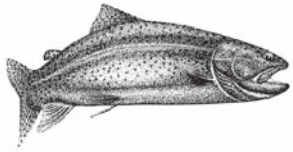


THE VOICE OF THE RIVER



Henry's Fork Foundation

WINTER 2013

More Wild Trout for the Caldera

Improving habitat for juvenile trout means better fisheries

For more than 25 years, wild trout have been the focus of management, research, and restoration in the Henry's Fork from Island Park Dam to Mesa Falls. Experience and research shows the key to adding more and larger trout to the Henry's Fork fisheries in this area is increasing the survival of rainbow trout during their first winter of life. HFF and its partners have done just that by improving winter flows in the mainstem Henry's Fork and restoring habitat and access to habitat in its tributaries.

Increasing Habitat With More Water

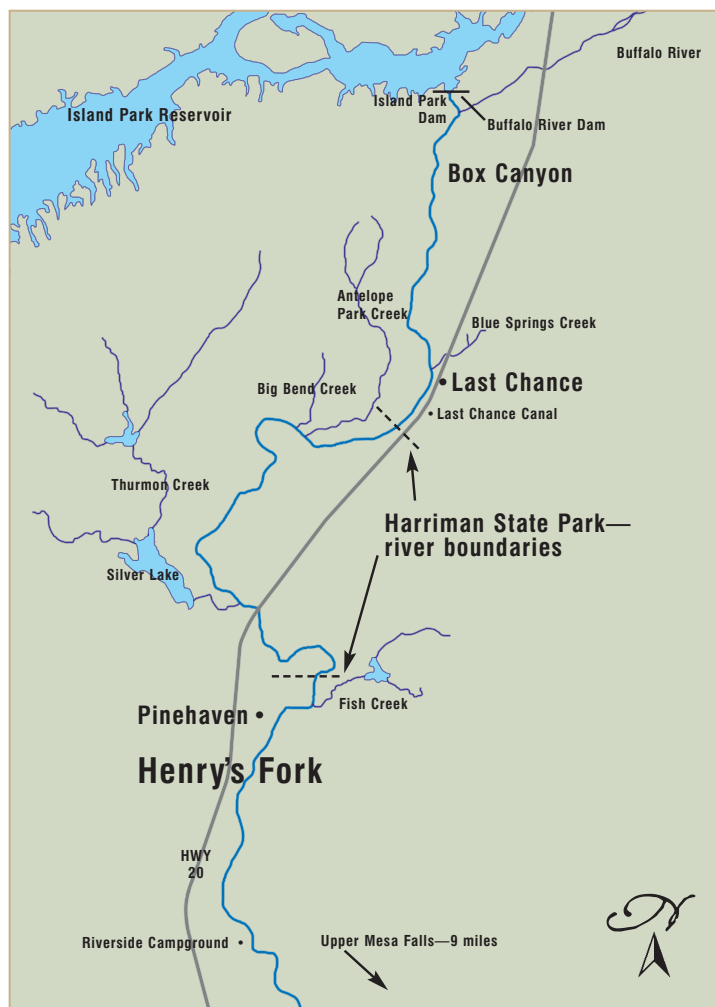
Most of the overwintering habitat for the Caldera section of the Henry's Fork is found in Box Canyon, where rainbow trout can find concealment cover in between big rocks. More water in the Box Canyon means more cover for juvenile trout in the winter. That is why HFF, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and others work with water management organizations to provide as much water as possible out of Island Park Dam during crucial winter months (see Riffles on page 6).

Depending on the availability of water, winter flows are lower some years. To make up for mainstem winter water shortages like this, HFF and its partners have restored habitat and improved fish passage access to habitat in the Caldera tributaries (see map left). These spring-fed streams offer consistent water flows and a large potential for improving the survival of young trout—the key to adding more catchable wild trout to the Henry's Fork.

Restoring Access to Habitat in Tributaries

The largest tributary of the Henry's Fork in the Caldera is the Buffalo River. In 2005, Fall River Rural Electric Co-op extended a fish ladder at the Buffalo River Dam by 250 feet in length (see *The Voice of the River*, Winter 2012 at www.henrysfork.org for a summary).

