



Fall Newsletter 2010

President's Message

In the quarterly IDFG commissioner's meeting in Jerome, Idaho, on November 17-18, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the extension of the fishing season at Henrys Lake thru January 1. Along with the other IDFG proposals presented and approved all regulation changes will go into affect starting January 1, 2011 so the first extended ice fishing season will be December 2011 through January 1, 2012. Two other approved regulation changes that will directly affect us are 1) The brook trout bag limit on Henrys Lake tributaries was changed to 25 with only 2 brook trout over 16", and 2) The season on the Henrys Lake tributaries was extended from July 1 through March 31 with catch-and-release for cutthroat trout throughout the entire season.

As many of you know, we have actively lobbied to stop the season extension ever since we first heard about it in July 2009. Almost all of you voted unanimously in the fall 2009 newsletter survey to not extend the season and instead shorten it to the end of October as it was up until 2007. Our argument was that as the premier trophy fishing lake in the Western U.S. and as the last bastion of the Yellowstone Cutthroat trout, Henrys Lake was deserving of special regulations to preserve that status. While the Foundation has never lobbied against any type of fishing, it is our view that Henrys Lake is a unique and fragile fishery and was due special treatment and that a season extension exposed the lake to inordinate trophy harvest and mortality by ice fishermen, particularly when nearby Island Park Reservoir provides ample ice fishing opportunity. In other words, we have a philosophical objection to the IDFG increasingly treating Henrys Lake as a put-and-take fishery and more fully utilizing the resource while we envision it as a trophy summer sports fishery that needs to be protected.

HLF Director Steve Snipper and I were both in attendance at the meeting to offer our testimony. In addition, many Henrys Lake anglers in attendance also spoke out against the season extension for the same reasons. Everyone advocated that the resource should be protected and that further liberalization of the regulations puts the fishery at even greater risk. In opposition, the IDFG justified the season extension based upon fish population statistics claiming that additional harvest by ice fishermen will not adversely affect the fishery. In addition, they presented survey results that showed the majority of randomly surveyed anglers favored an extended season. Interestingly, our survey opinions were largely dismissed as being biased. Although the commissioners appreciated all the impassioned comments, they valued the biologic facts over our social and philosophical concerns.

To say the least we are disappointed. Our mission to protect and enhance the fishery at Henrys Lake remains unchanged but we face a significant challenge with the IDFG continuing to liberalize the regulations in support of increased angler opportunity and simplification of the regulations - two of their stated strategic goals. Just as the IDFG extended the season in 2007 and then again this year, they may do it again in future years. We have no reassurance that they won't and even told us so at the November meeting.

So where do we go from here. The HLF directors have voted unanimously to suspend funding of all future IDFG projects until further notice. The Board first suspended funding in October once we confirmed that the IDFG had finalized their proposal and was awaiting the vote of the commissioners. Although we have maintained a strong partnership with the IDFG for the last 29 years, it was too optimistic to think that our social and philosophical arguments would cause them to not extend the season. I know they considered the consequences of losing our support when the season extension was first proposed but it was still not enough to stop them. Somewhat ironically they actually considered this a compromise since one of their proposals was to extend the season through the end of January.

Given the IDFG's liberalization of the regulations on Henrys Lake both now and probably again in the future, the foundation needs to rethink its almost exclusive partnership with them. Despite an excellent historic working relationship with IDFG Regional Biologist Damon Keen, we need to identify projects and funding opportunities that are not solely reliant upon the IDFG but still maintain our mission to protect and enhance the Henrys Lake fishery. I have asked each of the directors to identify future projects following this guideline. I look forward to sharing those ideas with you in our spring newsletter. I am confident that we will be able to put this issue behind us and move forward. As always I welcome your ideas and feedback.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Phil Barker
President, Henrys Lake Foundation

IDFG Report

Damon Keen, IDFG Regional Fisheries Biologist

I just spent some time reading through an angler's journals that he had provided to me. The journals covered 11 years from the late 80's until the late 90's. The journals were detailed and included not only the author's notes, but also notations from other anglers. It was interesting to read about his angling success and or lack thereof during that period. A couple of details I gained from the journals included his references of 3 fish exceeding 10 pounds during that time frame. None of the fish were caught by the author and he actually only observed one of those fish. Certainly there were fish exceeding 10 pounds that the author didn't know about. But how different was the last decade when so many anglers landed that 10 pound plus fish! The other detail I noted from his journals included the frustration from time to time. His catch rate success would often go from "unbelievable" to "p___ poor" in a matter of days. Sound familiar?

