



Fall Newsletter 2009

President's Message

Once again we had a very good year of fishing at Henrys Lake. Catch rates were outstanding albeit slightly lower than the incredible year we had last year. Some of the best fishermen caught their share of 10 lb hybrids, large brooks and big numbers of cutthroat trout but the stories of larger fish were less frequent. Reports from IDFG indicate an improvement in the overall contribution of natural production so our stream habitat improvements are really paying off! It goes to show that the foundation work to maintain the diversion screens, weirs, culverts, fencing and overall riparian habitat of our tributaries is time and money well spent. Just as with every year, it is important that our annual fund raising efforts keep pace with our projects' budget. It is only the contributions of our membership that allow us to fulfill those needs. So thank you!

In 2010, the IDFG will initiate their fishing regulations review cycle. Changes in the fishing regulations will take effect starting in the 2011 season. The foundation has been proactive in addressing some of the most critical issues we see impacting the fishery and what the IDFG can do to help our collective cause. Essentially, the foundation has requested that the IDFG take a more conservative approach to the management and regulation of Henrys Lake. This is contrary to what occurred during the last review cycle when the IDFG liberalized the regulations by extending the fishing season through the end of November, allowing fishing 24 hours a day and opening up the tributaries to fishing July 1 through the end of November. The directors would like to see those decisions reversed.

Why? First, with respect to the 24 hour fishing, the threat of invasive species such as Eurasian Watermilfoil, Quagga mussels and Zebra mussels is all very real. The Idaho Department of Agriculture has jurisdiction over the preventative measures to thwart the introduction of invasive species. The department funded the purchase of the boat wash stations located at the three primary boat launches on the lake. Fremont County, with a contribution from the foundation, funded the staffing of the boat wash attendants. It would not be economically viable or practical for the boat washes to be staffed 24 hours a day through November. This is why we have requested that the IDFG help in these efforts by returning the fishing day to 1 hour before sunrise to 1 hour after sunset instead of 24 hours a day, and returning the end of the fishing season to October 31 instead of November 30.

Second, regarding the tributaries, the foundation board asked for closure of the tributaries to all fishing in order to protect the natural reproduction of the Yellowstone Cutthroat. The current regulations allow fishing in the tributaries July 1st through November 30th. The prior regulations only allowed fishing in the tributaries during the month of August.

Third, we asked the management designation of the fishery be changed to "Trophy" instead of "Quality". A trophy designation is intended to provide a greater percentage of larger fish. The lake was actually designated as a trophy fishery from 1976 through 1986.

Finally, the last key item that we requested of the IDFG is to conduct a detailed Utah chub assessment with a plan for controlling the growing population of chubs. The board feels as though it is only a matter of time until the chub population adversely impacts the fishery. Unfortunately there are not a lot of viable alternatives when that does occur so the foundation would like to see the chub population controlled now instead of waiting until it is too late.

Although the board has unanimously approved the stance we have taken on each of these issues, we want to make sure that we are accurately representing our membership. PLEASE complete and return the enclosed survey. I wish everyone a safe and fun winter. Please take this opportunity to make a tax deductible donation to the foundation. As a completely volunteer organization, every dollar helps fund our projects.

Thank you for your support,
Phil Barker

Colonel Bill Walker

By John Baer

The Henry's Lake Community has lost a good friend and life member of the foundation, a gentleman in the true sense of the word. Colonel Bill Walker passed away on September 8, just a few weeks short of his 94th birthday.

Bill first started coming to the northeastern Idaho / Yellowstone area shortly after his retirement as an Air Force Career Officer. Although he spent a few years in military intelligence work most of his service career was spent test flying combat airplanes. He flew well more than 50 types of airplanes during his career, many of them pictured on his memory wall at the Walker winter home at Air Force Village West in Riverside, CA. After military retirement, Bill served for a few years as a consultant for missile engine design for General Dynamics.

In the early 70s, Bill decided he wanted to have a permanent home at Henry's, found a perfect spot right on the northern shore and pulled the permit to cut some lodgepoles. With a home-made gin pole on the front of his Chevy truck the logs were cut, loaded and hauled to the home site. With minimum help, over four years his new self-designed, self-engineered cabin took shape. It was lovingly named "Tall Timber".

