

**Meeting Notes**  
**Henry's Fork Watershed Council**  
**February 18, 2014**

The meeting was held at the Ashton Community Center in Ashton. Sign-in began at 8 a.m. and the meeting started at 8:30 a.m. with introductions and community building led by Brandon Hoffner (Henry's Fork Foundation).

**Community Building**

Brandon welcomed everyone (60 people in the circle). Brandon noted this is the 21<sup>st</sup> year of the Watershed Council. Because of the many new faces in the circle, he reminded everyone that the "rules" of the council affirm that we are all equal, our thoughts are equal. During the moment of silence, we are asked to consider what to say, how to conduct ourselves and to respect each other. Two minutes of silence were observed.

In response to a question, Jan Brown said the HUD grant information has been posted online at [www.sustainableyellowstone.org](http://www.sustainableyellowstone.org). She said she would provide more information during her presentation.

**Panel Discussion, moderated by Brandon Hoffner**

Jim Caswell, Steve Woodruff and Tom Cluff were members of the panel for "Perspectives on National Monument Designation for the Island Park area." (Speaker biographies are included in the record.)

Caswell gave a history of the talk about a national monument designation for the Island Park area. He became aware in the mid-1990s when the Idaho Stateman did a series of feature articles about Idaho Gems, those special places in Idaho that should be protected and enjoyed. That was during the Clinton Administration. Readers nominated the places they wanted to see protected, and Mesa Falls was among them. In the mid-2000s, another series of articles came out as Congress debated the Owyhee bill. Mesa Falls came up again. National Monuments are designated under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Grand Canyon was the first such monument, designated by Teddy Roosevelt. When Dirk Kempthorne was Secretary of Interior, he asked Caswell, then-director of the BLM, to develop a list of possible sites for National Monuments. Caswell actually laid out a proposal for Mesa Falls. He recommended looking at the whole caldera, having the county commissioners ask their people what they want. Give the people control of their destiny on public land. Let the local people decide, not at the whim of federal mandates. He suggested looking at natural resources, cultural resources (such as the Nez Perce Trail), water, name recognition, economics, land patterns, fishing clubs, wildlife refuges. Time ran out for the Bush Administration and the information was shelved. In April 2013, the topic came up again when Idaho Statesman columnist Rocky Barker wrote about plans for a Mesa Falls National Monument. Caswell said, "This is not some hidden agenda of the Obama Administration. This is not on the radar in Washington, D.C."

Cluff said it took eight years to write a management plan for the Grand Staircase - Escalante National Monument in Utah after it was designated without notice to the public. He didn't want to see that happen in Fremont County and went to the commissioners. When he is asked about a national monument for the Island Park area, he said:

- 1) I don't know how to respond; I don't know what's in it.
- 2) How do the citizens feel? How would it affect them?
- 3) If we find out more about Island Park in this process, we'll have already laid the groundwork for a management plan.

We need to know how it would impact private and public land, businesses, ranches, fish, and more. "Fortunately, Fremont County is the middle of a HUD grant." There is some money in the grant to specifically study Island Park. Jan Brown suggested asking the Watershed Council to moderate/host the discussion. He said he is pleased about the interest shown by the commissioners and looking forward to working with the community of Island Park. The commissioners definitely support this, he said, this being the information gathering for the Futures Study of Island Park.

Woodruff started with information about the National Wildlife Federation, which is providing matching funds for the futures study. The federation has three primary strategies:

- 1) protect and restore wildlife habitat, primarily through conservation efforts
- 2) find solutions to the challenge of climate change issues
- 3) connecting families with nature

The NWF is interested in the study because of the wildlife issues involved and the county's vital connectivity to Yellowstone and the Centennials, winter range and migration through Island Park. We don't see this as a problem to solve but as a tremendous opportunity. If we are possibly going to have a national monument, aren't we interested in drawing it up? Woodruff said the Antiquities Act is the most flexible land designation we have in this country. We have the latitude to describe what we care about, can structure it to protect all of the values we hold dear. We cannot separate conservation and economic prosperity. Our role is to participate and try to be a catalyst with the resources we can bring to bear. This is a scary process for you and for us. We have a substantial investment in this process from NWF in time and funding is being made. We are going to produce something constructive no matter the final outcome.

