



# HENRYS LAKE FOUNDATION

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2006

### President's Message Ron Slocum

What an interesting year on the Lake called Henrys! I'll touch on several subjects, but detailed information will be in Damon Keen's report as well as information provided by Bob Bartsch, our project chairman.

**Targhee Creek.** Last month as many as 1,000 estimated fry per day came down the creek to the Lake as a result of our bridge project of last year. They are still coming as of this writing to the tune of 200-400/day. These estimated fry counts are much higher than the previous several years and a beginning of the promise of things to come.

**Fish Radio-telemetry Project.** We have committed \$4,000 to assist the F&G on a project to better understand the movement of fish in Henrys. See 'Adopt a Fish'.

**Kelly Springs and Duck Creek.** We have entered into a partnership with the U.S. Fisheries and Wildlife Service and Idaho F&G to begin \$15,000 of stream restoration projects.

**Fish Size and Condition.** Both are the best in my experience of over 35 years....lots of 7-11 pound hybrids, lots of cutts over 4 lbs. and many big brookies.

**Membership.** 2007 will be a year of concerted effort to increase our membership base. This effort is led by new director Phil Barker with assistance from Gail Eason. Please give us a hand with recruiting new members!

**Hatchery Creek.** A very sensitive sub-division proposal is being contested in court by the F&G. Bob Bartsch's article brings us up to date on this potential threat to the water source of our fish hatchery.

**Water Levels.** The Lake is hovering near 95% full thanks to 'Mother Nature' and the irrigators! Have a happy and productive winter. We look forward to a healthy Henrys Lake in 2007.

### The '**Release**'.... In 'Catch and Release' Bob Bartsch

Numerous anglers at Henrys have noticed the unnecessary death of improperly released fish this season. Many have seen fish float by belly up and lifeless downwind from a pod of boats. Last week two spin fishers in a \$25,000+ jet boat were landing fish by hauling them over the sides and allowing them to flop, then carelessly tossing them overboard. They had a large black rubber net in the boat, but didn't use it.

By flaring the operculae or gill covers a fish pumps water through its' mouth and over the gills transferring dissolved oxygen into its' bloodstream. This process works nearly the same in a human lung except that our lungs remove oxygen from air instead of water. When we hook a fish, a life or death struggle ensues with the fish exerting itself maximally to escape the tugging line until it is tired. Now, the spent fish is pulled out of the water unable to breathe, the hook removed, then, finally is put back into the water. To translate this event into human terms consider that a seven foot angry grizzly chases you down a path for 5 minutes. Upon catching you the bear tosses you into a lake and holds your head under for an additional minute or two. *How many people would survive this?*

25 donors of \$200 each can name a fish to be tracked by radio-telemetry. We will publish the results at the end of the study and the list of donors in an upcoming newsletter.

### Spring Membership Drive

Two special promotions are being offered to the individuals who sign the most new members between now and the beginning of next year's Henrys Lake fishing season.

*Awards for signing the most new **LIFE** members:*

**1st Place** – a 5 wt Sage 586 SLT rod, a \$530 retail value.

**2nd Place** – a Super 4 Abel reel, a \$440 retail value.

**3rd Place** – a 5 wt Scientific Anglers Mastery Stillwater Taper Fly Line, a \$60 retail value.

(Note: At least 3 new life members must be signed in order to qualify.)

*Awards for signing the most new **ANNUAL** members:*

**1st Place** – a 5 wt Sage 586-4 VT2 rod, a \$385 retail value.

**2nd Place** – an Abel Big Game Pt.5 reel, a \$330 retail value.

**3rd Place** – a 5 wt Scientific Anglers Mastery Uniform Sink Fly Line, a \$60 retail value.

(Note: At least 5 new annual members must be signed in order to qualify.)

Please include your member name with the new member's check. You may copy the enclosed membership form for your recruiting efforts.

HENRYS LAKE FOUNDATION  
P.O. BOX 1389  
WEST YELLOWSTONE,  
MT. 59758



Releasing a fish begins immediately after hooking up. Play the fish to death and that is what happens-death! Less is always better. In a lake like Henrys 3X or 4X tippet is standard. A good deal of 'umph' can be put on the fish to bring it in quickly. If the fish wants to run, that's fine, just keep the line taut and start reeling when the fish stops. The object is to bring the fish in before it is completely exhausted. This is most critical during the hotter weeks of summer. Cold water contains more dissolved oxygen than warm water. This is why fish are prone to stress during the heat of summer. If you are in a boat on Henrys have someone (or



Targhee bridge ribbon cutting in early June from L-R: Bob Bartsch & Ron Slocum, HLF; U.S. Senator, Mike Crapo; Mike Homza, Geo-engineers; Scott Christiansen, GYC; Lee Mabey, USFS. The culverts are gone and the fish are free to use their historic spawning grounds.

yourself) slip the net under the fish and bring it to the surface keeping the fish in the water.

Not all nets are created equal for releasing fish. The nylon, cloth or plastic strand nets are not as good as the ones with the wide rubber mesh because they remove fish slime from the skin of the fish. Slime, besides stinking, is a barrier between the skin of the fish and bacteria and other infectious agents in the water. This also applies to handling fish with bare hands-get them wet before touching the fish. I always have a needle holder or hemostat handy to remove the hook if it is deep in the fish's mouth. If the fly is in the tongue, the gill arches or deep in the throat, I generally cut the tippet and let the fish have the fly. The hook usually works out quickly and harmlessly. Avoid touching the gills-they are the fish's lungs and are just as delicate as yours! Brown trout are another reason for the hemostats or pliers. They have larger teeth, uppers and lowers, than other trout and they love to bite fingers that are trying to remove a hook.

