

## Aquatic Plants Key to Trout Habitat

**Plants provide optimal conditions for the Ranch's wild rainbow trout**

The centerpiece of the Henry's Fork wild trout fishery is Harriman State Park—a.k.a. "The Ranch"—arguably the most famous dry-fly fishing water anywhere. Every summer, anglers from around the world flock to this flat-water reach of the Henry's Fork for the thrill of casting to large, wild trout feeding on a buffet of aquatic insects.

For decades, research and restoration efforts on this reach of river focused on young trout. The Buffalo River fish ladder and improved winter flow management have provided more habitat for young fish and increased the number of two-year-old fish that enter the population of wild trout each year.

But once those young fish grow up to become the large trout anglers want to catch, what creates habitat for them? The first year of a wild trout habitat-use study by HFF and Grand Valley State University suggests the short answer is aquatic plants.

### Habitat Needs of Adult Wild Trout

Adult trout need cool water, oxygen, cover, and food. Optimal water temperatures range from 50°F to 66°F, with maximum trout growth occurring at the top end of this range. Trout require dissolved oxygen concentrations of at least 6 mg/L and preferably 8-12 mg/L. As water warms, the amount of oxygen it can contain decreases, and trout can become stressed due to lack of oxygen when temperatures exceed 70°F.

Adult trout require cover that will conceal them from predators, and they need areas of low current velocity where they can rest while not feeding. The majority of a rainbow trout's diet consists of invertebrates (insects, leeches, snails, etc.). In turn, these invertebrates, including most aquatic insects of interest to anglers, require the same things that trout do: cool water, oxygen, cover, and food.

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Macrophytes hold the key to wild trout habitat in the Ranch; they provide cover, produce oxygen, support invertebrates, and increase water depth. The photo above shows the Henry's Fork below Osborne Bridge in March 2014.



By fall, thick plant growth covers the same location. Photo above was taken during September 2011.

# Celebrating 30 Years

Thank you to donors from the HFF board chair

We are overjoyed at the prospect of celebrating our 30th Anniversary as a non-profit organization this year. For three decades, your unwavering support has ensured that there has been a dedicated team of staff and volunteers working every day to conserve, protect, and restore, where needed, the habitat and wild trout populations of the Henry's Fork. On June 14, we'll celebrate all that we've achieved together at the 30th Annual Henry's Fork Day (see back cover for details). I invite you to mark your calendars, grab your gear, and join us for this extraordinary celebration.



You don't have to look back very far in the Foundation's history to find a day when we squeaked by to fund salaries and support a handful of projects in the watershed. Through extraordinary personal leadership by our last two board chairs, Layne Hepworth and Bob Rosenberg, an effort began to focus on securing long-term funding that would ensure a more reliable future for the HFF, thereby ensuring wild trout in a pristine environment for generations. Undertakings like this, however, require a passionate commitment from members like you. As a group, you stepped up in a major way, allowing expanded research and restoration efforts along the entire watershed. A specific example of the impact is found in the groundbreaking research in Harriman State Park. Learn more by reading the cover article co-authored by our senior scientist Rob Van Kirk. The Research & Restoration Raffle (see page 3) offers another opportunity to give to projects for wild trout while having a chance to win an entire week fishing the river with some of its most knowledgeable and "fishy" guides.

All of our efforts to protect, conserve, and restore the Henry's Fork would be severely handicapped if not for the partnerships we have with our local agricultural community in Fremont and Madison counties. If I were asked to name only one attribute that sets the HFF apart from other conservation groups, it would be this collaborative relationship that allows us to work with the local community for the common goal of protecting the river's wild trout fishery and to preserve one of the most special places on earth. Without contentious regulatory or legal wrangling, we work with the local farming community, who owns the majority of the water rights, to ensure the river has adequate flow during the winter when young trout are most vulnerable. This partnership is extraordinary in the West and is responsible in no small part for the resurgence in the legendary fishing in the river's most famed stretch—The Ranch.

