

Henry's Fork Watershed Council

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

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

Brandon Hoffner, of the Henry's Fork Foundation, called the meeting to order. Participants introduced themselves. Brandon explained that the Watershed Council began in 1993 in an effort to build trust and to find a way to collaborate, solve problems, and open lines of communications among the various stakeholders in the watershed. Dale called for two minutes of silence, noting that it has been a tradition of the council at every meeting since its inception. Dale then opened the meeting up to any announcements or comments.

Community Building

There were no announcements or comments from the group, so the meeting proceeded.

Upper Snake River Reservoir System Update

Brian Stevens, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Because of wet, cool weather during April and delayed onset of high-elevation snowmelt, snow-water-equivalent is well above average in all major watersheds in the upper Snake River basin. Basin inflow has already exceeded 60% of last year's annual total, with the majority of snowmelt and runoff yet to come. The reservoir system is currently at 62% of capacity and is expected to fill in early June. Outflow is around 22,000 cfs American Falls and 20,000 cfs at Minidoka.

Inflow to Jackson and Palisades reservoirs is well above average and expected to remain above average for the next few months. Both reservoirs are now filling and are expected to fill in early June. American Falls Reservoir is very close to full and will remain there in anticipation of increased irrigation demand over the next week. Snowmelt has peaked at Ririe Reservoir, and outflow there was reduced recently to 400 cfs to fill the remaining space. Outflow was also reduced recently at Island Park Reservoir to its current value of around 920 cfs. At current inflow rates, Island Park should fill before the end of May. Over the remainder of the spring, the reservoir system will be filled, and inflow will then be passed through full reservoirs until storage release is needed to meet irrigation demand. Weather forecasts in the 7-14 day range call for cooler-than-average temperatures and above-average precipitation, which should slow snowmelt a little and extend release of snow later into the summer.

Island Park Reservoir Enlargement

Cynthia Bridge-Clark, Idaho Department of Water Resources

Island Park Reservoir enlargement is one of many projects being considered or implemented to address water-supply issues across Idaho. Major demands on water supplies include declining aquifer levels statewide, conjunctive administration and water calls in the upper Snake River

basin, the Swan Falls minimum flow requirement, provision of 400,000 ac-ft of water for anadromous fish flow augmentation in the lower Snake River, meeting needs of population growth and economic development, and climate change. The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB), with legislative mandates and funding from the Idaho legislature, is actively addressing these needs through managed aquifer recharge, development of a new water sustainability policy, consideration of new surface-water storage, and other programs. As part of statewide water planning, the IWRB partnered with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) to conduct the Henry's Fork Basin Study, which was completed in 2015. The Henry's Fork Watershed Council served as the stakeholder workgroup for the Basin Study. The Basin Study initially considered 51 alternatives, eventually reduced to a set of 11 alternatives that were considered worthy of additional assessment. The most promising near-term option among these 11 was enlargement of Island Park Reservoir.

Island Park Dam is an earth-filled structure built between 1935 and 1938. The top of dam crest is at an elevation of 6,312 feet above sea level, after being raised 3 feet in 1985. The crest of the dam itself is 1,607 feet long, and a dike extends another 7,950 feet to the northeast of the dam. The dam has two spillways, the operational spillway at 6,303 feet elevation (when the one-foot rubber bladder is inflated) and an emergency spillway at 6,309 feet elevation. The hydroelectric power plant, owned and operated by Fall River Rural Electric Cooperative, was added to the dam in 1994. The concept for enlarging Island Park Reservoir is to add up to four additional feet of height to the spillway crest, bringing its elevation up to as much as 6,307 feet. This would add up to 35,000 acre-feet of additional storage capacity. One possible way to expand the height of the spillway crest is to replace the current one-foot bladder with a taller one. The emergency spillway would need to be modified to accommodate higher outflow, because the additional operational space to accommodate the enlargement would occupy space currently allocated to capture flood events. USBR estimates that the currently authorized flood-surge space extends 3.6 feet above the operations spillway crest.

The IWRB has contracted with Forsgren Associates to conduct a land and real estate assessment of potential enlargement of Island Park Reservoir. This assessment will evaluate and quantify impacts of enlargement on roads, land, real estate, utilities, septic systems, and easements. The assessment will consider effects of 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-foot increases in the full-pool elevation of the reservoir. The scope of work for the assessment includes data compilation, mapping, field surveys to validate elevation contours, and modeling of the four scenarios. In spring of 2016, elevation data were collected with light detection and ranging (LiDAR) technology. Other data compiled to date include property boundaries, well locations, and ground-surface elevation contours. Data on USBR easements, septic systems, utilities, and structure classifications have yet to be compiled. The last component of the assessment requires development of an iterative analysis approach that can be used to characterize impacts and identify data gaps.

Project timetable for the remainder of 2017 is:

- May: Complete data compilation and base map.
- June: Field work to validate elevations; possible update to IWRB Storage Committee.
- July: Potential public meeting in Island Park.
- August/September: Present preliminary results of surface-raise scenarios and decision-support tool to IWRB Storage Committee.

- December: Final Report.

Other outreach opportunities will be pursued as they arise, including updates and future Watershed Council meetings and a web site.