### **Question and Answer**

The following information was presented in answer to questions from the audience:

- A National Monument designation within an Antiquities Act Proclamation is a very simple document.
- An advantage of a National Monument designation is the magnetism, which can bring in people who want to live in this type of community.
- The panel members are not aware of anyone specifically pushing for a National Monument designation.
- We need to identify the threats if we want to protect something. (comment from audience). Are there threats?

- Under the Antiquities Act, we have the ability to frame the management structure in any conceivable way according to the objectives laid out in the Proclamation.
- The threat is, what we have today may not be sustainable: for all interested resource users
  - Infrastructure
  - Managing water to maximum benefit
  - Habitat fragmentation
  - Truck traffic
- Need to focus on the opportunities, not the problems.
- At this point, there are no lines on a map, no proposed boundaries. That is part of the study. Caswell said his proposal basically encompassed the watershed, from Yellowstone along the Divide to the Centennials and south to the forest boundary. "But that was me. This is you."

### **What Lies Beneath: The Unique Volcanic History and Hydrology for the Island Park area**

Bill Hackett, registered geologist #714 in Idaho, described the geology of the Island Park and Yellowstone region. The North American Plate moves southwest at a rate of about one inch per year over a fixed mantle plume or "hotspot," resulting in what appears to be a northeasterly path of the cycle of volcanism. Over the past 17 million years, the location of volcanism has moved from southeastern Oregon to its current location underneath Yellowstone National Park. Volcanism associated with the hotspot has occurred in two-phase cycles: 1) massive rhyolite explosions that produce what are called volcanic "tuffs", and 2) small, localized eruptions of fluid lava that form basalt flows. Three such cycles have formed the geologic features of Island Park and Yellowstone. The oldest cycle produced the Huckleberry Ridge Tuff, around 2 million years ago. The second occurred around 1.3 million years ago and produced the Mesa Falls Tuff. The most recent occurred around 600,000 years ago, forming the Lava Creek Tuff. Following each of these explosive episodes, collapse of magma chambers formed calderas. An analogy for rhyolite caldera formation is a "failed soufflé." The caldera associated with the first cycle has largely been covered by subsequent volcanism. The second volcanic cycle produced the Henry's Fork Caldera, the proper geologic name for what is commonly called the Island Park Caldera. The Yellowstone Caldera, in which Yellowstone Lake lies, was formed after the third cycle. The modern-day topography of Island Park is the result of all three cycles.

Three other processes associated with the movement of the North American Plate over the hotspot have contributed to the geology and topography of the Yellowstone region. The first is subsidence, which occurs as the crust cools in the wake of the explosive rhyolitic volcanism. This results in sinking of the crust, which has formed the Snake River Plain. The plain is, on average, a kilometer lower in elevation than Yellowstone National Park, where the hotspot is currently located. The second is seismic activity. The Yellowstone caldera is the most active seismic area in North America. Displacement and uplift associated with seismic activity have created what is described as a "bow wave" of mountainous terrain that forms an arc extending to the west and south of Yellowstone. The mountains that form this arc include the Henry's Lake,

Centennial, and Teton ranges. The third post-caldera process that has contributed to topography of the Yellowstone region is displacement of streams by basalt flows. The courses of the Henry's Fork and Fall River have been determined in large part by displacement due to basalt flows. This is particularly visible, for example, at Millionaire's Pool in Harriman State Park.

