



# THE VOICE OF THE



# RIVER

Fall 2010



Fun Farm Bridge at Chester

## The River Has a Voice

- Motorized use proves a divisive issue

For much of this year, the Henry's Fork Foundation has been engaged in a difficult and divisive debate about whether motorboats should be allowed on the Henry's Fork. The struggle has demonstrated a great deal about the Foundation; how we work, the challenges that we face, our strengths, and even our vulnerabilities. Most importantly, it has illustrated how much the Henry's Fork does, indeed, need a voice, and that the Foundation is that voice – including in the tough fights that do not have certain outcomes.

Motorized use of the Henry's Fork, and the regulation of that use, has a long history. Many local residents remember waterskiing on the Fun Farm backwater, motoring up from Pinehaven to fish the evening hatch, or encountering jet skiers above Ashton Reservoir.

As use of the river increased, and the number of people living and vacationing in the watershed grew, so, too, did both potential and actual conflicts among river users. A review of the Spring 1993 edition of the HFF newsletter reveals a story that begins with this sentence: "The Fremont County Commission is considering an ordinance restricting motorized watercraft on some stretches of river. The areas were proposed by the Fremont County Parks and Recreation Commission after they received numerous complaints regarding noisy watercraft, safety hazards, threats to wildlife, and pollution."

In response to these conflicts, over the past three decades Fremont County (which has the authority to regulate boating

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## From the Chair

Henry's Fork Foundation members,

It was a great year on the Henry's Fork. Flows were good, hatches were strong, and the fish were there in numbers and sizes that had many regulars talking about the best fishing they had ever seen on the river. One HFF staff member even had a longtime local angler tell him that the fishing was much better now than it was when he was growing up. It isn't often these days that you hear that about a trout river.

Over the past few years, we've had some help from Mother Nature, but also some tough times. Every Foundation supporter can take pride in the quality of this year's fishing. The bottom line is that it wouldn't have been possible without the HFF, and the HFF wouldn't exist without you. The years of hard work that the Foundation has put into researching, restoring, and protecting the river and its watershed produce the rewards that we all enjoy in years like this one, and in years to come. Thank you for making it possible!



*Layne*

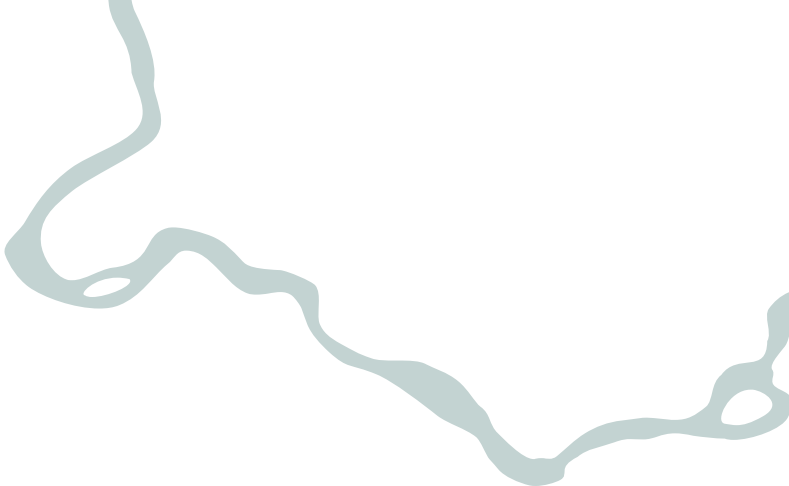


This fall, the HFF conducted two separate fish salvage operations to rescue entrained fish. Shown here, volunteers hand lift fish in buckets from several stories down in the aeration basin at Island Park Dam, and return them to the Henry's Fork. This operation was a great example of our cooperative relationship with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, which called on the HFF for this mission when they were needed elsewhere in region.

View more pictures and read the entire story in the online Monthly Hatch at [www.henrysfork.org](http://www.henrysfork.org).







Thus, the rest of the river—including the Box Canyon, the Ranch, and the entire lower river below Stone Bridge—is open to any and all motorized boat traffic.

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on its waters) enacted a number of motorboat regulations. In addition, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game fishing regulations for years noted that no motors were allowed on most of the river. These rules were called into question last year, however, when Fremont County officials revealed that, according to their review of the record, the only valid ordinances regulating the use of motors on the Henry's Fork are those dating from 1985 and 1993, which limit motors used between the Big Springs trestle bridge and the Mack's Inn Bridge to 15 horsepower, and do not allow motors to be used between McCrea Bridge and Coffee Pot Rapids, Osborne Bridge and Riverside Campground, Lower Mesa Falls and Stone Bridge, and on the Buffalo River. Thus, the rest of the river – including the Box Canyon, the Ranch, and the entire lower river below Stone Bridge – is open to any and all motorized boat traffic.