A brief review for angling in 2010 includes a pretty decent year overall, with the common ups and downs Henrys is noted for. A highlight of the year included excellent catch rates for brook trout. With the exception of 2007, angling at Henrys has been good the last several years. The poor catch rates of the early 2000's are only a memory and Henrys is doing well.

As most of you have undoubtedly heard, the fishing season on Henrys has been extended through January 1st, beginning in 2011. There were many of you that expressed concern about a possible season extension. Although the concern was sincere, the reality is that the season extension and ice fishery during that extra month will almost certainly not have an impact on the fish population. To that end, our 2010 creel survey was focused on the November fishery and most notably on the ice fishing. A few notes from that survey follow:

- Ice anglers released 86% and harvested 14% of the fish they caught.

- An estimated 3750 hours of ice angling effort resulted in 775 fish harvested and 4,787 fish released.

- Ice angling effort was relatively heavy on several days, but light on others, dependent on the weather conditions.

- Ice angling effort and harvest numbers were similar to the open water angling. The percentage of fish harvested vs. released was actually lower than what we normally see in the open water angling.

- The average size of fish harvested during ice angling was slightly higher than the 2009 survey. Approximately 52% of the fish harvested were cutthroat, 33% brook trout and 14% hybrid. This was similar to the actual catch rate. It doesn't appear that a species of fish was targeted for harvest.

Using these numbers, we can estimate that the new season extension will result in approximately 2,500 fish harvested during the entire month of December, or about 600 fewer fish harvested than during the first three days of the open water angling in 2009 (Memorial Day Weekend) and about ½ the harvest we've noted on some other opening weekends. That December estimated harvest also represents less than 1% of the estimated fish population in Henrys and is far below a level that would have a notable impact on the Henrys fish population. More importantly, our yearly harvest on Henrys will remain near or below 5% of the total population, which is an exceptionally low harvest rate for a productive fishery such as Henrys.

Average daily angling effort will probably decrease as more opportunity and a longer season has been provided. Anglers might not be as inclined to rush up for the few ice angling days and may spread out the effort. If the average daily angling effort goes down, so will the estimated harvest for the month. As is the case with the open water angling, weather plays a large role in angler participation on Henrys. The unrelenting winds of last summer provide ample evidence of this fact, as do the sub zero temperatures of a few weeks ago.

Regardless, yearly angler harvest is not a major factor in fish mortality or the fish population at Henrys Lake. Natural mortality plays a much larger role relative to fish survival in the lake. Henrys Lake is a special place and the IDFG has worked hard to maintain it as such. Department personnel understand that Henrys is one of the most important fisheries we have in the state. Maintaining it as such, while providing opportunity has and will remain the department's focus. We will continue to monitor Henrys Lake so it may provide unparalleled success for the generations to come. That's in all of our best interest!

Brook Trout Study-A brook trout diet study was initiated in 2010. Currently, samples are being examined and we are compiling data. The main objective of the study was to determine if brook trout are feeding on chubs within this system. Results should be forthcoming next spring.

Water Quality-Henrys Lake had ample water this fall, and early snows look good to date. The lake should be near full by early next spring. The lake froze completely on November 21st. Department personnel will begin to monitor dissolved oxygen levels as soon as safety permits (normally, late December). Our depletion model that we've used for over 15 years will then be employed to determine aeration necessity. No significant events were noted that would indicate unusual concern this winter, but our wintertime monitoring is our best tool for predicting dissolved oxygen conditions.

Fall 2010 Fish Plants

A summary of the fall plants and the relation to the management objectives follows by species.
Yellowstone cutthroat-1.33 million stocked. Slightly above the objective of 1.3 million.

