



JAN. 2003

# HENRY'S LAKE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The summer of 2002, our twentieth anniversary, was highlighted by our most successful picnic and fund raiser ever. Very special thanks go out to Bill and Gloria Walker for their Herculeanean effort and boundless energy planning and executing last year's picnic and auction. A huge thanks to all of you who participated and contributed to insure it's success!

Because of the event's success we have committed to fund over \$18,000 in projects on and around the Henry's Lake watershed. Bob Bartsch and Damon Keen have spent hours identifying tributary needs and improvements.

Serious questions are on the table. Why was the fishing so slow this summer, especially July? What is there to be done to help prevent a repeat? As a result of reviewing the catch rates for the summer, the Foundation Board approved and sent a letter to Idaho F&G requesting an increase in cutthroat fingerling plantings by 50% for the next 3 years. Also, partially due to your opinions and prodding from your Board. Damon Keen of the Idaho F&G has collected, fertilized and incubated brook trout eggs this fall for a new stocking next fall. As you may know the planting of brook trout was halted in 1997. Recent interviews and surveys verified that a large portion of our fishermen considered the Henry's Lake brook trout a highly desirable catch.

We will push hard next year to expand the base of our membership with the formation of a membership commit-

tee. While we have increased our income base and improved our balance sheet our total membership has lagged behind this positive trend. We need to increase our membership commensurate with our aspirations for improving the watershed and for better future weather conditions and fishing.

The Foundation is still actively pursuing the acquisition of land to build a physical presence for the Foundation and an angler's center for gatherings, demonstrations and meeting place for others in the Henry's Lake area.

My final thought is that of **water**. The Lake continues to struggle with low water levels (73% full)! Please pray for rain and snow!

**Ron Slocum, President**

## Where have all the fish gone?

All last summer your Board of Directors heard from fishermen that fishing was poor. The F&G confirmed this via the creel surveys. This winter our question is why? Herein we have a summary of a report by the F&G presented at the fall Board of Directors meeting then a report by Bill Scheiss. There may be no clear answers now but we wanted our members to be informed as to the differing points of view.

## 2002 HENRY'S LAKE OVERVIEW

by Dan Garren  
Regional Fisheries Biologist, Upper Snake Region  
Idaho Department of Fish and Game

### Catch rates on Henry's

Our creel survey of fish caught per hour ranged from 0.6 early in the season, fell to about 0.1 in the middle and then rose to 0.5 at the end of the 2002 season. The average catch rates

have varied between 0.4 and 0.6 fish per hour for the past ten years.

**Has winterkill impacted the population?** Our monitoring throughout the winter showed that dissolved oxygen levels did not approach lethal or even stressful levels during the winter (3 and 5 mg/l, respectively). Further, no fish were observed crowding the oxygen-rich tributaries which usually happens in periods of low oxygen. No dead fish were observed in any of the open water or after ice-out. All these factors indicate that a winterkill event was unlikely.

**Was there a Summer kill?** Dissolved oxygen monitoring shows no evidence of low levels. No fish were reported crowding the tributaries, and no dead fish were observed.

**Have Utah chubs impacted the trout population?** For the past two decades, we've monitored the fishery with gill nets set in standard locations. Gill nets catch a representative segment of the population, so increases and decreases in populations are reflected in the catch of these nets. Utah chubs were first documented in 1993. Our standard gill net monitoring indicates they were at the peak of their abundance at that time. We went several years afterwards catching only a few chubs. Densities have not increased significantly and remain about 1.3 fish per net night. Comparatively, Island Park Reservoir has densities of 47 chub per net night. The chub population does not appear to be increasing or impacting the trout population at this time.

**Has the trout population declined?** Our monitoring of trout is also done with standard gill net samples. Our catch of trout during the '02 sampling was average for the lake, and suggests the trout population is comparable to past years. Declines in the population would be reflected in gill net catch rates.

We have no biological evidence of a reduction in the number of fish present in the lake. However, we do have decreased catch rates. How can we fix the problem of low catch rates? One

option is to stock more fish. This is possible, but can yield mixed results. The size of fish caught decreases with increased stocking rates. Therefore, we need to balance desirable catch rates with preferred size of fish caught. Furthermore, stocking more fish now won't help catch rates for another two years. If the fish population isn't really below historical levels, as we believe, stocking more fish isn't the answer..

Prolonged hot spells or cooler weather clearly affect the fishery. Henry's Lake is managed to produce specific catch rates. When these goals are not met, IDFG will take steps to help bring catch rates back up to our target goal. Periodic drops in catch rates can be expected. Dramatic changes in lake level last year or environmental conditions such as drought and high temperatures may cause fish to change their habits. As conditions improve, fish will likely return to typical Henry's Lake behavior and feeding patterns. We observed that the catch rates returned to nearly average levels (0.6 fish/hour) toward the end of last season and are hopeful for the year ahead.

#### **"T'was the worst of times"**

by Bill Schiess

The 2002 fishing season on Henry's Lake was the worst season that I have ever experienced.

At the beginning of the season everyone waited for the weather to settle so that the fish would start hitting. We truly believed that the fish were there, but were not feeding. The weather settled down the first week of July and the fishing remained poor. Now, most of us felt the fish were few and far between. By mid-July the water had warmed to 68 degrees and the fishing got even worse. Most mornings after 9 A.M. there were only two or three boats on the lake.