Harriman Canal and Related Projects in Harriman State Park

Brandon Hoffner, Henry's Fork Foundation
John Sullivan, Harriman State Park

In 2014, a Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF) and long-time Harriman State Park (HSP) angler contacted HFF with concerns about degradation of the upper reaches of the Harriman Canal and resulting erosion and deterioration of the angler trail between the canal and the river. In 2015, HFF presented a proposal for addressing these concerns to the Watershed Council, which endorsed the proposal through its Watershed Integrity Review and Evaluation criteria. Since then, several consultants have evaluated various components of the project and provided more refined assessments of cost and feasibility. In addition, HFF, HSP and grazing permittees have met several times to address livestock management issues in and adjacent to HSP. Following these discussions, it became apparent that issues associated with the canal and pasture irrigation were tied to some of the grazing and livestock management issues. For example, better management of the canal would increase forage quality and water availability in areas away from the river, thereby reducing tendency for cattle to seek forage and water near the river. In 2016, grazing permittees, HFF staff, Idaho Master Naturalists, and other volunteers built six miles of new fence. The feasibility and cost assessments revealed that neither constructing a new headgate nor screening fish out of the canal were cost-effective. Thus, the current emphasis of the project is on maintaining and improving operation of the existing canal, stabilizing the canal bank, and constructing a new angler trail, at a cost of around \$120,000. This summer, some test sections of new trail will be constructed to test materials and design.

Many of the current problems with the Harriman Canal and other irrigation and livestock infrastructure in HSP have been caused by limited state funding allocations and by slow transition from the way the park was operated in the first decade or two after the State received the property to more modern management. All of the limited state money allocated for irrigation management and infrastructure in HSP this year will be devoted to the Harriman Canal project. In addition, revenue from increased grazing fees will be put directly into improvements in livestock management, including better irrigation. In general, new management directions at HSP are aimed at increasing visitation at the Park, through new facilities and events. Visitation has increased from 70,000-80,000 visitors per year a few years ago to 120,000 in 2016. Park revenues have also increase around 20%. Although HSP plans to continue expanding recreational facilities and infrastructure, new development will be carefully planned to blend with the scenery and existing historic structures and promote existing recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, and mountain-biking.

Harriman Ranch Bridge Replacement

Jon Stiehl, Friends of Harriman State Park

Friends of Harriman State Park (FHSP) was founded in 2010 to serve as a volunteer and fund-raising partner to HSP. Between 2010 and 2015, FHSP rebuilt three miles of historic jack fence, under the direction of volunteer Jim Kemp, at a cost of \$41,555. The next big project FHSP intends to undertake is reconstruction of the Ranch Bridge, which crosses the Henry's Fork in the middle of the Ranch, about 1.5 miles upstream of the ranch buildings. The bridge was built in 1921 to shorten the twice-daily trip to feed cattle on the other side of the river from the ranch buildings. The bridge was repaired in 1942, but no maintenance has been done since then. In 2002, HSP began thinking about replacing the bridge, and engineers from Idaho Transportation Department proposed a design. However, budget cuts prevented the project from moving forward. In 2015, FHSP started pursuing replacement of the bridge. To start the planning process, FHSP conducted an online survey, which showed that recreational users in HSP highly value the bridge and are willing to donate funds toward its replacement. However, retaining the original appearance and historic qualities of the bridge was less important. In January 2017, HSP gave approval to pursue replacement of the bridge, and FHSP has hired Keltic Engineering to scope options. The current concept is to essentially replace the bridge as it currently exists at low cost, low impact to the river, and with minimal permitting and logistical requirements. The goal is to complete the new bridge in 2021, on the 100th anniversary of the original bridge.

Fremont County Road and Bridge Improvements

Brandon Harris, Fremont County

Ora Bridge west of Ashton has been in poor condition for many years, although condemnation of the bridge has not occurred. Planning and public scoping for Ora Bridge replacement started in 2011, but accommodation of Ute ladies'-tresses orchid found at the site slowed environmental review. The final design for the bridge was completed last week, incorporating 100-foot span with sufficient width for two lanes and a six-foot shoulder on each side. There will be no formal pedestrian crossing on the bridge. Bids will be let this fall, with construction to begin in 2018. The County intends to move and expand the angler parking area in 2017 so that there will be no conflicts between recreational use and construction activities next year.

The Fun Farm Bridge has been closed four times in the past few years. Each time, temporary repairs have allowed re-opening of the 100-year old structure. Replacement of the bridge is planned for 2020-2021, although that could be moved up if the bridge is condemned. The bridge is a historic structure, so every attempt will be made to find a new use and location for the bridge. It is light so will be relatively easy to move.

The County received funding to pave the Yale-Kilgore Road to the Clark County line and add an ATV trail on the south side. The trail will require new some new water crossings, most notably at McCrea Bridge. The County hopes to find additional funding to build a bridge there for the ATV trail similar to the recreational vehicle bridge at Warm River Campground.

Community Building and Wrap-Up

Dale asked for one minute of silence to wrap-up the meeting before closing comments and announcements.

Brandon Hoffner announced that there would be a Drought Management Planning meeting after the conclusion of the Watershed Council meeting and then thanked everyone for coming out today and for the presenters putting presentations together for this meeting.
The meeting was adjourned at 11:00.