world.

A less enjoyable aspect of my job is occasionally needing to explain to anglers why fishing is not as good on a favorite water as it used to be and what measures might be necessary to restore fishing to "the good old days." Explanations are often more complicated than expected, and the necessary sacrifices in harvest opportunity are usually more than most anglers are willing to accept.

In an ideal world, the great fishing waters would be productive, resilient and capable of satisfying virtually all anglers whether their interests are geared toward catch and release or harvest fishing. This might surprise you, but Henry's Lake is as close to that ideal as I can hope to experience.

Those of you who read this newsletter and fish Henry's Lake on a regular basis know that there have been plenty of controversies and concerns about Henrys Lake in recent years. Issues like the 1991 winter kill, the "high" fishing pressure in 1989 and 1990, the discovery of Utah chubs and controversies between bait, lure, and fly fishers have generated many discussions and meetings. That's really a good thing. Sitting down together, discussing problems, and working toward mutual understanding of the issues benefits everyone. In fact, it has been exactly those controversies that made the extra studies of the Henry's Lake fishery by our management team the past few years so necessary. The result of the new information is a significant increase in our understanding of the health of Henrys Lake today and what we might expect for the foreseeable future, an up to date "picture" so to speak. This "picture" of the Henrys Lake fishery is composed of information that we have collected for years and some newer data that allow us to describe:

- 1) the total fishing effort,
- 2) the total fishing harvest,
- 3) the rate of exploitation of the trout population by anglers - i.e., what percentage of the trout population is killed by anglers,
- 4) the mortality rates for the trout population - natural mortality, angling mortality and total mortality, and
- 5) the total number of trout in the Henrys Lake fishery.

The last estimate (#5) is the total number of trout large enough to be considered "fishable." For our purposes we defined that size as 14 inches or greater in length.

By this time I hope that most readers of this newsletter are aware of the trout management workshop that we

held last July in Island Park to describe this up-to-date picture of the Henrys Lake fishery. My staff and I were excited with the turnout and participation by Henrys Lake Foundation members, and we were encouraged by the discussions generated, and comments we received from the workshop participants. However, I also understand that only a few of the many folks who love Henrys Lake were able to attend, so I want to use this opportunity to pass on the good news about the health of trophy trout fishing in Henrys Lake.

The "picture" of Henrys Lake fishing that I keep referring to is nothing more than a reasonably accurate estimate of the number of trout that people are fishing for, and what is happening to them over the course of a complete year. How many die of natural causes? How many die as the result of fishing activity? How fast are those trout growing? What are the effects of current fishing practices on the size and number of trout in Henrys Lake? At the end of the workshop, we used a simple but useful computer model to demonstrate what benefits to the number of trophy trout we could expect to achieve by changing fishing rules in different ways. Let's start with answers to each of the questions above before predicting the future.

Space won't allow me to go into all of the technical details we covered during the workshop, but briefly here's what we did to answer those questions:

- We estimated the total number of trout using a mark-recapture method that is a standard for censusing fish populations.
- The exploitation estimate was made from returns of reward tags we put on Henrys Lake trout before the beginning of the 1994 season. We also made an estimate using the estimate of the total trout harvest divided by our trout population estimate. Both methods gave us an approximation of the percent of the trout population over 14 inches in length that were killed by fishing during the 1994 fishing season. We included the expected losses from hooking mortality in the exploitation estimate since hooking mortality is clearly a fishing related effect.
- The mortality rates for Henrys Lake trout are based on the relationship between the cumulative fishing catch and the age of trout in the catch. This simply describes how quickly fish "leave" the population due to a variety of causes - disease predation, old age, or fishing.
- The total fishing effort and total trout harvest estimates come from the season long creel survey that we have conducted annually.

I should emphasize that many extra hours of data collection by several additional biologists went into developing the "new" information - the trout population, exploitation and mortality estimates. Trout were captured with intensive trap netting and purse seining work as well as utilizing the spawning run of cutthroat and hybrids at the hatchery ladder. All in all, we gathered information from

several thousand Henry's Lake trout to develop the picture of the Henry's Lake fishery.

So, what did we find?

Trout Population

Our mark recapture estimate for cutthroats is 424,700 and for hybrids is 117,252. That's a total of 541,942 trout over 14 inches in length in Henry's Lake. This is actually a conservative estimate, because we intentionally made assumptions about post spawning mortality of trout marked for the estimate that were likely pessimistic. We decided we wanted to err on the side of under estimating fish numbers because we do not want to exaggerate the health of the Henry's Lake trout population. Even so, over 1/2 million catchable size trout is a very healthy number for a 6,000 acre, shallow lake.