Bill Walker was an avid fly-fisherman and outdoorsman and traveled the world, sometimes alone, sometimes with his fishing buddies. Alaska was a favorite destination and he floated the 49th state salmon and steelhead rivers on four different occasions. Other foreign fishing destinations include Costa Rica, Belize, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania, Christmas Island, Kamchatka (Siberia), and Karelia (European Russia). Closer to home, Bill enjoyed fishing the Park, with favorite spots on Fan Creek, the Yellowstone River, Firehole, Madison, Nez Pearce, Lamar and Slough Creek. Outside the park, he fished the Missouri and he'd take his canoe or inflatable raft down Henry's Fork. And, of course, Henry's Lake fishing from his speedy white boat christened Dolly II.

The Walker family had roots in Eastern Texas, near Texarkana, so as a young lad Bill learned to fish on the lakes and bayous of Louisiana and Texas. When he went to California for his retirement years he became intrigued with fly-fishing and joined an FFF affiliated club in Santa Monica. The club sponsored fly tying and Bill became an expert with the vise and bobbin.

Bill and his wife Gloria would come up to Henry's Lake every summer, usually by the end of May. Bill enjoyed driving his sporty little BMW and they'd make the long haul, usually via Las Vegas, often in record time due to Bill's lead foot, sometimes to the delight of the Highway Patrol. After the first few snows in mid October the Walkers would head back to Southern California to spend the winters.

Over their years at Henry's Lake, the Walkers entertained guests from all over the country and from Australia and New Zealand. His daughter, Laurie, and granddaughters would also make summer visits to Tall Timber. Although quiet and reserved, Bill became good friends with a number of West Yellowstone fly-shop owners, also a number of artists such as Shirley Cleery and Mike Stidham. The walls of Tall Timber are covered in fishing art and memorabilia of his fishing trips.

Colonel Bill liked nothing more than sitting in his overstuffed easy chair by his huge picture window, watching the day begin and end over Henry's Lake and Sawtelle Peak.

IDFG Report

Damon Keen, IDFG Regional Fisheries Biologist

The 2009 fishing season has wrapped up and it's hard for me to imagine that I've seen 9 of those seasons now. One thing that continues to surprise me is the changes I see from year to year. And, predicting catch rates is akin to predicting the stock market. However, I still remember the exhilaration I felt in the early hours of opening day 2005 as I witnessed bent rod after bent rod. After some tough years, anglers were being rewarded for their patience with our management decisions. Fortunately, four of the past five years have provided good catch rates. And, I hope we don't see environmental conditions like we saw in 2007. But it's only a wish and I know that we'll be facing challenges again and again.

In 2009, we completed a major creel survey. We'll be compiling that data throughout the winter, and we'll have results in early spring. I can already tell everyone that our catch rates were strong. But the rates were somewhat up and down throughout the season; certainly more so than in our terrific 2008 season. Some anglers reported fewer large fish than in prior years. In looking at our plant numbers that does make sense. In 2004 we had low dissolved oxygen levels at spawning, and that resulted in only 30k hybrids being planted that fall. Those five year old fish would be some of our larger fish. Our objective is to plant 200k hybrids, so that was an exceptionally light plant. Many anglers' reports indicated some of the best brook trout angling in years. A brief look at our numbers seems to validate that. And, I have to smile somewhat when I repeat one of our most senior anglers reports of his best September ever. After many decades of fishing Henry's I salute him. Not for numbers, but for perseverance. Without question there will never be another.

During 2010, the Idaho Fish and Game will be taking public comment on regulation proposals. Public meeting dates will be announced during spring and early summer. Attend a public meeting if possible. It's a good time to find out how we look at data, and turn that into management decisions and/or regulations. Public comment is solicited and appreciated. If you can't attend a meeting, we still appreciate your comments. Website, email, letter, or phone comments are all important.