Over 17,000 rainbow trout less than 7 inches in length have moved up through the fish ladder since monitoring began in March 2006. These trout are moving into the Buffalo River between September and December looking for a place to spend their first winter. For the past several years, HFF has also monitored fish moving downstream at the Buffalo River Dam to the Henry's Fork. Again, thousands of trout have been captured. The large numbers of these young rainbow trout moving into and out of the Buffalo River reaffirms that the Caldera



Continued on page 4.

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As Beautiful as Ever

By Robert Dotson, Chair of the Board of Directors

Dear fellow Foundation members,

Last winter I was fortunate to be fishing the northern end of New Zealand's south island during their kiwi summer, a land that has been gifted with stunning beech forests, raw exposed shorelines, and magnificent rivers that originate in remote mountain gorges. At the end of a long day I found myself at dinner with a group of Americans from the east coast that were being hosted by one of Fly Fishermen Magazine's lead photographers.



The group excitedly discussed the fish landed, hooked, spooked, or lost that day. When quizzed about where I was from in the states, I replied that I resided a portion of the year on the Henry's Fork. The answer had hardly left my mouth when someone asked "Is it true that the Henry's Fork is back?" This wasn't the first time I have been asked this question recently. However, I was surprised at the level of curiosity regarding my home water as we sat in the midst of the lush forests and emerald rivers of New Zealand.

As someone who was fortunate to begin fishing the Railroad Ranch and Box Canyon in the mid-1970s, it gave me pleasure to report that the opportunity to chase big, wild rainbows over 19 inches on the upper river was again a daily reality, not to mention the impressive lower river browns. I also noted that the aquatic vegetation was rebounding, creating holding lies and cover similar to what I experienced many years ago. In short, yes, I could report that the Henry's Fork was undeniably back as one of the finest fly fishing rivers in the world.

It is not by accident that the river we all love is seeing better days again. Through the generosity of members, like you the Henry's Fork Foundation remains the active voice of the river. The threats to this legendary river, however, remain a reality that we must all diligently address. Development regulations and practices, reduced state funding for Harriman State Park, and the threat of many winters in a row with a low snow pack are just a sampling of the challenges that the Henry's Fork faces in the near future.

Once again we are asking for your help to protect this legendary, wild trout fishery and its unique ecosystem by making a year-end gift that will prime the Henry's Fork Foundation to meet next year's exciting opportunities to conserve, protect, and restore the Henry's Fork watershed.

Before I finish, if you haven't fished the Henry's Fork in the last few years, I invite you to come back to the river and experience what all the fuss is about. After all, it's true, the Henry's Fork is back and it is as beautiful as ever.

Best Regards,

Robert P. Dotson
Chairman of the Board
Henry's Fork Foundation

Make a Difference in the New Year

Launch HFF into 2013 with a year-end gift

The Henry's Fork is continually asked to do more, not only by anglers from around the world looking for abundant and large fish, but also by local farmers, hydropower operators, and municipalities. The Henry's Fork is a working river, and with your help, we ensure the river works for fish and wildlife too.

Consider making a year-end gift that will help guarantee the Henry's Fork remains a special place.

2012 was a defining year for the Henry's Fork Foundation. HFF accomplished an enormous amount of important conservation work for the watershed. We also saw the payoff for past efforts in the form of reviving and abundant fisheries.

We couldn't do the important work of conserving, protecting, and restoring the Henry's Fork without members like you. We know we're on the right track because we had a record year for membership support and growth in 2012. But that only highlights the many ambitious opportunities there are to make a difference in the coming year.

As a thank gift for \$100 or more, we'll send you a hardback first edition of Mike Lawson's book, *Fly-fishing Guide to the Henry's Fork*, newly published this past October.

Not only is Mike one of the most well-known experts on the Henry's Fork, he is also the recipient of the 1999 Manlove Award, named after the late HFF founder, Bill Manlove.