Over the last three decades, the Foundation has undergone a number of changes that tested the structural fiber of a relatively small conservation organization. The support and generosity of members like you, our dedicated staff, and collaborative partnerships with our local community have made us more effective than ever. On behalf of the entire HFF board, we are humbled by 30 years of your generosity and we thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert Dotson  
Board Chair

## 30th Anniversary Life Member Special

To celebrate HFF's 30th Anniversary, we're offering a special rod and reel to our members. Become a life member for \$3,000, and we'll send you a customized Scott Radian 9'5 wt. rod and a limited edition engraved Hatch 4 Plus Finatic reel. Learn more online at [www.henrysfork.org](http://www.henrysfork.org).



# Raffle Delivers a Dream Come True

Last year's grand prize winner recounts his "Fall on the Fork"

Fall on the Fork was a fantastic trip, a dream come true. As soon as I won my biggest prize ever, I called my brother Clark Porter and a friend John Garacochea, both from Los Angeles, thinking someone would decline. I had created an early list of six fishing friends because I thought I might have trouble finding a partner in crime for a week of fishing in September. I was very wrong. They both said yes immediately. So John and I did the first four days and my brother and I added an extra day on the end so he would have three days on the Fork.

We arrived on Saturday night September 7, and spent the next two nights at The Pines in Island Park. Rick Egan, owner of The Pines, set us up in our luxurious log cabin. Saturday night, dinner was a delicious prime rib and crab. Our fishing started at Henry's Fork Anglers with Tom Grimes. We floated the Warm River to Ashton stretch on a warm and sunny day. John caught a big rainbow on a rubber legs (photo right).

Our next day was a beautiful South Fork lower canyon float with Chuck Quint of Henry's Fork Anglers. We caught and lost a lot of fish, saw a great big female moose relaxing in the shade, and realized the only negative about a fishing trip down a pristine river in a rugged canyon: If you enjoy the scenery, you're not concentrating on your fly, and the fish tease you with a tug and off the hook they go.

Our third and fourth days of fishing were with BJ Gerhart from Three Rivers Ranch. We spent day four on the Teton River starting at the old dam. That afternoon, I caught my best cutthroat of the day.

For the next two nights with Lonnie Allen at Three Rivers Ranch, we enjoyed four-course meals, including a delightful entrée of roasted duck. My brother arrived, and we said goodbye to John.

Rich Paini and everyone else at the TroutHunter continued our perfect trip. We were served great food with a view of the Henry's Fork flowing through the Harriman Ranch. We spent our first day fishing at Henry's Lake with Kevin Darby. Weather came blowing in, and it was not a good day

for fishing but it was fun to be on the lake. In the afternoon we floated Box Canyon, and even though fishing was still tough in the wind, at the end we pulled a big rainbow out with a hopper. The next day we fished the Warm River to Ashton stretch. It started slowly, but by the end of the day we landed lots of healthy fish.

I still daydream about that big cutthroat or that missed hook set, too many fish to count, and many peaceful hours on the river.

Everyone I encountered was courteous and professional. The fact that all these people support the river through the Henry's Fork Foundation is outstanding.

I've been coming to this area every year for the past ten years, and it's still my favorite place. The country, the wildlife, the fishing, and the people all make it an unforgettable experience every time. I got to return this year for an extra week because of my raffle skills. Anyone can win the trip of a lifetime. All you have to do is buy raffle tickets and support Henry's Fork Foundation. Join me every year in funding HFF and all the work it does to support and maintain the river, and improve the fishery. I am excited to continue to enjoy my favorite place and with the help of HFF leaving it even better condition for the next generation. I can't wait to return next year.

Greg Porter, 2013 winner of the 2013 R&R Raffle grand prize and an HFF member for eight years.



## Don't Miss Your Chance to Win the R&R Raffle

Suggested Donation:

**\$10 per ticket or \$80 for TEN tickets**

Drawing takes place on **Monday, May 19, 2014**

Purchase tickets online at [www.henrysfork.org](http://www.henrysfork.org) or call us today at 208-652-3567 to purchase over the phone.

The Research & Restoration Raffle raises money for projects that improve the wild trout fisheries of the Henry's Fork. This year, we'll start an innovative project to discover the value of spawning habitat in the Buffalo River by genetically testing rainbow trout migrating up through the Buffalo River fish ladder to spawn.