The county organized a citizens' Waterways Advisory Committee (which included HFF Stewardship Director Kim Ragotzkie) to discuss possible regulations, take public comment, and make a recommendation to the County Commissioners. The committee was able to agree that motors were inappropriate between Mack's Inn and Vernon Bridge (reservoirs excepted), but could not reach an agreement for the river below Vernon – despite an overwhelming demonstration of public support at a public hearing this summer for closing much or all of the river to motors.

The County Commissioners then directed County Planner Stephen Loosli to draft a waterways ordinance. The draft proposed closing the river to motors between Mack's Inn and the Fun Farm backwater and on all tributaries to the Henry's Fork, allowing 15 horsepower motors above



Mack's Inn (an existing use) and also on the Fun Farm backwater, and allowing unrestricted motorized use below the Fun Farm. The draft in no way restricted motorized use of lakes and reservoirs.

At the public hearing on October 6, although some people argued for no regulations at all and others for no motors anywhere, a significant number of comments fell generally in line with the county's draft: Restrict much of the river, but provide for some motorized use (with a horsepower limit) in certain areas. Most observers (the HFF included) were thus taken aback when, shortly after the public hearing, the Commissioners, asserting that "nobody liked the draft," decided to take no action, and simply left the existing patchwork collection of restrictions in place.

Questioned regarding this decision, the Commissioners invited the Foundation (or any other interested party) to submit an alternative ordinance. On October 25 the HFF did just that, presenting a simple draft that consisted almost entirely of existing ordinance language, and that proposed the following: No motors between Mack's Inn and the Fun Farm diversions (reservoirs excluded) or on the tributaries (Warm River, Robinson Creek, Falls River, etc.), with motors of 15 horsepower or less permitted between Mack's Inn and the Big Springs trestle and below the Fun Farm diversions. The Foundation's draft generally reflected the great majority of the public comments received in two different public comment periods, and struck a reasonable balance between opposite camps in the motorboat battle.

The Foundation's rationale for this proposal was based on many factors, including conservation concerns, public safety, actual and potential user conflicts, losses to the local economy should user conflicts lead to fewer anglers and other river users coming to the area, and the preservation of existing ordinances. The proposal was a compromise for the Foundation, because we do not endorse motors anywhere on the Henry's Fork. In this case, however, we felt that the interests of the Henry's Fork would be best served by making a reasonable proposal that took into account the broadest possible range

of resource and user demands, rather than a more rigidly regulatory proposal that risked outright rejection.

On November 8, Fremont County issued a new draft ordinance, scheduled for public hearing on November 30. The draft proposes limiting motors to 10 horsepower above Mack's Inn and below Vernon Bridge, and not allowing motors on the rest of the Henry's Fork and any other streams in the county. The draft also forbids the use of jet-powered motors, thus protecting the river from powerful, shallow-draft jet boats and from jet skis. It is, in most ways, an excellent proposal. Its flaw is its failure to protect the river between Vernon Bridge and the Fun Farm from motorized use.

The Foundation has participated in this public process as citizens, as a concerned organization with 26 years of experience watching and studying the Henry's Fork, as the investor of hundreds of thousands of dollars in public recreational access to the river, and at the invitation of Fremont County. We will remain involved in this question until every option has been explored, and until the best possible solution for the Henry's Fork – not for any specific user group – has been achieved.

This has not been an easy debate, and its outcome is, as I write this, far from certain. Accomplishing our mission for the river is rarely easy, and as the pressure on the many resources of this watershed grows, that mission will only get more difficult. The river has its voice in the Henry's Fork Foundation; it needs a voice, and it has one.

-Steve Trafton



In Memoriam

Jerry Crabs  
1940—2010

Former Board member will  
be missed

The Henry's Fork Foundation lost an old friend, and former member of the Board of Directors, when Jerry Crabs died on October 29.

Jerry and Betsy Crabs managed the Flat Rock Club for many years, and in that capacity Jerry worked with HFF staff on a number of projects aimed at improving the upper Henry's Fork. He was particularly instrumental in urging the Foundation to address the problem of excessive sediment in and around Mack's Inn, efforts that led to the channel restoration work that the HFF and The Nature Conservancy have worked on for years on the Flat Ranch. Jerry and the Flat Rock Club provided the sort of unflinching support that long and difficult restoration projects need.