Fall 2010 Fish Plants—continued

Hybrids-138,000 stocked. Below the objective of 200,000. Disease protocol necessitated the department to obtain milt from a different source last spring. Egg survival was not as good as we've seen in some years, so our final plant numbers were below objective. On the good side, the hybrids we did plant looked good going into the lake. Since brook trout survival has been exceptional the past several years, we plan on trying to duplicate that with the hybrids. The department will take additional hybrids this spring and attempt to raise them to a larger release size. The goal is to improve survival of hybrids.

A special note here on hybrids. Egg survival fluctuates dramatically from year to year. Due to dissolved oxygen depletion in 2004, our hybrid plants were exceptionally light that year. Some anglers have commented on fewer large hybrids the last couple of years. This is a valid observation, but probably related to planting numbers rather than angler harvest.

Brook Trout-93,000 stocked. Below the objective of 100,000, but sufficient to maintain good catch rates.

Overall numbers-Approximately 1.56 million fish stocked in 2010 (Objective 1.6 million). The numbers of fish planted is sufficient to produce good numbers of fish in the future. The department will monitor this year class of fish and will determine survival at 2 years of age (spring of 2012).

Projects Report

By Ron Zega, Director

During calendar 2010 two HLF sponsored and jointly funded projects were completed. The first was the construction in October of a fish weir on a section of Duck Creek immediately below Red Rock Road. This weir will facilitate the upstream passage of spawning cut-throat trout and the downstream passage of fry through a problematic section of Duck Creek. Combined with the prior years' Foundation sponsored stream fencing, willow planting and stream bed hardening, Duck Creek now supports spawning trout from the lake shore to Red Rock Road.

The second Foundation sponsored project was the replacement of 2 of the 3 remaining old culverts where Duck Creek passes beneath Red Rock Road. Led by Lee Mabee of the U.S. Forest Service, these obstructive culverts were replaced in October and November of this year and will permit the upstream passage of spawning trout and downstream passage of fry on this



Above: New bridge and culvert on Red Rock Road just before the Henrys Lake Road intersection.



Left: The new weir on Duck Creek

Two projects sponsored and committed for partial funding which were previously scheduled for installation in 2010 have been temporarily postponed. These are the installation of two new diversion screens on Targhee Creek below Highway 89. Postponement of installation resulted from work load rescheduling due to improved screen design at the Idaho Fish and Game Screen Shop in Salmon, Idaho. Both of these redesigned screens are now scheduled for installation in the fall of 2011. With the installation of these screens, Targhee Creek will now have all new modern diversion screens from Hwy 89 to the lake.

Duck Creek Culverts Project

By Lee Mabee, U. S. Forest Service

The Forest Service continues to work on Duck Creek to improve fish passage and habitat conditions for spawning Yellowstone cutthroat from Henry's Lake. The end goal of this project is to provide unobstructed passage for spawning fish to 6 miles of Duck Creek and its tributaries. In 2009 the upper most culvert (#4) was replaced and in 2010 culverts #1 and #3 were replaced with two 20 foot bridges. These bridges will improve passage and the function of the stream as flows are no longer restricted by small culverts.

However for those of you familiar with the area you may be scratching your heads wondering why Culvert #2 has not been replaced as it is the worst barrier of the 4. That's kind of a long story but it will have a happy ending. As these bridges are rather expensive the Forest Service has been working with the private landowner, BLM who holds a conservation easement on the private land and Fremont County to move the road and avoid crossing #2 all together. We thought we were all set and ready to go this past October but found we still had some hoops to jump through. These hoops have now been successfully negotiated due to the willingness of all the partners so culvert #2 will be removed next fall during low water and the road moved. So in the end there will be one less road crossing. Unfortunately the fish will have to wait one more year.



This water gap has been closed and natural channel width restored.



One of the two new bridges and culverts on Red Rock Road this one near Duck Creek Ranch.

Map 2.



The Forest has also been completing other work on Duck Creek. We received \$5,000 in 2010 from the Eastern Idaho Regional Advisory Council to harden two cattle water-gaps and provide funding to Idaho Fish and Game to rebuild a section of electric fence they maintain to keep cattle out of Duck Creek. In the end we totally excluded cattle from one water gap and hardened the other one to decrease sediment input to the stream.