The size of the fish continued to be large which kept some of us searching for that elusive pocket of fish or tackle buster.

In August a small number of brook trout moved into the Targhee Creek area. There were 11 boats thenext day fishing for brookies. Many were harvested to mount because they were averaging between 16 and 23 inches. After six days the fish had disap-



peared from the Targhee area. We could not find them.

During September we saw a few more fish willing to feed, but no pockets of good numbers. The best fishing was in areas where we found fish in the spring, off of the County boat dock in 12-14 ft. of water, in the Wild Rose Hybrid Hole and around the Hatchery. By late September a number of fish moved into the Hatchery area and the fishermen once again returned to Henry's. The feeding habits of the fish there were very strange. They would feed early in the morning and as soon as the sun hit the water they would disperse and catching became difficult. Also, one day we would catch mostly brooks, the next day mostly cutts and once every few days the majority of fish caught would be hybrids - big ones!

The first week of October turned out to be our best week of the season. My guests and I landed over 100 fish that week with two days producing 28 fish each. As good as these results seemed, during the same week last year we took 741 fish! By the last week of the season the water temperature had dropped to 34 degrees with skim-ice on the lake in the mornings. The fishing was very slow. The lake froze over on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

***Here are the number of fish caught by myself and clients for the last five seasons .***

Season	Fish	Catch Rate/hr.
1998	4831	4.2
1999	5108	6.1
2000	4381	5.3
2001	3116	3.2
2002	541	0.38

I do not know what happened to cause the poor fishing last year. According to IDF&G data the fish are in the lake and in good numbers. We are hoping and praying that they are correct and that the fishing will be better next year.

#### **Projects Update** **by Bob Bartsch**

Three new fish drums were placed into the diversions in their respective tributaries and have been working much better than the older ones with larger openings. These drums were paid for in part by a grant from the Idaho Community Foundation which helps non-profit

organizations with all sorts of projects around the state. So, a great big thank you goes out to the ICF for their help.

In addition we cooperated with the F&G to pay for the repair of several fish migration obstructions in Duck Creek. Our biggest two problems with fish obstructions are the culverts under Highway 87 on both Targhee and Howard Creeks. Damon Keen, F&G hatchery specialist assigned to HL and I drew a blank as to how to proceed. Damon got advice from Lee Mabery, a biologist with the Forest Service. Together they worked with the Idaho Transportation Department to fill the fish ladder in the west culvert on Targhee with a load of rocks. The pool above the highway will be fitted with some boulders and the east culvert altered a bit to improve fish passage in the spring. A plan to improve the Howard Creek culvert passage is in the works also.

Damon is completing the first brook trout spawn and hatching since 1997. He trapped and spawned 204 females with a yield of 469,000 eggs, fertilized them, then sterilized about half. The developing fry will be transported to the Ashton hatchery and planted in the lake as 4 inch fingerlings next fall. Also, Damon released 991,000 yellowstone cutthroat trout and 276,000 hybrid fingerlings last September.



One of the obstructions to fish movement on Duck Creek,

We have lost contact with some of our members. We need help in finding current information for the members listed below. If you can help, please contact Carolyn Keen at 208-221-9024 or email at [ckeen40@hotmail.com](mailto:ckeen40@hotmail.com). Your help is greatly appreciated.

✓ Evelyn Brittingham *rec'd*  
~~Joan Smith~~  
 Norvin G. & Sharon L. Brewer *rec'd*  
 Grace S. Brooks *rec'd*  
 Roger D. Cantlon *rec'd*  
 ✓ Dale L. Cartwright *rec'd*  
 ✓ Edward & Patricia Dunn Jr. *rec'd*  
 E.J. Eagleton *rec'd*  
 ✓ Lowell C. Finney *rec'd*  
 Garland Family  
 Lee Garland Family  
 Rosland Garland

Mike Gold *rec'd*  
 ✓ James R. Gregath *rec'd*  
 ✓ Trisha Marie Grinstead *rec'd*  
 ✓ Jeffrey C. Hubbard *rec'd*  
 John G. Jordan *rec'd*  
 Nick Lyons *rec'd*  
 ✓ Louie Mallane *rec'd*  
 ✓ James R. Markusen *rec'd*  
 Patrick D. McElya *rec'd*  
 W. Brant Morris *rec'd*  
 Dr. Arthur O'Dell *rec'd*  
 Tom O'Dell *rec'd*  
 ✓ Jack Rainey *rec'd*  
 ✓ Joe & Joyce Rainwater *rec'd*  
 Tom Robinson *rec'd*

Christopher Jordan Robison *rec'd*  
 Lloyd E. Ross *rec'd*  
 Joe & Joyce Rainwater  
 Tom Robinson  
 Christopher Jordan Robison  
 Lloyd E. Ross  
 ✓ Jim Sanders *rec'd*  
 Morrell Stout  
 Thomas W. Tully  
 Lynn Watson  
 James Watts *rec'd*  
 Charles D. Whechel *rec'd*  
 J. V. Williams  
 ✓ Norman J. Winsor  
 Roger Wood *rec'd*

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