



HENRY'S LAKE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

2002

July 5th is Celebration Time!

Thanks to the efforts of several people, but especially Gloria and Bill Walker, the outlook for our 20th Anniversary Picnic and Auction couldn't be brighter. This year's auction will be our most successful ever with a silent auction, live auction and opportunity to purchase many other items. The live auction will feature a one week stay for 4 in a condo in Kona, Hawaii donated by John Baer. Also, Bank of America has donated a 6 wt. Loomis fly rod for auction. Gloria Walker has been dreaming up all kinds of new ideas for the auction.

Festivities will begin at 10:30 A.M. about 300 yards southwest of Staley Springs. Here's a special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Nelson for making their property available for the picnic and Stan Horton for hosting picnics in the past!

News from other fronts:

1. Brook trout- the F&G is moving forward for public comments during June and July. At this time they see no biological negatives to resuming brook trout plants. Your comments to F&G are needed (write to Damon Keen, Hatchery Manager, 3850 Highway 87, Island Park, Id. 83429).
2. As of this writing the lake is 67% full and may reach 80-90% capacity. Winter precipitation is currently at 99% of average. A great deal will depend on May and June rains!

3. Land acquisition-Rick Prange and I have pursued this project to establish a permanent residence for HLF. We hope to have something settled this summer and then we will begin the search for corporate donations to fund the building.

4. Fly tying expo-Thanks to Rick Prange, Tom Herron, Norman Gates, and Carolyn Keen for putting together a booth for the Foundation at the Eastern Idaho Fly Tying Convention in Idaho Falls.

Finally.....if any of you have a recommendation for new directors or, if you would like to help or have a donation for the auction please call me at 208-558-9161. I hope to see a lot of old friends and meet new ones at the 20th year celebration!

Ron Slocum, President

A TIME OF TRANSITION FOR THE HENRYS LAKE FOUNDATION

By Richard Prange

As a long time member of the HLF, my family and I again made our annual July trip to HL last year to take in the Foundation meeting, see old friends and fish the lake. As some of you may know, I have a history of involvement in the Foundation, coordinating the newsletter and projects for a number of years. Then during most of the 1990's, I did not hold an office or board position in the Foundation. My July return last year was really special because I

had just retired the day before! Now, I was free to pursue my fly fishing passion and other interests at my discretion. So far, my retirement has been everything I had hoped for, staying busy at doing what I want to do.

With my newfound freedom, I have recommitted to HL by volunteering to serve on the Board of Directors for HLF. Some have said the Foundation has fallen on hard times in recent years. If that be the case, things are about to change under the leadership of the energetic and capable new President, Ron Slocum. In addition, the board is composed of mostly new directors that are area property owners that bring an assortment of talents. These people want to build on the many past Foundation accomplishments.

Last September, I again returned to the lake and had an opportunity to revisit several of the tributary fish habitat projects undertaken by the Foundation and Idaho Department of Fish and Game since 1983. I was heartened to see that our miles of fencing and numerous fish screen projects continued to be in place, maintained and operating. The riparian vegetation recovery over the years has been impressive. Credit goes to the IDFG for their commitment to carry out the day to day maintenance/operation of these projects. This means that the original purposes of our fishery improvement efforts have remained valid.

The need for the HLF continues, as much now as before. Time will tell whether the renowned HL fishery is impacted by last year's 7-foot irrigation draw down of the lake. We need to acquire an understanding of the effects, if any, of the Utah chub infestation on the lake's trout population. Older fish screens at tributary irrigation diversion are scheduled to be

replaced with smaller meshed drums to further reduce trout fry losses in HL tributaries. There are more fish passage projects, fencing and riparian vegetation plantings that need to be implemented. Some existing fence sections need to be repaired. All this will take money and volunteer labor, much of which must be generated by the Foundation.

What I see ahead for the HLF is expanded conservation initiatives, membership growth and fund raising actions. The foundation needs to build on all the dedicated members and friendships that have stayed connected over the last two decades. More Foundation projects and sponsored fishery research can be expected. A new office is in the works and represents a significant step to expand the exposure and influence of the HLF. This promises to be a beautiful building that we'll all be proud of. These efforts will help insure that the fishery of HL continues to be protected. Stay tuned and stay involved with the Henrys Lake Foundation. Good things are coming.