By the time Jerry joined the Foundation's Board of Directors his background included everything from school teacher to high school principal to restaurant owner to fishing guide to club manager and year-round upper river resident; suffice it to say that he had a unique and invaluable perspective on the role that organizations like the Foundation can play, not only in and around the river but also in the larger landscape of the watershed and its communities. He was a great friend to the Foundation staff, often stopping at the office on his way to and from Mack's Inn, or showing up in his waders to lead a quick trip to find a fish or two on the lower river. I am personally grateful for the memory of a steelhead fishing trip that Jerry took me on prior to my departure for a year in the Marines, during which he showed me the Salmon River ropes and wouldn't allow me to touch my wallet. It was the sort of quiet thing that Jerry did.

Jerry and Betsy retired from the Flat Rock Club to Bozeman, where Jerry led a very active life of involvement in church and community services. The packed pews in the church at Jerry's memorial service were a testament to his long and full life. We are fortunate to have known him, and we will miss him.

-Steve Trafton

# Riffles

**Ashton Dam Update** – The low-level bypass tunnel that will connect the reservoir to the river below is nearly complete. Construction crews encountered few problems during the construction, but the first major reservoir drawdown for the tunnel tap has been postponed until at least late January, 2011, due to delays in delivery of the headgates. Based on comments received from both the Foundation and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, PacifiCorp and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality are taking a closer look at options to manage sediment and water flows during the tunnel tap sequence. PacifiCorp continues to provide regular updates at the Henry's Fork Watershed Council.

**RAC Projects** – The Foundation was awarded Forest Service Resource Advisory Committee funding for four projects in the Island Park area in 2010. We worked closely with USFS staff to complete two projects this fall. The Moose-Lucky Dog stream restoration project (pictured below) put these two tributary creeks back into the original meandering channels for the first time since they were channelized many years ago. Another project stabilized a severe gully on the Henry's Lake Outlet which was dumping tons of sediment into the stream. Two other projects are in progress, the Stoddard Mill Kids' Fishing Pond and Tom's and Fish Creek assessments and restorations.



**Chester Dam Hydroelectric Project** – Fish ladder construction at the project will begin this autumn. Funding for the fish ladder is being raised by the HFF, Trout Unlimited, and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, who jointly applied to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act program for fish ladder funding and will receive 65% of the total project cost through this source. Several other contributors are providing the remainder of the funding. The hydroelectric project powerhouse (see turbine photo above), fish screens in the irrigation canals, and the fish ladder are scheduled to be completed during late spring 2011. HFF research and restoration staff are the conservation liaisons to the Fall River Rural Electric Cooperative for the construction of the fish ladder.



**Caldera Project** – Restoration planning and design work has been ongoing throughout the Caldera. Stream habitat restoration will occur on Fish Creek and Tom's Creek (tributary to the Buffalo River) in 2011. Also planned for 2011 is the construction of a fishway on Silver Lake Dam, with the intent providing fish upstream passage into Silver Lake and Thurmon Creek. The objective of the tributary restoration work is to improve juvenile rainbow trout overwintering capacity, with the goal of increasing rainbow trout numbers in the Henry's Fork. In the Henry's Fork itself, habitat restoration work planned for 2011 involves coordinating, measuring, and monitoring the effects of a spring-time channel shaping flow through the Ranch, based on a hydraulic model developed through the Caldera Project. The objectives for this action are to decrease fine sediment, increase macroinvertebrate production, and improve fish habitat in Harriman State Park.

**Final Fish Salvage on Cross Cut Canal** – Rescuing entrained fish as canals are dewatered at the end of the irrigation season has become something of an annual event for the HFF. The Cross Cut Canal diversion at Chester Dam will be screened next year, so this year's salvage was something of an historic event. The HFF, IDFG, and volunteers salvaged 1039 white fish, 252 rainbows, 26 brown trout, two Yellowstone cutthroat, and one arctic grayling from the canal.



Photo courtesy of Darren Clark

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Thanks to the following friends who have donated  
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Because of omissions on the list published in the Summer 2010 Newsletter, the entire list has been reprinted here. The HFF is very sorry for the errors, and thankful to those that brought this to our attention—it is always our intent to recognize our loyal donors. We appreciate your understanding and your continued support.

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**Staff News:** The Foundation saw one its most selfless, hard-working, and cheerful staff members leave us and move away from the watershed at the end of August. Melanie Sessions worked for us for many years, supporting virtually every office function imaginable – and even some field work – while still managing to be the friendly and helpful presence through whom most people knew and communicated with the HFF. We could not possibly do justice to her service in words, nor could we thank her adequately. We miss Melanie very much, and wish her well in Utah!



The Henry's Fork Foundation  
P.O. Box 550  
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