Rob Van Kirk from the Henry's Fork Foundation talked about the hydrology of the upper Henry's Fork, defined as the watershed upstream of Ashton. He described the hydrologic regime of a river as magnitude, timing, duration, frequency and rate of change of flow. The "natural" regime is determined by climate and geology, and the actual regime includes the effects of water management. Hydrologic regime is important because it is the primary driver of geomorphic processes in the stream channel and floodplain, which, in turn determine the type of habitat available to fish and wildlife. Climate is the first-order determinant in the hydrology of a river. Over half the year, the temperature in Island Park is below freezing. Rain that falls in summer is immediately used by plants and so does not contribute to streamflow. Thus, the primary source of water in the Henry's Fork watershed is snow, which essentially stores water between the time when it falls and when it melts. Water is also stored in aquifers, lakes and reservoirs. Geology is the second-order determinant. Basin elevation affects timing of snowmelt, and basin relief influences the amount of water that is able to seep into the ground. In general, flat topography such as that found in Island Park provides more opportunity for groundwater infiltration, whereas steep terrain such as that found in the Teton watershed, results in less infiltration and a greater fraction of snowmelt immediately contributing to streamflow.

Dominance by groundwater is the distinguishing feature of the hydrology of the upper Henry's Fork, in contrast with the snowmelt-dominated hydrologic regimes that dominate most other rivers in the region such as the Madison, Yellowstone, and upper Snake. All of the major streams in the upper Henry's Fork watershed—Big Springs (Henry's Fork headwaters), Buffalo River, and Warm River—are fed primarily by groundwater. Snowmelt on the Madison Plateau recharges deep aquifers in the rhyolite flows and emerges as spring discharge. The process of aquifer recharge and discharge attenuates or "smooths" the input of snowmelt, resulting in nearly constant streamflows in the upper Henry's Fork. Residence times of water in these aquifers range from on the order of 10-100 years. The groundwater-influenced hydrology of the upper Henry's Fork is important to both recreational fishing and water management. Anglers from around the world visit the Henry's Fork for the unparalleled opportunity to fish for rising fish in a spring-creek environment. From a water management perspective, the groundwater hydrology of the upper Henry's Fork provides a stable water supply that is relatively constant within and across water years. This stability allows higher precision in managing Island Park Reservoir and predicting water availability for irrigation and other uses than is possible in watersheds dominated by snowmelt. In addition, the Henry's Fork contributes a disproportionate amount of water to the upper Snake River basin; the upper Henry's Fork watershed comprises only 3% of the area of the upper Snake River basin yet contributes over 11% of its water supply.

In the Q&A that followed their presentations:

What kind of surface effects can we have on groundwater? Well drilling and exploiting geothermal features in Island Park could have an effect.

How does the extraction of water for populations affect groundwater? It would take a huge population growth in Island Park to have an impact. Teton Valley or the Snake River Plain is a different story. Groundwater use for domestic, municipal, and industrial supply could certainly impact groundwater resources in Teton Valley.

Per capita water use in Idaho is among the highest in the country, because of the large amount of irrigated agriculture relative to its small population. Irrigation is the biggest source of recharge to the Snake River Plain, which stores an amount of water equal to the size of Lake Erie.

What is the possibility of another state coming into Idaho for water? Water law in Idaho, as it is now written, keeps water in Idaho for agricultural use. First in time is first in right may seem archaic, but it prevents other states from coming in and getting Idaho water.

What is the possibility of raising Island Park Dam? This is being studied through the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Henry's Fork Basin Study and is one of several alternatives for increasing storage capacity. Jackson Lake was built prior to creation of Teton National Park and so is "grandfathered" into managed of the Park. How might a national monument designation impact Island Park Reservoir? It goes back to the Antiquities Act and putting it in the proclamation.

### **Island Park Area Resource Assessment**

Jan Brown explained the HUD grant. The details of the grant have been posted online at [www.sustainableyellowstone.org](http://www.sustainableyellowstone.org) in the About Us section.

She said as she has talked to neighbors about the future of Island Park, she has been told, "we don't want more people, we don't want them to know about us, we don't want change. "But times are changing." Budgets are down. Infrastructure will determine what we can and can't do. The question is whether we are doing everything we can to maximize the benefit to the community. We are trying to see that what happens in Island Park matters.