The Foundation has the last remaining 100 hardback first editions of this book available on a first come, first serve basis, so make your gift quickly to secure your copy. The Foundation is looking forward to the ways we can act as the *Voice of the River* in the future. With your help, we'll have another spectacular year in 2013.

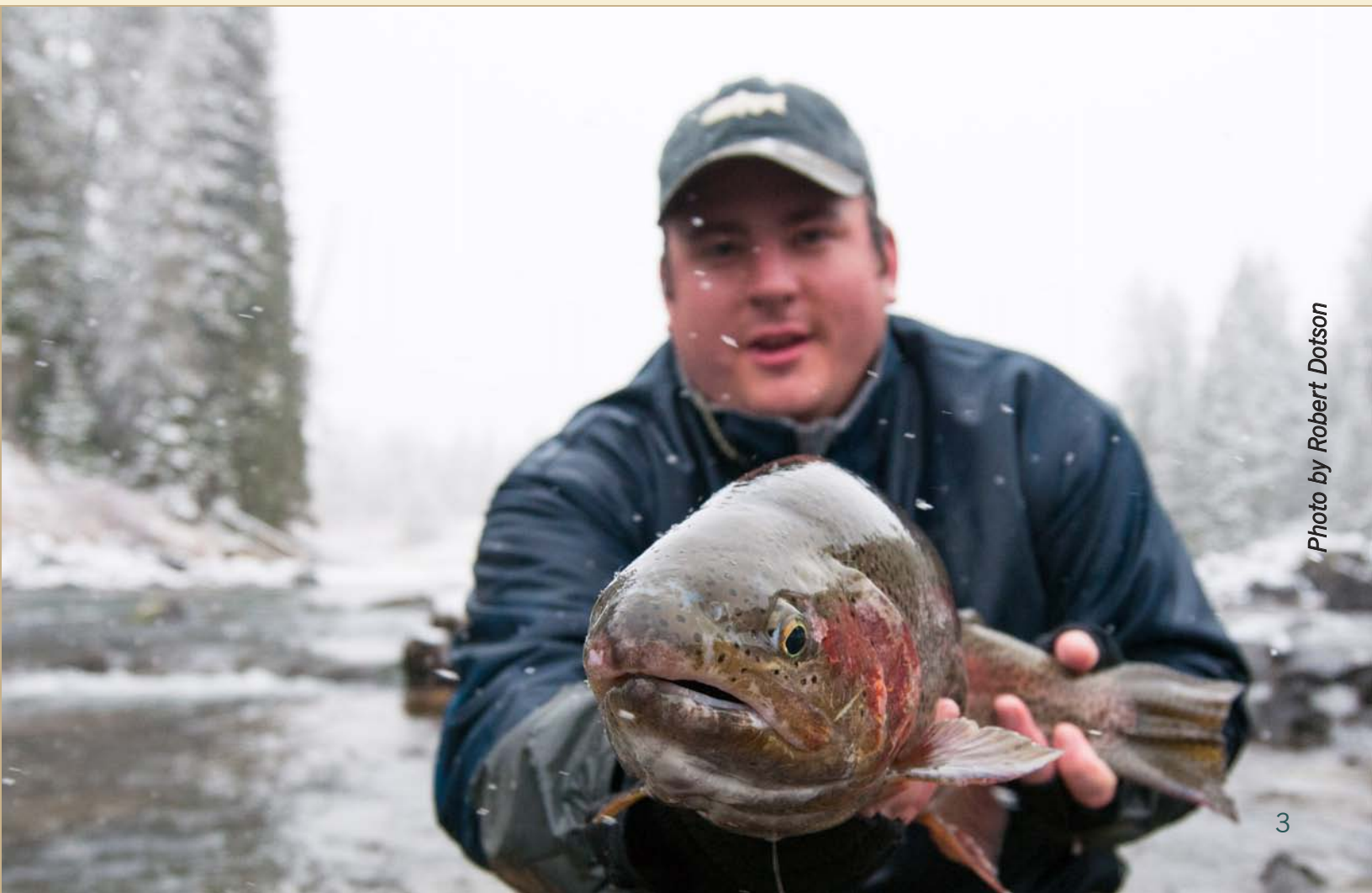
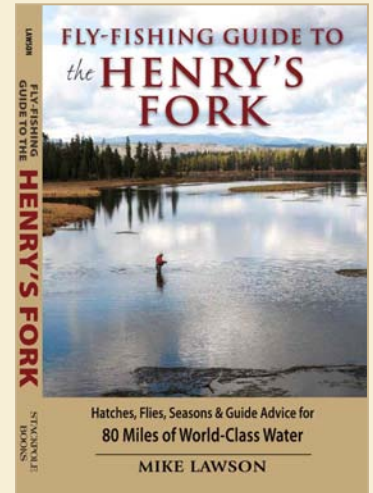