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And the most important topic in my opinion. “Turn someone on” to fishing and/or hunting. Sure, it’s in the Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s best interest. But as anglers and hunters it is also in our best interest. I’ve worked with Idaho anglers and hunters as a major function of my job for over 30 years now. I can say that we, the sporting public, are not doing our best job in this realm. The young and old need us as much as ever. Recently, a father and his kids spent their Thanksgiving meal in a tent at Henrys Lake. Without question, those youngsters will turn events like that into passion for the out of doors. I hope to see them in the field with their children one day; alongside my grandkids.

Projects Report

By Ron Zega, Director

Several important projects which had been jointly sponsored and supported by Henrys Lake Foundation grants were completed this past year. The total of funds spent by the Foundation on these projects in 2009 was \$17,400. Among these projects were the installation of automated water temperature and flow sensors in July on Targhee, Duck and Howard Creeks, the major spawning tributaries of Henrys Lake. These sensors will permit Idaho Fish & Game to create a database of stream levels and temperatures in order to assess future stream spawning enhancement.

In September, a new diversion screen was installed on Duck Creek on the Taft property. Our thanks to John and Melody Taft for their cooperation in this effort.

In September/October, the U.S. Forest Service replaced an existing obstructive culvert on Red Rock Road where the uppermost tributary of Duck Creek passes beneath. The new culvert will facilitate the upstream passage of spawning trout and the downstream passage of fry on this important tributary. An additional 3 culverts on Red Rock Road will be replaced during 2010.

Finally, HLF funded the hiring and salary of one full-time attendant to man a wash station at Wild Rose Resort for the 2009 summer season. This wash station is part of a Fremont County initiative to prevent the introduction into Henrys Lake of invasive species, particularly Eurasian Watermilfoil, Quagga mussels and Zebra mussels. The prevention of invasive species introduction is perhaps the single most important issue facing Henrys Lake. Accordingly, the Foundation has both petitioned the Fremont County Commissioners and Idaho Fish & Game to coordinate the annual fishing season and hours, as well as boat washing efforts to address the invasive species risk.

Three additional projects aggregating \$23,000 in Foundation funding are scheduled for completion in 2010. Two projects are for two major new diversion screens on Targhee Creek; the third is for the installation of a fish weir on Duck Creek.



Lee Mabey from the USFS (blue shirt) and crew installing the new culvert on upper Duck Creek. Three other culverts on upper Duck Creek will be replaced in the summer of 2010. Some road closures on Red Rock Road should be anticipated.



Ron Zega and Damon Keen with one of the new temperature and flow sensors installed on Targhee Creek. Sensors were also installed on Howard and Duck Creeks.

IDFG Regulation Change Process

IDFG will be holding public meetings in the spring of next year to discuss changes in the fishing regulations. Unfortunately many of us will be wintering far away and unable to attend. IDFG takes the public feedback and formulates a proposal of changes that can then be further commented upon prior to its submission to the commissioners for approval. It is essential that our membership submit feedback to the IDFG as part of this process. The greater our response the more likely the changes will reflect our input. I would encourage everyone to contact Dan Garren with your support of our requested changes.

Dan Garren, Regional Fishery Manager

Dan.garren@idfg.idaho.gov

Phone: 208-525-7290

Idaho Department of Fish and Game

4279 Commerce Circle

Idaho Falls, ID 83401

The IDFG has a page on their website where they will post items for public feedback. I would encourage everyone to bookmark this page and watch for postings in the March—April 2010 timeframe.

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/public/>

Quality and Trophy Trout Rules

The terms “quality” and “trophy” have been applied to trout fisheries by anglers and managers to mean various things, including whether fish were of native or wild origin or not and the aesthetics of the surroundings. Within the context of the Department’s fish management programs and this plan, however, they are used to refer to specific management programs that utilize special regulations to increase the average size of trout in a fishery. They generally provide increased catch rates as well. Trout may be of wild, natural, or hatchery origin. Quality and trophy trout management differ in the size of trout the regulations are designed to produce. They are defined as follows:

Quality Trout Management - A management program using special regulations that reduces or delays mortality to provide increased size of trout, but where less than 20% of the fish exceed 16 inches. Quality trout management is appropriate for lakes and streams with poorer productivity and growth potential, or on waters with trophy growth potential where the majority of affected anglers desire to retain more harvest opportunity than that provided under trophy management.