Idaho Fish and Game has also completed work on an irrigation diversion just downstream of the Culvert #1 to eliminate the drop and to stabilize the channel to improve fish passage. This was done by constructing a series of rock weirs to stabilize and raise the channel where the irrigation structure had caused the channel to down cut.

Phil's October Fishing Tales



Life Member David Reese with a beautiful trophy hybrid.

David's Big One -

It was a windy day out on Henrys. Most all the boats had been 'blown off'. David saw me fishing when the 'surf was up'. He said, "You must be crazy." I said, "No, the fishing is really good." He pulled in about 100 yards above me. I had just released a 9 lb hybrid which was my first and only fish of the day. Within a couple of minutes I see David and his fishing buddy Jim Wood are catching fish. I hear "Thank you Phil". I had to leave shortly thereafter so David moved down to where I was. Later that night after dinner I got a telephone message that he had caught some big fish in that spot. I saw him a few days later and this is the picture he showed me. What a great catch! Oh, and the spot we were fishing, sorry I can't tell you.



1 line, 2 flies, 2 fish in the net, a first!

Phil's Double -

For all the years I have been fishing, this has never happened to me. I was fishing two flies. I was in my float tube pretty close to the shore in shallow water. It was one of those times where the fish are in tight. I hooked a fish and started bringing him in. As it got a closer I said geeze it looks like his buddy is following him to the net. When I tried to net the first fish the leader to the second fly was tight. I said to myself oh oh I've got both hooked how do land two at a time. Anyhow it worked. I had my new Lake Magnum net from Wachter Nets and I am glad I did. Both fish were hooked in the lip. To say the least I think my flies were working that day! Love the new net!

If you have a fun story and picture please let us know..
Send an email to web@henryslakefoundation.com with the picture attached
and we would be glad to include in our next newsletter.

Annual Election Results

As part of our summer 2010 newsletter we included election ballots. It was the first time that we had ever done so. The response was great with more members voting than those that attend the annual fund raiser. As such, the board has taken a decision to send out ballots annually with the spring/summer newsletter from now on. As noted on those ballots, the board welcomes nominees for inclusion on the ballots but it is essential that the board has a chance to meet the proposed candidate well in advance. So please make sure that your nominee is made known to the board at least 3-4 months prior to the publication of the newsletter.

The results of the last election are as follows:

Officers Re-elected

Phil Barker, President
John Taft, Vice President
Penny Zega, Secretary/Treasurer

Directors Elected/Re-elected

Red Ferris	John Taft
Lynne Hodge	Melody Taft
Richard Hodge	

Annual Renewals

If you are an annual member your annual renewal notice was mailed with the newsletter. Annual memberships are now calendar based so renewal notices will only be sent out at year end as part of the newsletter mailing. Please note—this will be the only notice that you receive so please take the time to renew your membership now. Annual memberships are \$50. If you prefer you can upgrade to a lifetime membership for a one-time payment of \$300 and receive a free HLF fishing shirt along with your life member lapel pin. Just fill out the renewal card accordingly.

2010 Summer Donor Honor Roll

(Since publication of 2010 Summer Newsletter)

\$1000+

John Herritt

\$500+

Marge and Bob Bartsch
Donald Jordan
Tyler Thompson

\$250+

EJ Eagleton
Terry and Joanne Hogue
Mel Kemp
John and Melody Taft

\$100+

Rex Bigler
HC and Kay Bohlscheid
Milford Dahl

Doris Hawkins
Richard and Lynne Hodge
Mark and Amy Miyamoto
Frank & Marilyn Moore
Tom Odell
Larry Purefoy
Lon and Mary Ann Rich
Leslie and Janet Rickerd

Other

Cindy and Corey Anneke
Eva Barker
Dean L Bunderson
Jon Bunderson
David Clark
Curtis Coman
Doug Cornett
Todd Eason
Robert Foote

Dick Frencer
Gene Gantt
Ed and Margaret Given
Sandy Hayes
Pat Huber
Bill Johnson
George Lang
Jeffery Scheel
Tom Schell
Gerald Waller
John and Elizabeth Whitman
Kathleen Wright

Henrys Lake Foundation

Officers

Phil Barker, President
John Taft, Vice President
Penny Zega, Secretary/Treasurer

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Enhancing and protecting the fishery of Henrys Lake