The typical fish is hooked either in the angle of the jaw or on the lip under the nose. These hooks can easily be removed without lifting the fish, while the fish is still in the net in the water, or in shallow, calm water in a river. Avoid bringing it into the boat or

pulling it out on the bank if you are wading. Fish do not have much of a protective skeleton and their internal organs are easily damaged by flopping around. Remember, fish in the water generally stay calm catching their breath; fish in the hand or out of water wiggle and flop! Now, we have the hook out of the fish and are ready for the obligatory photo. **Only when the photographer is ready**, lift the fish from the water with one hand under the gill slits behind the jaws. The heart is just behind the pectoral fins where there is no bony support. Hold there and you interfere with their blood circulation. The other hand is best placed around the narrow part of the tail. Never lift a fish under it's belly with one hand. And, sliding a finger under the gill cover is a no-no! The lung thing, remember? Now, after the picture, lower the fish into the water, facing upstream in a river or gently moving the fish back and forth a few inches to help move water through the gills to encourage oxygenation. Tossing the fish into the water may undo much of what we have tried to accomplish thus far. Many of these fish drift to the bottom and go into shock, die and pop back up to the surface, belly up. If the fish is passive, it is exhausted, and may go into shock if turned loose now. Keep applying the 'artificial



When lifting a fish from the water, place one hand under the operculae and pectoral fins and the other under or around the narrow of the tail.

respiration' until the fish takes off on his own. You might even quietly thank the fish for playing! Not too loud, your buddy will think you are nuts!

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## IDAHO FISH AND GAME REPORT

Damon Keen,  
**Tributary Monitoring**

Excitement, enthusiasm, and outright gratification come to mind when I think about the Targhee/Howard creek culvert replacement projects. From the moment we witnessed the first Henrys Lake cutthroat swimming unimpeded from the new bridge over Targhee creek on Hwy 87, to the present time as we continue to capture, count, and measure the

offspring of those same fish; we realize what has been accomplished with the culvert replacement projects. This will stand as a critical and hugely beneficial project to improve natural spawning of the famed Henrys cutthroat. And when a coalition of individuals, groups, and agencies came together to complete this much needed project, success was the end result.

As of September 30<sup>th</sup>, the number of adults passing above the new bridge on Targhee and the resulting fry produced moving back down to the lake has been



Damon Keen counting young cutthroat migrating back to the Lake at the fry trap in Targhee Creek

better than anticipated. Adult cutthroat have moved close to 5 miles above the old culvert and there they have found habitat that is just right to make redds. Young cutthroat have hatched and made their way back to Henrys Lake to start the cycle again. Given decent water years ahead, natural production of the Henrys Lake cutthroat is on the upswing and the future is bright. And although the Howard creek natural production was not quite as dramatic, better numbers have been noted and like Targhee, production will only get better.

### Fish Stocking

The Henrys fish plants have been completed. The hatchery staff at Mackay and Ashton once again did an outstanding job of raising the Henrys fish and ended up planting fingerlings that were above size objectives. Larger fish size could result in better survival and this season's plants should provide an excellent year class of fish. Approximately 1.125 million cutthroat, 150 thousand hybrids, and over 100 thousand brook trout were planted. The plants went well with minimal mortality and predation at plant. The fingerlings dispersed well and have been sighted throughout the lake. Expect to begin seeing these fish next summer in the 8-10" range.

### Henrys Fishing

This year's fishing has been similar to last year, with catch rates around .5 fish per hour or two hours per fish. A .5 catch rate is considered good when

compared to historical rates. Once again Henrys is the place to be for a trophy sized fish. Hybrids up to 13 pounds, brook trout up to 6 pounds and cutthroat up to 7 pounds have been caught this year. Seeing a 4 pound brook or an 8, 9, or even 10 pound hybrid is not unexpected on any given day. We've seen a strong number of younger year class fish as well, indicating good year class strength. Fishing in October and November should be excellent as the fish move towards shallow water.

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### Proposed Subdivision on Hatchery Creek: A Threat to Henrys Lake

Early this spring the Board heard about meetings with the Island Park City Council and Planning and Zoning Committee considering a subdivision of 17 homes to go into the area adjoining the small spring creek. The spring is critical for Henrys since the water is used to oxygenate and incubate fertilized eggs that are eventually returned to the Lake as fingerlings. The hatchery requires pure, oxygenated water. Any significant nutrient, pathogen or chemical pollution, or sediment may lead to heavy losses and disruption of our fine stocking management program developed over so many years. The continued successful function of the hatchery is dependant upon the purity of that water. The City of Island Park approved the development and the permitting process is underway for septic systems and well drilling. Meanwhile the Idaho Fish and Game has filed a complaint with the Attorney General's office. The initial hearings will be held in December. The position of your Board of Directors is that the burden of proof should be on the developer. We feel they need to prove that the construction process, runoff, septic systems and functioning of the wells will not have deleterious effects on Hatchery Creek. Also, we believe the Mayor and City Council of Island Park need to formulate a twenty year plan for future development so that developers do not ruin this beautiful environment and world class fishery.

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### Adopt a Fish

We are funding a very interesting project at Henrys Lake this fall and would like to extend the fun to everyone. The Idaho F&G is planning to tag some fish in Henrys with radio-telemetry units. We decided to donate funds for radio-telemetry units for an additional 25 fish. This will allow IDFG to follow the tagged fish throughout the Lake for a period of one year. Do the fish disperse all over the Lake? Do they go up the tributaries? Do they remain in their area where they are stocked? Or, as some suggest, do they frantically move all over the Lake shuttling the fry to school at Staleys, run to the gym at the Cliffs and to the movies at Targhee? Help us find out! By phoning our secretary, Penny Zega (208-558-8899), the first