Trophy Trout Management - A management program using special regulations that reduces or delays mortality to provide increased catch rates and increased size of trout such that 20% or more of the trout exceed 16 inches. Trophy trout management is appropriate for lakes and streams with good productivity and growth potential where the majority of affected anglers desire to forego most or all harvest opportunity in order to catch large trout.

How Do We Determine Natural Reproduction

By Damon Keen, IDFG Regional Fisheries Biologist

First of all, it’s important to confirm that our work on the tributaries cannot only be tied to natural reproduction. Benefits derived from tributary enhancement also include: Improved water quality, reduced water temperatures, reduced sedimentation, improved fish passage for fish refuge, reduced waste delivered to the tributaries and lake, and many other ancillary benefits. The department spends thousands of dollars in wages and materials annually to maintain riparian fencing and fish screens to ensure that these benefits are perpetuated. This is an expenditure that’s quite unusual within the department’s responsibilities when it comes to the resident fishery program. These expenditures certainly signify the value that the department places within the Henrys Lake ecosystem. The payoff is tremendous. But without the department’s commitment, these programs would certainly wane and/or disappear. The department has taken on this commitment even in the face of tighter budgetary pressures.

Evaluation of the tributary/natural production has taken place using various methods. The most common method the department has used is adipose fin clip ratios. Using adipose fin clips to evaluate natural production is a common and valid method to determine percentages of hatchery and/or natural production within a system. Basically, a certain percentage of hatchery fish are fin clipped (adipose) prior to release and then evaluation is made from samples within the lake population of fish to determine hatchery and natural contribution. 10% of all hatchery reared cutthroat are fin

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clipped annually at Henrys Lake. After sampling the lake population, if 10% of sampled fish within the lake population are determined to be adipose fin clipped, then we can confirm that the entire population of cutthroat within the lake is hatchery origin. Any percentage less than 10% can be evaluated to be production other than hatchery (natural). For example, if a valid population sample of Henrys Lake cutthroat are determined to have 5% adipose fin clips, then we can determine that 50% ($5\% = \frac{1}{2}$ of 10% clipped fish) of the population are hatchery origin. The other $\frac{1}{2}$ of the population therefore are natural production. If 7% of the population is determined to be adipose fin clipped, then 70% of the population is hatchery origin and 30% is natural production.

We use several samples when evaluating this adipose fin ratio. First, all fish that return to the hatchery ladder are examined for adipose clips. This generally provides a large sample number (5000 or so). The second sample we take is from fish acquired by gillnetting. Gillnetting provides a large sample to evaluate natural and hatchery production. Our protocol at Henrys is to take 50 gillnets annually (ice out sometimes impacts this protocol). Again, all fish that are caught via gillnet sampling are checked for adipose fin clips. A third sample is taken during the creel survey. Again, every harvested fish is checked for adipose fin clips. A fourth sample was evaluated this year when we electro shocked fish for a tag retention study. And again, all fish were checked for adipose fin ratios.

Done correctly, adipose fin ratios are a valuable and scientifically sound tool to evaluate population contribution. It's also important to use this tool over the course of several years to determine trends. We all have run into the problem of looking at one sample and making an evaluation that later turned out to be incorrect. Analysis and interpretation of data is a rigorous process that often requires consultation for correct interpretation.

Another natural reproduction evaluation tool that we have used at Henrys is tributary fry trapping. The fry at Henrys are unique because they migrate to the lake soon after hatch. This unique trait makes it difficult to successfully evaluate fry. Trapping the migrating fry using traps called a Krey Meekin was completed at Henrys during the summer and fall of 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006. Additionally, spot checks were completed during 2008. Krey Meekin traps work fairly well in streams that have constant flows and are relatively debris free. Krey Meekin traps require maintenance and physical checks 1 or 2 times a day (occasionally more) for a period of approximately 4 months. On Henrys Lake, it is not uncommon for the traps to be periodically ineffective or "not fishing". Other methods of natural production evaluation also are implemented periodically at Henrys. Those methods are spawner and redd counts.