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In most Rocky Mountain trout streams, riffles and rapids mix air into the water, providing a source of oxygen. These riffles also create a choppy water surface, giving overhead cover for trout. Deep pools offer both cover and resting habitat. Additional cover is provided by large rocks and wood, also habitat for aquatic invertebrates.

The Harriman State Park reach of the Henry's Fork has few riffles, deep pools, or large rocks and wood. Instead, it has aquatic plants.

### How Plants Provide Trout Habitat

The kind of plants we are interested in are called macrophytes. This is simply a technical term for the aquatic versions of the common terrestrial plants with which we are familiar. Like their land-dwelling counterparts, macrophytes grow from roots or tubers and produce oxygen via photosynthesis. But in the Henry's Fork, they do so much more.

To quantify the importance of macrophytes to wild trout on the Ranch, we measured habitat variables during each of three time periods in 2013 (see table above) at 164 randomly selected sampling points between Last Chance and the Osborne cattle bridge. We also measured sediment and phosphorus transport in the river above and below Island Park Reservoir.

Macrophyte cover increased from less than 14 percent of the stream bottom in June to 90 percent in late July (see figure, right). By late September, plant coverage had begun to decline but still exceeded 75 percent. At the beginning of each spring, the river bottom is nearly barren of plant cover, but by July, nearly the entire stream bottom is covered (see photos on cover). Plants remain abundant into November, providing habitat for trout and aquatic invertebrates.

During the summer of 2013, average daytime water temperatures fell within the optimal range for trout (see table), but afternoon highs exceeded 70°F during mid-summer. Surprisingly, we found that dissolved oxygen concentrations were highest when water temperature was highest. It turned out that high dissolved oxygen concentrations resulted from high rates of oxygen production by macrophytes.

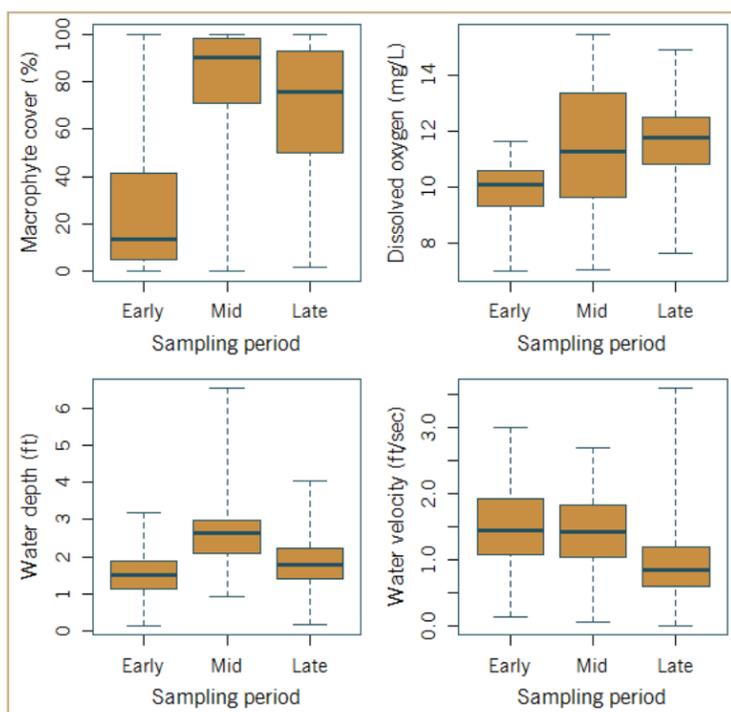
Because river flows were high during the July irrigation-delivery period, we expected water depths to be greatest during mid-summer (figure right). However, we noticed that mean water depth in late September, at a river flow of 438 cubic feet per second (cfs), was 2.8 inches higher than it was in June at a river flow of 868 cfs due to the displacement of water by plants. This is the same process that increases the water level in the bathtub when you get into the tub. The actual effect of plants on river depth is even greater when we accounted for the effect of river flow on depth. For example, at a flow of 438 cfs in the

Summary of the three habitat sampling periods in 2013			
	Early Season	Mid-Season	Late Season
Sampling dates	June 11 – June 26	July 24 – August 1	September 21 – 27
Mean river flow at Island Park Dam	868 cfs	1556 cfs	438 cfs
Mean daytime water temperature	59.8 °F	66.6 °F	53.7 °F

spring, when macrophyte volume is low, mean water depth would be 12 inches. At that same flow of 438 cfs in the fall, when macrophyte volume is high, mean depth would be 21 inches, an increase of 75 percent in water depth due to plant volume alone. In addition to increasing depth, macrophytes also slowed current velocities, creating resting habitat for wild trout.

