Henry's Fork Watershed Council
Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2014

Participants began registering at 8 a.m. at the Marriott SpringHill in Rexburg.

Dale Swensen of Fremont-Madison Irrigation District welcomed everyone at 8:30, and introductions were held with the 17 people present. After observing two minutes of silence, Dale opened the community building session for comment.

Brandon Hoffner of the Henry's Fork Foundation announced the Council didn't get the WaterSmart grant we talked about at an earlier meeting. He has requested a download session with the USBR in Denver to find out what might have been lacking in the application and why it was turned down. We will submit a new application in the future. The funds would have been used to operate the council in connection with further evaluation and implementation of alternatives presented in the Henry's Fork Basin Study. The council's financial situation is not critical, but we are low on funds.

Dale apologized to Mike Rasmussen for not notifying him prior to the meeting that Mike was on the agenda.

Dick Spackman of Rexburg said he spent 70 days on the river this summer, all in Harriman State Park. People come here from all over the world to fish. He talked to two anglers from New Zealand who were impressed. He talked to some other anglers from Sweden who own a fly shop there, and they were thrilled to be here. He also talked to people from Great Britain and Japan. The Henry's Fork is one of the iconic rivers of the West. It's not just the river, it's everything we have – the fields, the mountains, the forest. We are involved with something that is very precious.

Dale said he was invited by the Idaho Joint Appropriations and Finance Committee on a tour of the area during their annual meeting. He acted as a tour guide for the Mesa Falls and Island Park Dam portion of the tour, and talked about the history of irrigation, the basin study, and the possible impacts of raising the dam. He talked also about the role of the Watershed Council in that study.

Brandon said he met with Cynthia Bridge-Clark of the Idaho Department of Water Resources in Boise. They are still working on the LiDAR project for mapping areas around the reservoir that could be impacted by raising the dam. She hopes to have the information by the end of January.

Cathy Koon of the Foundation reminded everyone the notes and photos from the field tour in August are now on the council's page of the Henry's Fork Foundation website (www.henryfork.org) along with notes from past meetings, including the Futures Study sessions.

Mike Beus
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Drought Management Planning, Winter Flows, Water Storage Update
At present, the Upper Snake Reservoir System is 43 percent full, starting with Henry's Lake at

95 percent full and Ririe at 56 percent. American Falls is at 21 percent, allowing the opportunity to release water from Palisades (at 47 percent) all winter and provide fish habitat. It's good we have space in American Falls and good to have water in Palisades. Island Park is at 56 percent, but more on that later.

We had a dry January, and a February at 212 percent of normal precipitation, followed by March at 157 percent and April at 101 percent. Water releases were calculated on those figures, and then May started out dry and ended at 115 percent of normal. May was warm, but June was cool and slowed the snow melt, which is not for filling Palisades. In July, things looked pretty grim, and then came August, which brought 130 percent of normal precipitation across the entire Snake system. Water use by farmers slowed significantly during August.

The Island Park drought management committee met, and flows were cut on October 1 to around 200 cfs, to allow for higher winter flows. Island Park Reservoir should reach 90,000 acre-feet by Dec. 1. American Falls is expected to fill, mainly because of carryover. Island Park will be managed to reach 127,000 acre-feet by April 1. To achieve this, flows will be set at 300 cfs starting Dec. 1. The possibility remains of cutting back in February and March.

Projected winter inflow is not good and not bad. The long-term weather forecast seems to call for a dry winter.

Amy Verbeten
Executive Director, Friends of the Teton River
Watershed Research and Monitoring Update

FTR has been conducting research on the fisheries, water quantity, and water quality in the Teton River. FTR has been electrofishing since 1998 as the primary way of gathering fisheries information. A comprehensive, quantitative assessment of Yellowstone cutthroat trout numbers throughout the watershed was conducted in 2005 and 2010. This survey will be repeated in 2015. In between, Idaho Department of Fish and Game conducts population estimates on the main river every other year. FTR has been working with Fish and Game on the electrofishing.

Overall trends show increases in all species in the main stem Teton River, especially Yellowstone cutthroat trout. The general trend in the tributaries is an increase in non-native fish. Rainbow trout are moving farther up the tributaries and hybridizing with the cutthroat trout, especially in Canyon, Bitch and Lower Badger creeks. The first hybrids in South Leigh Creek were found recently and tagged to track their movements.

Fish are currently being tagged for a telemetry study, and tracking will begin in 2015. The telemetry study will complement the PIT-tagging that is already being done. The telemetry tags can be used to track movement of larger fish anywhere in the river system, but the PIT tags can be implanted in smaller fish. We have implanted more than 3,600 PIT tags. Detection of fish implanted with PIT tags is limited to fixed interrogation sites, where information from the tags is collected.

The studies will show where fish spawn, which tributaries they use, when fish out-migrate, when they return to the Teton River, when they need water, and which streams have the greatest

impact on the populations of YCT and other species. FTR is also looking at stream temperature, which is a trigger for spawning.

Fish passage and restoration projects are based on the information. A seven-year project on Teton Creek has resulted in water staying in the channel longer. The project includes planting, seeding, and weed control.

In answer to a question, Amy said cutthroat trout face competition from brook trout, especially as fry, and they are seeing a replacement of the cutthroat trout by brook trout in the upper reaches of the tributaries. Dan Garren of Fish and Game said the brook trout produce more offspring, and that overwhelms the cutthroat population.