The Watershed Council is not the only forum for this study. Other options include online surveys and other events.

The National Wildlife Federation is matching funds. A \$25,000 sub grant is available to grant to individuals who participate on subcommittees of the study. Applications are available for the grants, and must be submitted by March 1 to Cathy Koon at the Henry's Fork Foundation, [cathy@henrysfork.org](mailto:cathy@henrysfork.org).

She reviewed the schedule of upcoming meetings, contained to attachments to the meeting notes.

After breaking for lunch, the attendees divided into three groups – citizens, agencies and technical folks – to review the agenda for the March meeting and to WIRE the study process.

### **Final Community Building**

About 45 people sat in the circle for the final community building. After one minute of silence, a representative from each of the three groups gave a synopsis of their discussions.

The agency group went through the meeting outlines and listed what needs to be added. The WIRE process was a bit more challenging but got easier by changing “project” to “process” and to “will” from “has” within the WIRE worksheet. With the current timeline, we may need to hone down on priorities to stay on schedule.

The technical group never got to WIRE but spent the time fleshing out the meeting schedule, rearranging topics and meetings. They suggested that each meeting should include a review of existing reports on that topic with a bibliography made available online ahead of time. It was noted there is existing documentation on many of the topics that shouldn't be ignored. And at each meeting, identify the region of interest for that topic. They suggested leaving the October meeting a little fluid in case more discussion is needed on earlier topics, and they suggested the November conference include a summary of findings instead of a summary of recommendations.

The citizen group spent most of its time on the schedule. It was suggested a SWOT analysis be done by subcommittees on each topic. Many changes were suggested for the winter recreation meeting, farmers said May is not a good time to talk about water issues since they will be out in the fields, we should reach out to those who own property in Island Park but don't live or vote there, and the national monument topic was used as a catalyst to bring people into the futures study. The national monument discussion comes later. The WIRE process should give equal weight to values and beliefs; make sure there is monitoring in place as we go.

In summary, Brandon Hoffner noted that since only two of the three groups actually got through the WIRE evaluation, a show of hands would signify moving the study process forward. A nearly unanimous show of hands provided the recommendation to move forward.

Mr. Sielinsky from Island Park suggested the Island Park Sustainable Fire Group should be part of the study group and vice versa.

Bill Hackett acknowledged the National Monument topic was used as a catalyst for discussion but said this is an opportunity for this group to seize the initiative as to the role for grassroots citizens for administering the Antiquities Act.

Steve Pinther said he was slightly confused about the focus on the National Monument to begin the meeting given that the process was truly not about National Monument designation. After a discussion of the importance of the history leading up to this particular meeting and the desire of the HFWC to not ignore the National Monument rumors, Mr. Pinther understood that the National Monument discussion was heavily used in the beginning to get people involved and properly frame the discussion. We need to get a recommendation so in the future we can get additional funds and to get Fremont County going in the direction we want it to go.

Ken Watts asked about the difference between a National Monument and a National Recreation Area. Jim Caswell said an National Monument is typically a presidential mandate and an NRA is a Congressional mandate, although a National Monument can be legislated by Congress. A National Monument is a much better forum to create what you want within the stated objectives of the Proclamation. If you can get the administration's backing, you can usually get what you want out of the National Monument designation.

Jan Brown said she wants to go through the process to see how special Island Park is.

Lee Mabey said the proclamations are online for the 12? monuments that exist.

Tom Cluff pointed out that agencies are managing their area according to their rules. This could change. The agencies may begin to manage within a framework designed by a local committee, essentially the area would be managed by an "Island Park" rule. It hasn't been written yet and we don't know what it looks like.

Garth Blanchard said the change would be in the way you market the area. He can see a positive economic impact as a result of every NM he has studied.

Pinther said the Forest Service has done a tremendous job at Mesa Falls, and Harriman State Park is great. I don't see the system as being broken.