Photo by Robert Dotson

(Wild Trout continued from cover)

tributaries can play an important role to adding more trout to the Henry's Fork.

Restoring Habitat in Smaller Tributaries

The success of the Buffalo River fish ladder led to a study of Blue Spring, Thurmon, and Fish Creeks (see map on front page) in the Caldera and their potential use by juvenile trout in the winter. Like the Buffalo River, these tributaries are not altered by water storage and delivery as is the Henry's Fork below Island Park Dam. These streams consistently have water, but in smaller quantities than in the Buffalo River. HFF began a study of these streams in 2008 and found a surprisingly high number of young trout using them in the winter. The trout start moving in during the autumn months, spend the winter, are still there in April, and then move back to the Henry's Fork during or after the springtime runoff, as they are not present during the summer. This study confirmed the value of habitat restoration in these streams to improve juvenile trout winter survival.

Fish Creek enters the Henry's Fork near the downstream boundary of Harriman State Park and provides about 1.5 miles of the creek accessible to fish below the Fish Pond Dam. Hundreds of juvenile rainbow trout were found overwintering in the creek immediately below the dam during recent winters, but relatively few fish farther downstream. The wide, shallow, and silty conditions of the creek in this area provided little winter habitat for young trout. These conditions, the likely result of decades of agricultural use and de-watering, showed little change in the 30 years since the Park was formed. Restoring the

creek to provide better winter habitat called for a more active approach.

This approach involved narrowing and deepening the creek, along with providing water to several old meanders that were dry. Banks were rebuilt with wetland sod mats harvested in the meadow along the stream. An excavator with an extra long arm that could reach both sides of the creek minimized creek crossings and streambank trampling (see photo below). Narrowing the creek will concentrate the stream flows, moving silt and fine sediment on the streambed to expose gravels and cobbles needed by fish. The new streambanks and deeper water will provide concealment cover for trout. Willows were also planted along the creek to stabilize banks and provide shading and habitat. Almost the entire length of Fish Creek below the dam was improved during this past autumn, just in time for juvenile trout to move in for the winter.

Two small streams, Big Bend and Antelope Creeks, enter the Henry's Fork from the north, just upstream of the Islands area in Harriman State Park. Undersized culverts near the confluences of both creeks caused erosion at high stream flows, and in the case of Big Bend Creek, a potential fish passage barrier at low stream flows. Both problems were fixed in September by removing the undersized culverts and replacing them with larger arch culverts. The new culverts allow the creeks to flow unconstrained downstream and fish to move unimpeded upstream.

Restoration Continues in 2013

Fisheries research and restoration work continues to expand our knowledge and the potential of the Caldera tributaries. New tools and techniques are being used on Thurmon Creek to assess when and how many trout return to the Henry's Fork and whether a fish ladder there may benefit fish survival (see back page). Other opportunities like those above exist for winter habitat improvements that will eventually add even more wild trout to the Henry's Fork.

Special thanks to: Brad Higginson, Caribou-Targhee National Forest (CTNF) hydrologist, who designed and implemented the restoration work on Fish, Big Bend, and Antelope creeks. Lee Mabey, CTNF fisheries biologist has played a key role in all fisheries research and restoration work of the Caldera tributaries. IDFG and Harriman State Park are other valuable project partners with the tributaries work. The Forest Service's Eastern Idaho Resource Advisory Committee funded the restoration work on Fish, Big Bend, and Antelope creeks. The Cross Charitable Foundation is funding work on the Buffalo River and Thurmon Creek. Snake River Prototypes, Kast Gear, Henry's Fork Master Naturalists, and Fall River Electric provide essential equipment, clothing, and assistance to our on-the-ground work.