In the early 2000's, after many years of planting tributaries, our data suggested that natural production was minimal. Additionally, survival of hatchery fingerlings was not as good as we determined it could be. Our fisheries management team took aggressive steps to improve natural production, as well as steps to improve hatchery fry survival. Hatchery fry were planted at sites directly at lakeside. This step dispersed fry rapidly to the lake environment and minimized competition with natural spawned fry. This step also reduced fry predation, and permitted access to the lake environment regardless of tributary flows. Lakeside planting also allowed for fry transport via "tankers" that improved small fry survival both during transportation and subsequent release.

What were and are the results? From the lowest recorded catch rates on record (2003 and 2004); the catch rate had tripled by 2005. Four of the last 5 years (2005-2009) have shown good to excellent catch rates. Even in the down year of 2007, the management team was confident that our population was excellent and catch rates were linked to environmental conditions rather than fish populations. The 2008 season confirmed that analysis and we were back in the black with catch rates. Many commented that the 2008 season was the best in 20 years. 2009 has turned into another excellent year; although catch rates are somewhat lower than 2008. Many other factors contributed to this success, but our management actions were instrumental in driving much of this improvement.

And what about natural production? After several years of minimal production on that front, our data suggests that we are seeing significant contribution from the tributaries. We are patiently gathering data, but our trend is definitely showing positive results. Our management plans have been exceptionally successful and once again, Henry Lake is as fine a public trout fishery as exists. The HLF can take a great deal of credit and accolades for this accomplishment. The tributary work that has been completed over the past 25 years is without question, yielding terrific results. Additionally, the IDFG can be excited about the accomplishments. There are many state natural resource agencies that would love to have the existing fishery on Henrys. It was and is one of the finest tributes to Idaho's natural resource bounty.

2010 Fundraiser for Henrys Lake Foundation
Saturday July 3, 5:30pm-9:00pm
Union Pacific Dining Hall, West Yellowstone MT

Over the last three years the foundation has held two fundraisers: a July picnic and an August dinner. Unfortunately the weather has not cooperated very well and guests have experienced cold temperatures, high winds and rain at one event or the other over the last couple of years. After much discussion and input from attendees of prior year fundraisers, the directors have opted for one event in 2010, and it won't be in a tent where the weather might cause trouble.

The new event will be a dinner with both a silent auction and a live auction. The location is the Union Pacific Dining Hall in West Yellowstone. We'll have a sit down dinner with great wine and live music in an historic setting. This will be a fun filled evening with an opportunity to support the important work of the Henrys Lake Foundation. Tickets are \$75 per person and can be ordered by calling Penny Zega 480-563-3898 or Phil Barker 208-558-9660.

The 2010 Dinner is still an all volunteer effort and the following committees are looking for help. Please call Penny or Phil and we'll connect you with the right group:

Event Manager: Penny Zega	Facilities: Steve and Lorraine Snipper
Catering: Ron and Penny Zega	Table Decorations: Melody Taft
Donations: Ron Zega	Music: Phil Barker
Event Attendance: Lynne and Richard Hodge	

The foundation is soliciting from its members fishing gear, wine, art and other items suitable for the silent and live auctions. If you would like to make a donation please contact us by June 15, 2010.

2009 Donor Honor Roll

(Since publication of 2008 Fall Newsletter)

\$1000+

Marge and Bob Bartsch
John Herritt

\$200+

Gem State Fly Fishers
Marvin Hawks
Terry and Joanne Hogue
Robert Mielbrecht

\$100+

Rick Barker
Rex Bigler
Jonnie and Roger Camping
Damon and Carolyn Keen

Mel Kemp
Marilyn & Frank Moore
Dr & Mrs Lon Rich
James Stone
James Wood

Other

Sallie Backus
Dexter Ball
Eva Barker
Carl Bianchi
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Enhancing and protecting the fishery of Henrys Lake