Rob Van Kirk
Senior Scientist, Henry's Fork Foundation
Watershed Research and Monitoring Update
HFF research and monitoring projects include fish passages at Chester Dam and Buffalo River, adult rainbow habitat use, predictors of Island Park water supply, angler surveys, and water quality monitoring.

During the summer of 2014, as part of the angler attitude survey, 431 anglers fishing the Harriman Ranch section were interviewed, compared to 616 interviewed in 2008. On average, anglers rated the fishing in 2014 above average, when compared to all previous years, whereas in 2008, anglers rated the fishing below average, when compared to all previous years.

The water-quality monitoring project, which was endorsed by the Council earlier this year through the WIRE process, emphasizes ecological process such as nutrient and sediment cycles, rather than regulatory aspects. During 2014, automated recording instruments called "sondes" were deployed in the Henry's Fork at Flatrock, Island Park Dam, Pinehaven, and Marysville. Because the sondes cannot directly measure sediment or phosphorus concentrations, HFF is conducting regular field sampling and laboratory analysis for these constituents. Findings to date indicate very good water quality at the four sonde locations, except for low dissolved oxygen concentrations immediately downstream of Island Park Dam. Phosphorus concentrations were at or near the maximum recommended value for running water at several locations but only for very short periods of time. Currently, the relatively high concentrations of phosphorus are fueling growth of beneficial aquatic vegetation, which in turn, provides habitat for aquatic insects and fish. However, that could change in the future, and the monitoring network will help us anticipate and manage those changes in the future.

Brian Reed
Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission
TMDL Implementation Plan for Ag
The Commission relies on data from DEQ for the upper and lower Snake River and works with local Soil Conservation District and local landowners to develop plans, which are not as robust as they used to be because of heavy budget cuts.

They are working on 2010 addendums, looking at streams and pollutants for which the Total

Maximum Daily Loads are developed.

On Warm River, where temperature is a focus, there is not a lot of private agricultural land. On the Buffalo River, where sediment is the issue, there is some private land in grazing so access to the river by livestock could be a problem.

Reed said he is not big on fencing and believes you can manage cows by managing water sources.

Howard Creek lacks a lot of shade to keep temperatures down, and there are several ponds along the creek that contribute to warmer water. Targhee Creek is spring-fed, and has some shading. There is a need to identify what can be done there. They are looking at Timber Creek, where there is some shading on lower parts of the creek but elsewhere doesn't meet shading targets. On Duck Creek, vegetating banks provides shade. Sediment is an issue on Sheridan Creek, and on Conant Creek, bacteria (E-coli) tends to be a problem.

Reed asked for input from the groups at the meeting and gave out his contact information.

Mike Rasmussen
North Fork Reservoir Company
Henry's Lake Outlet Report

Almost a hundred years ago, canal companies in the valley formed the North Fork Reservoir Company, the oldest in Fremont County. They built Henry's Lake Dam, which is a private dam, just as the reservoir is privately owned. The reservoir company built the dam within five years of organizing and purchased easements through Henry's Lake Flat to straighten the channel and deliver water to the valley. Fifteen years ago, they negotiated a winter flow on the outlet of 13 cfs.

About six years ago, Reservoir Company Chairman Dave Rydalch received a request to lower the flow out of Henry's Lake to facilitate some stream work on the Flat Ranch. The Nature Conservancy, owners of the Flat Ranch, planned to return the water to its original channel "without our [North Fork Reservoir Company] knowledge."

Rasmussen said "relations were a little bit strained" and referred to "an element of mistrust when you have a means in place for discussion," meaning the Watershed Council. He described a "time where the Watershed Council was on shaky ground because of this one thing." He said the council's policy of "commenting up front means everything."

Since that initial contact, the reservoir company, TNC, the Henry's Fork Foundation, and agencies worked out an "agreeable working system." A flow test was conducted in August of 2014, and it seems to meet the needs of all parties. The restored channel is a half mile longer than the straightened channel, which is filling in with willows and grass, thereby reducing erosion. The objective of the agreement is to be able to pass 300 cfs through the project reach without overtopping the banks in the restored channel. This is accomplished by delivering about 180 cfs through the restored channel and the remainder through the straightened channel. This objective was met during the 2014 flow test.

Community Building and Wrap Up
Brandon Hoffner, HFF
21 in closing circle; one minute of silence
Rob Van Kirk thanked Mike Rasmussen and said bringing a project like the Outlet restoration to the Watershed Council "would have save a lot of consternation." It reminded him of a USDA study just published as "Society of Natural Resources" that points out the difference between land and canal easements. Canal companies have easements to maintain the canals. Communications about easements and rights is important.

Brian Reed said the work he is doing here is made easier by having the Watershed Council in place. The watershed is in a lot better condition that it would have been.

The annual Henry's Fork Water Conference will be Dec. 9 at the Springhill Marriott. Topic will be "Water Management after the Snake River Basin Adjudication Completion." The adjudication process took 27 years and ended this summer, with the exception of a few outstanding claims. The conference will feature several panels discussing various aspects of the adjudication, including reservoir fill accounting.

Completing the adjudication is a "momentous occasion in water history. No other state has ever attempted to do this." It encompasses state and private water rights and includes agreements on federal reserved water rights in wilderness and tribal water rights.