Almost the entire length of Fish Creek below Fish Pond Dam was restored this past September to increase winter habitat for fish—the key to adding more trout to the Henry's Fork fisheries in this area.

A Guide's View of the Season

Reflections on the 2012 Fishing Season by John Hudgens

To say that the fishing on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River is "pretty good" is like saying that Idaho has "pretty good" potato farming. I recently got together with Shaun Lawson so we could reflect back on the past year. The son of Mike Lawson, Shaun is one of the few people working in the industry to have grown up along the banks of the upper and lower river. When I asked Shaun about his experience this past season, he replied: "I can't remember the river fishing this well in my lifetime! You can talk about the hatches that you may have seen or you may have missed, but the fish are there and they are big and healthy!"

Both Shaun and I have had the opportunity to fish and visit many waters throughout the world and consider the Henry's Fork to be one of the most unique. The 70 miles of the Henry's Fork consists of incredibly diverse water characteristics and sections, from that you could polished spring creek surfaces to cascading canyon water—and everything in between. Each water type holds a variety of insects that require different presentation tactics. In 2012, at any given point during the season, every section produced prolific hatches and excellent fishing.

The Henry's Fork is known for its insect hatches. On the lower river, the golden stone hatch from mid-June through early July consistently produced some of the largest fish. Despite the work on Ashton Dam, the lower river continued to fish well throughout the spring and early summer months and into the fall. Gray drake spinners can swarm the lower river, but they require some flooding in the late spring and early summer months, which we didn't have this past year, to produce huge numbers. Although we didn't see a ton of them this past season, they'll return.

The upper river, or the Caldera, as many like to call it, has rebounded over the last four years and trout fishing through the town of Last Chance and Harriman State Park's Railroad Ranch is as good as most can remember. The fish in these sections are noted to be some of the most selective trout around, and I can certainly testify to that statement. But there were many years when the fishing was tough due to lower fish numbers in these sections. Now these fish are back, as well as many of the anglers that stalk these waters. I personally witnessed numerous fish caught in the 20-inch range, with a few larger ones. There really is no place like the Ranch.

Some of the best hatches of this past season were



Photo by Jim Klug

evening caddis, afternoon flavs, green and brown drakes, mayfly spinners, calibaetis, tricos, mahagonies, and blue-wing olives. Although there were a few days of promising overcast weather when the bugs hatched stronger and the fish fed harder, most of the summer was bright, dry, and hot. Despite these conditions, there was still plenty of good fishing found on the Henry's Fork in 2012. Smoke from fires in nearby regions filled the air in late July, August, and early September. Sometimes the smoke produced the perfect amount of subdued light that made for great fishing.

The Henry's Fork produces and attracts the finest fishermen, who exhibit good ethics and a love for the sport as well as their surroundings. I live in North Pinehaven, just a short walk from the famed Wood Road 16, where I enjoy neighbors that dedicate their summers to fly fishing the Henry's Fork. I've traveled all around the west, and as many waters become more crowded, it's hard to find the romance and atmosphere in other fishing towns and waters as one finds on the Henry's Fork. It is a privilege to guide this watershed, and it will be something I'll continue to do as long as I am able. Protecting this water, land, and resource, as well as the sport's future, ethics, and attitude is mandatory to me. Thank you for joining me in supporting the Henry's Fork Foundation! We will work hard to ensure that this place continues to provide what we have all come to love!

John Hudgens has worked as a fishing guide for Mike Lawson's Henry's Fork Anglers since 2002 and guides in the Henry's Fork region approximately 130 days each year. John has served as a member of the Henry's Fork Foundation Board of Directors for the past four years.