Winterkill, Tom Herron

The soils in the 100 square mile watershed of Henry's Lake are some of the most fertile soils associated with any lake at such a high elevation. From these soils, rich in phosphorus, the nutrients come that provide the growth of algae, aquatic plant, insects and subsequently trout.

From this soup of nutrients and vegetation also comes the potential for a natural phenomenon common to shallow lakes-winterkill. When plants and algae decay, particularly under the ice, they use up oxygen. When thick ice forms on standing water from extreme cold and snow piles up on the ice sunlight is cut off which provides the energy for plants to produce

oxygen. The water under the ice is cut-off from the wind that normally forces oxygen into the water and mixes the water from the surface to the bottom. The correct combination of circumstances can result in localized mortality of fish under the ice-winterkill.

The last notable winterkill at HL was observed in early March, 1991 when fish crowded around the tribs trying to get oxygen. There was a huge plant and algal growth in the summer of 1990 and prolonged cold spell during Nov-Dec forming 4 feet of ice. The mortality was not quantitated but easily could have exceeded 100,000 fish.

It's been almost 11 years since the last documented winterkill on Henry's Lake and with the severe drought conditions that have resulted in 6_ feet of water being drawn from the lake for irrigation people are wondering if 2002 will be a repeat of 1991. If HL can have a winterkill when it is full, how about when it is half full? Actually, removing half the water may have helped in some ways by flushing out stored nutrients from the lake that may have caused more algal and plant growth. Last season HL was clear, not much algae, and the oxygen content was high. Combining this year's water level with the winter conditions that we saw in late 1990 and early 1991 could have been disastrous, but we did not have a bitter cold winter this year. One thing that HL has this year that it didn't have in 1991 is an aeration system unlike any other in the western United States. The aeration system was put in place last fall and turned on Jan 7 through April 15. This had the effect of maintaining a football sized area of open water-water that was aerated by the aerators and wind, and the oxygen-rich water spread to other areas nearby as well by the wind.

At this writing it looks as though there has been no congregating of fish around the tribs, no signs of winterkill and the oxygen levels in the lake are good.



Inspecting fry diversion drum on Duck Creek are F&G Environmental Biologist, Kim Ragotskie; HL hatchery manager, Damon Keen; and HLF members Tom Herron and Richard Prange.

PROJECTS REPORT

by Bob Bartsch, HLF Project Director

I've never been involved with conservation projects like those done by HLF in the past, so the endeavor has been new and energizing. I've spent part of every summer since 1984 roaming around the Yellowstone country, fishing, hiking, canoeing or mountain biking. My love of flyfishing keeps me moving between the area's rivers, streams and lakes. Thanks to Damon Keen, Richard Prange and Tom Herron taking me under their collective wings, I was able to take a crash course last summer. Damon identified some of the more pressing issues that the Foundation might help with: obsolete drums in the fish diversion screens and the Utah chub minnow population in the Lake.

Our first outing was to examine the tributaries leading into HL and inspect the diversion systems and fish screens that help prevent fry that were hatched in the streams from being washed into the irrigated field areas or cattle


troughs. We toured the hatchery and finally the fencing projects that excluded the cattle from most of the tributaries. Rob Ryan, fish biologist from the Idaho Falls F&G Office brought the South Fork shocking boat to experiment with catching chub. We spent an afternoon shocking fish and talking about strategies for studying the chub biology in the lake. We only caught a few chubs but did manage to shock a brookie that will be a state record if someone catches it. Rob was trying to evaluate a few techniques for catching chub so the population could be studied in the future. Richard and Tom have had many years of experience in the past organizing and accomplishing projects around the lake. Thanks to these men and others the HLF has a fine history of successful conservation projects, and, although I feel like a rank newcomer, with their help I am confident

that we can have a host of worthwhile projects moving ahead.

Our first funded project was to pay for the production of two new fish drums on Duck Creek. The drums were originally made for steelhead and salmon smolt which are larger than brookie and cutthroat fry with the result that many of the fry cruise right on through into the irrigation or watering ditches. These new drums have been manufactured by the F&G and will be installed shortly.

Board of Directors

Ron Slocum	President
Bob Bartsch	Vice President
John Taft	Vice President
Dave Light	Secretary/Treasurer
Dave Rydall	
Rick Prange	
Roger Lang	
Sallie Slocum	
Bill Walker	


 HENRY'S LAKE
 FOUNDATION
 P.O. Box 1389
 West Yellowstone, Montana 59758