### Growth Needs of Macrophytes in the River

We know that trout need plants, but what do the plants need? Macrophytes need the same things as terrestrial plants: sunlight, substrate (soil), and nutrients, in this case phosphorus. Substrate comes in the form of sediment on the stream bottom. Early in the season, when macrophytes were sparse, the plants that were present were associated with areas of fine sediment. As the summer progressed, fine sediment delivered from Island Park Reservoir was trapped



Plots of macrophyte cover, dissolved oxygen, water depth, and water velocity observed in the Harriman State Park reach of the Henry's Fork during 2013. Thick line in the middle of each box is the median across 164 random observations. Bottom and top of the box are the 25th and 75th percentiles, respectively. Bottom and top of the dashed line are the minimum and maximum, respectively.

by macrophytes and deposited on the stream bottom. This suggests higher plant abundance leads to trapping more sediment, which promotes growth of next year's plants, and so on into the future.

Phosphorus concentrations in the Henry's Fork downstream of the reservoir were 10 times higher than those above the reservoir, consistent with previous research that showed that phosphorus is delivered to the reservoir from tributaries that drain the Centennial Mountains, which lie to the west of the upper Henry's Fork. Phosphorus enters the reservoir in mineral form and settles on the reservoir bottom. There, chemical reactions convert it into dissolved form, which is then delivered into the river downstream, where it fuels growth of macrophytes, invertebrates, and wild trout.

### Reservoir Management Can Influence Wild Trout Habitat

Macrophytes hold the key to wild trout habitat in the Ranch; they provide cover, produce oxygen, support invertebrates, and increase water depth. In turn, macrophytes depend on fine sediment and phosphorus delivered from Island Park Reservoir. They are also affected by other factors such as river flows and waterfowl grazing. For example, high flows during the spring can displace macrophyte tubers and limit plant growth.

The river currently appears to be in a "sweet spot." Nutrients, sunlight, and water temperatures are near the maximum levels possible to grow large trout without triggering excessive growth of nuisance plants or algae.

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Increases in phosphorus, sunlight, or water temperature could potentially push the river past the sweet spot, reducing oxygen levels, fish growth rates, and trout survival. Sunlight and water temperature are largely out of our control, but it is likely that macrophyte growth can be influenced through management of Island Park Reservoir.

In 2014, we will expand our monitoring of phosphorus and sediment transport. We will also continue to study trout habitat, focusing this year on behavior of individual fish. **Our goal is to ensure that the young trout that enter the population in the future will continue to provide the wild trout fishing opportunities for which the Henry's Fork is so famous.**

Rob Van Kirk and Zach Kuzniar



## Riffles: Notes From the Field

### HFF Begins Long-term Monitoring of Water Quality in the Henry's Fork

This spring, HFF kicks off a new program to monitor key chemical, physical, and biological properties of water in the Henry's Fork and its tributaries. Over the next few years, we'll install a network of instruments that continuously record water-quality characteristics such as water temperature and dissolved oxygen that are important indicators of wild trout survival. We will also periodically collect field samples of sediment and phosphorus concentration (see cover article). We'll install instruments above and below Island Park Reservoir and in the Pinehaven area during 2014. This project will help us relate trout survival, growth, and movement to water chemistry, as well as assess the effects of changes in land and water use. The project was endorsed by the Henry's Fork Watershed Council in April, and several partners have already volunteered to contribute time, expertise, and resources to the effort.