Riffles: Notes From the Field

Drought Management Planning

Fisheries research has shown that adequate river flows during crucial winter months means more trout survive their first winter and reach adulthood. The key to getting water in the river when juvenile trout need it is Drought Management Planning.

Drought Management Planning could be the single most important task the Henry's Fork Foundation is involved in. It provides the policy and system for monitoring, assessing, and preparing for drought conditions, while supporting irrigation water users and the ecological resources of the Henry's Fork of the Snake River.

A legally mandated process that officially started with the adoption of a plan in 2005, Drought Management Planning ended the days when the entire Henry's Fork river flow was shut off to fill Island Park Reservoir during the winter. The process seeks to meet the dual goals of delivering water from Island Park Reservoir to the Henry's Fork downstream when fish need it most in the winter, and at the same time ensuring that the reservoir is filled to meet irrigation needs for the coming growing season.

The huge snowpack of the 2010-11 winter allowed more than 500 cubic feet per second (cfs) to flow out of Island Park Reservoir during the winter of 2011-12. But the meager snow pack last winter, combined with a warm, dry, and windy summer meant Island Park

Reservoir stood at only 40 percent of capacity by the end November. It seemed that Drought Management Planning might be a challenging process this autumn, especially when the 90-day forecast in September 2012 predicted an El Niño event and forecasted warm dry conditions. It appears now that the forecasts may have been inaccurate, and so far precipitation has been falling regularly.

At the November Drought Management Planning meeting, the parties agreed to reduce autumn flows out of Island Park Reservoir to the minimum required to maintain electricity production at Island Park Dam and allow the reservoir to fill as much as possible prior to the winter months.

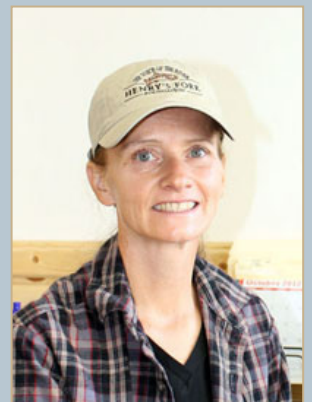
November has seen flows hover around 150 cfs out of Island Park Reservoir. Starting December 1, the flow from Island Park Dam will increase to 300-350 cfs, a sufficient flow to ensure juvenile trout facing their first winter have a higher chance of survival. That is good news for the Henry's Fork fisheries and for those who like to chase wild rainbow trout in the Henry's Fork.

Caldera Symposium Online

If you missed the Caldera Symposium in July, you can find the video of the proceedings on HFF's YouTube channel and a written summary is now available on our website. Go to www.henrysfork.org and click on **Caldera Project** to find links to both the video and proceedings.

New Office Assistant Keeps HFF Organized

If you contact the Foundation or attend an HFF event, Julie Maurer will likely be the friendly person who greets you. Julie joined the Foundation this past fall and brings 26 years of experience in the U.S. Air Force, with duties ranging from an airman working in field locations to a program manager in charge of major weapons systems supporting munitions troops worldwide. Experience like that makes HFF's logistics no problem for Julie. She is an Ashton native and recently returned to town with her husband Tim after living as far away as Iceland.



Thank You for Your Contribution!

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Thank you

Fish Detection in Thurmon Creek

A fish detection system (photo below) was installed in Thurmon Creek in November as part of an ongoing study of how juvenile rainbow trout use the creek in the winter. Trout are captured at a weir near the creek mouth and then implanted with a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag that contains a unique number specific to each fish. Some of the PIT-tagged trout will be moved into Silver Lake by hand. Most of the PIT-tagged trout are expected to remain in the creek, either above or below the dam, for the winter. When the fish do return to the Henry's Fork they will swim past the detection system and the fish number, date, and time are recorded and stored by the transceiver unit. Read the cover story to learn more about how projects like this improve the Caldera's wild trout fisheries.



HFF's Upcoming Events

Salt Lake City Reception
Friday, February 22, 2013
Downtown Radisson, SLC

Boise Reception
Saturday April 13, 2013
Riverside Hotel, Boise

Henry's Fork Day
Saturday, June 15, 2013
Last Chance, Idaho