

Meeting Notes
Henry's Fork Watershed Council Meeting
March 17, 2009

The March meeting of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council was held March 17, 2009 in Rexburg at the Cottontree Conference Center. More than 40 people were in attendance. Three speakers were lined up to present at the meeting including Rob Van Kirk from Humboldt State University, Greg Schoby, Idaho Fish and Game, and Jim De Rito from the Henry's Fork Foundation.

The meeting began with introductions and community building. After the group arranged the chairs for presentations, Rob Van Kirk introduced the group to a plan to develop a surface water-ground water model for the Henry's Fork watershed. The project involves developing a model to simulate stream flows and ground water elevations under different historic and potential future management scenarios. This is a continuation of the discussion from the January meeting with a focus to get feedback from participants on the project. A discussion period was held during the latter portion of the meeting. Comments included an interest in educating planners and developers to avoid building projects where hydrologic regimes create a high water table in certain scenarios. Other comments suggested studying nitrates in areas of concern or how projects like the Marysville pipeline effect hydrology in surrounding areas. Other observation was that it would be helpful to learn how patterns of future agricultural land uses i.e. sprinkler irrigation, flood irrigation, sloughs and ponds as water banks for irrigation, and climate effects might predict future land and water uses. Rob will incorporate the comments and suggestions into the project where appropriate and relevant. Periodic updates on the project will be given to the Council as warranted.

Greg Schoby, Regional fishery Biologist from Idaho Fish and Game presented the findings of the IDFG creel survey conducted from Island Park Dam downstream to St. Anthony. The survey looked at angler effort, catch rates, and demographics. Of the 608 people interviewed in the survey, 2,593 fish were caught and 79 were harvested. The average length of the angler's trip was 3.7 hours with an average of 1.7 anglers per boat. Aerial statistics were also taken in the survey showing 2,115 wading anglers and 1,733 boats. Effort was highest from June through July and the Warm River section from Harriman Ranch to Ashton saw the highest catch rates where the estimated trout per mile was 1,866. Of the 608 interviewed, 56% were not residents of Idaho and 44% were Idaho residents; the majority (32%) of non-residents were from Utah.

Jim De Rito of the Henry's Fork Foundation presented the results of a Harriman State Park angler attitude survey conducted by the HFF in 2008. The purpose of this survey was to measure angler values and satisfaction as well as opinions of management issues rather than catch rates and angler effort as the Fish and Game survey illustrated. Some 616 anglers from 41 states and nine foreign countries were surveyed at angler access points – many of them at the Last Chance Anglers Access – with the following results: Many of the anglers had several years of experienced, although, there were an unexpected high percentage of new anglers. In ranking, satisfaction was lower than importance for rising fish, quality of hatches, and habitat and the majority of anglers approve of wild trout management and disapprove of hatchery trout management.

Additional analyses of angler demographics and seasonal trends in satisfaction will be done and the final results will be published in a report by the Henry's Fork Foundation later this year.

Many thanks were extended to presenters and to those who commented or offered assistance with Van Kirk's project then the meeting adjourned at noon.