Rob Van Kirk

### Finished Basin Study Outlines Water Management Alternatives

After three years of technical analysis and substantial input from stakeholders, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will present the completed Henry's Fork Basin Study to the Henry's Fork Watershed Council in May. The study presents a wide variety of alternatives for improving management of water resources in the Henry's Fork Basin, including enlarging existing reservoirs, replacing outdated canal headgates with automated diversion structures, and reducing demand through economic incentives and water transfers. Following completion of the study, implementation of the most feasible and mutually beneficially alternatives will be pursued by a small group of stakeholders, which includes water users, the Henry's Fork Foundation, and other conservation groups.

Rob Van Kirk

Continued on page 7

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# HFF Life Members Tom and Joan Brown Give Back

Although our family ranch on the Green River near Daniel, Wyoming, is a three-hour drive from Island Park, Idaho, my wife and I have been fishing the Henry's Fork for more than 30 years. I actually started fishing this extraordinary fishery more than 50 years ago with my father and then fished it with our son when he was in college.

As I think back over the years, it is impossible to catalog in my mind the endless spots I have fished throughout this marvelous watershed. I fully expect that this year we will undoubtedly be introduced to some new water that we have not yet seen, which will most assuredly produce some more memorable trout.

Many years ago my Dad told me that "there are a lot of people with money but not a lot that are willing to give back to assist meaningful organizations doing good work for important causes." I have never forgotten that message, and it is at the core of why Joan and I have found a way to contribute to the Henry's Fork Foundation in their continuing quest to preserve, protect and develop this wonderful ecosystem for the benefit of not just us fly fishers but all the important stakeholders.

*Tom and Joan Brown, HFF members for 20 years*



Tom Brown

## Riffles: Notes From the Field *continued*

### Fifth-Graders Track Trout With HFF

This winter, HFF gave local kids a chance to learn more about fly fishing and wild trout in the Henry's Fork. In February, HFF joined Ashton Elementary fifth-graders on a cross country field trip at Harriman State Park. On the six-mile ski, students enjoyed identifying waterfowl on the river, watching fish rise to hatching midges, and listening to trumpeter swans. Students also learned how HFF uses telemetry equipment to follow trout movement and successfully relocated a radio-tagged trout at Millionaires Pool! At the end of the day, students loaded the bus with a better appreciation for state parks, winter wildlife, and outdoor recreation.

### HFF Takes Kids to Fishing Film Festival

In March, kids attended the IF4 International Fly Fishing Film Festival in Idaho Falls for free. In addition to free admittance, the kids also joined host and local film maker Marc Crapo on stage to throw free gear to the audience, as well as walked away with some free fishing DVDs of their own. The Henry's Fork Foundation would like to thank Marc Crapo, and the IF4 Festival for making this such a memorable night for our future anglers. For more information on the festival and the footage shown, please visit [www.flyfilmfest.com/IF4](http://www.flyfilmfest.com/IF4).

*Anne Marie Emery*





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[www.henrysfork.org](http://www.henrysfork.org)

# Henry's Fork Days Line-Up

## Friday, June 13

7:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Casting Competition by Loop USA  
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Breakfast on the river (\$10/person)  
9:30 p.m. – 12:00 p.m. HFF projects update and member meeting

## Saturday, June 14

4:00 p.m. Host bar, reception, and silent auction begin  
5:30 p.m. Rib-eye steak and grilled chicken dinner  
(*\$50/ticket or \$500/table for 10*)  
7:00 p.m. HFF awards  
Silent auction closes  
Live auction with Will Godfrey  
Hyde Drift Boat raffle drawing

## Corporate Sponsor Highlight: Hyde Drift Boats

Special thanks to Hyde Drift Boats for donating two drift boats and trailers for this year's Henry's Fork Days boat raffle and auction. Hyde has remained a steadfast supporter of HFF for nearly 15 years.

Find Hyde online at  
[www.hydeoutdoors.com](http://www.hydeoutdoors.com)



Artwork by Mark "Smitty" Smith

Register for Henry's Fork Day and purchase raffle tickets online: [www.henrysfork.org](http://www.henrysfork.org)

## Upcoming Events

### Green Drake Reception

Friday, June 13, 2014  
By invitation only  
*Pond's Lodge, Island Park, Idaho*

### Henry's Fork Days

June 13 – 14, 2014  
*Last Chance, Idaho*

### San Francisco Reception

Friday, November 7, 2014  
*San Francisco, California*



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