Exploitation of Henry's Lake Trout

Our exploitation estimates, based on the percentage of reward tags returned by Henry's Lake anglers, was 7.2% for cutthroat and 12.8% for hybrids. Again, these are conservative estimates because we assumed 50% of the trout we tagged with reward tags died of natural causes, and we assumed 50% of the reward tags collected by anglers were not turned in. We then estimated hooking mortality losses for trout caught and released in 1994 by bait, lure and fly fishers, and added those losses to the overall exploitation estimate. We estimated hooking mortality to be 1.6% of the cutthroat population and 3.0% of the hybrid population. Adding harvest and hooking mortality exploitation rates together gives a total of 9% exploitation of cutthroat and 16% of hybrid trout. Heavily fished trout populations commonly support 30% exploitation rates, so again, the Henry's Lake population is in a very favorable and stable situation.

Total Annual Mortality

This may be more confusing than the population and exploitation estimates, but it's really pretty simple. We're just estimating what percent of the total fish population at the beginning of the year will die by the end of the year of **all causes**. It turns out that annual mortality in Henry's Lake is higher than we expected, 80% for hybrids and 95% for cutthroat, probably because the growth rates of Henry's Lake trout are so high. Growth rates that we have calculated for cutthroat and hybrids are higher than any other Idaho water we know of, and are near the top of the range of growth rates for any trout population on record. It's a rule of nature that the faster a fish grows, the younger it dies. They simply burn themselves out metabolically like a very hot light bulb. What this means for Henry's Lake is that we should not expect to stock pile large numbers of very big trout. Most trout will die by age 4, somewhere around 20 inches in length, whether they are harvested or not.

In summary then, the "picture" that we have of the Henry's Lake fishery is that there is an exceptionally large

fishable trout population that has **very low** harvest and hooking mortality and experiences very high growth rates and natural mortality. Now we can begin to predict what improvements we might expect for Henry's Lake fishing if we change fishing rules by reducing harvest, imposing length limitations, prohibiting gear types (i.e. - no bait), or eliminating harvest (catch and release only).

Using the computer model (MOCPOP) that I mentioned earlier, we simulated how a theoretical Henry's Lake trout population would change over a ten year period if we changed fishing rules on Henry's Lake to:

- 1) no bait,
- 2) no bait, only 1 trout over 20 inches, and
- 3) no bait, catch and release only.

For cutthroat trout in Henry's Lake, the MOCPOP computer model predicted that changing the current regulations by prohibiting bait fishing would increase the number of catchable size fish by 2.5%. The same regulation change would increase the number of catchable size hybrids by 6.4%.

If we changed regulations to ban bait fishing **and** reduced the bag limit to only one trout, over 20 inches in length, MOCPOP predicted that numbers of catchable size cutthroat would increase by 2.9%, and catchable size hybrids would increase by only 9.3%. Finally, if we made regulations as restrictive as No Bait **and** Catch and Release, we should expect improvements to the number of catchable size cutthroat to be roughly 3.2% more than under current regulations and hybrids might increase by about 10.6% above the numbers supported under the status quo regulations.

What does this mean? Is this good news or bad news? I believe this is some of the best news Henry's Lake supporters could ask for. It is clear the Henry's Lake fishery is in very good shape. We have a very strong population of fast growing trout that can easily support the type of fishing Henry's Lake anglers want at the levels of fishing effort we can expect for the foreseeable future. In simpler terms, I believe we can expect to have continued excellent fishing on Henry's Lake for years to come.

I have tried to make some pretty technical fish population data understandable, but - undoubtedly, many readers will have questions about this picture of Henry's Lake that aren't answered in this brief article.

I would be happy to answer any questions about this or any other aspect of our Henry's Lake management program. If you have questions, feel welcome to call at (208) 525-7290, or write to us at Idaho Department of Fish and Game, 1515 Lincoln Road, Idaho Falls, ID 83401.

Mark Gamblin, Regional Fishery Manager

Happy Holidays



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(Send all membership dues/donations to Secretary-Treasurer)

The Henry's Lake Foundation invites you to join and support our non-profit, tax exempt corporation formed to preserve, protect, and enhance the great trout fishery of Henry's Lake. Just fill in the information below and send your tax deductible contribution or membership dues to:

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