VOICE OF THE RIVER

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2016

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THE VOICE OF THE RIVER
SINCE 1984
HENRY'S FORK FOUNDATION

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THE VOICE OF THE RIVER
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Meet Our Members:

Gary and Cathy Gross

When did you first visit and fish the Henry's Fork? What do you remember most about it?

We first visited the Henry's Fork in the summer of 2002 when some friends offered the use of their cabin on the Warm River. While there, we set up a trip on the Henry's Fork with guide, Brady Sessions, and ended the day below Del Rio bridge where Brady said a big brown trout had been lurking. He waded me out into the middle of the river to throw a streamer around a large, submerged rock. After about 45 minutes, I finally got lucky and hooked up. We couldn't accurately measure the fish, but I remember its head looked a foot long. In the meantime, Cathy was striking out, while the resident osprey sat on the bridge and watched with contempt. Suddenly the raptor flew into the water near Cathy and flew back up with a nice rainbow trout. Cathy went on to catch three nice rainbows of her own. We were both hooked on the Henry's Fork.

How long have you been a member of HFF? How were you introduced to HFF?

We continued to return to the Henry's Fork at least once a year after that initial visit. On one such visit around 2004, we were out with a guide from Trouthunter, and he gave us a one-year free membership to the HFF. We didn't know much about HFF at the time, but as we read the periodic mailings, we became acquainted with its mission. We also began doing some work for the HFF as volunteers through the Idaho Master Naturalist program. The volunteer work allowed us to see the scope of the work the HFF was performing, and to witness the professionalism, knowledge, and dedication of the HFF biologists and staff. What also struck us was the economic need for visitors like ourselves to support the HFF. The Henry's Fork is a pristine watershed, but lacks the economic base to fully monitor and protect it as the area grows.

Briefly, some background. Career choice, family, interests?

We are both retired. I was a consulting actuary for an international consulting firm and Cathy was an anesthesiologist. We both attended the University of Texas at Austin, where we met at nearby Lake Travis.

Best fishing story?

After college graduation, some friends and I decided to drive to Alaska to go camping and fishing before we started our respective careers. When we reached British Columbia, it was sleeting, so we decided to not go any further. We spent a week at a lakeside camp outside Kamloops, BC, where we rented a skiff and were loaned some Indian bamboo fly rods to use to troll for Kamloops trout. While I was operating the outboard, my best friend offered me a PB&J sandwich, I set the bamboo rod upright against the transom and turned around for my sandwich. That was when I heard a splash behind me. Turning back, I could see this lovely bamboo rod sinking reel-first and a huge Kamloops trout leaping out of the water in the distance. I panicked and shut off the engine, then immediately tried to re-start it. By the time I got it re-started and backed up to the rod, just the rod tip was above the water. Luckily I retrieved the rod and the fish was still on and subsequently landed a four pound Kamloops trout.

Cathy's favorite fishing experience was on Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park. While out one day, a huge storm blew up, sending us motoring for shelter in a narrow cove. As we pulled into the cove, it began to rain, and as it rained, trout began rising everywhere around us. Our casting skills were in their developmental stage, but there were so many risers that even a poor cast had a shot at attracting attention and several were caught. The sun started coming out again over the lake, even as the rain continued to fall on us, creating a brilliant rainbow. The combination of the rainbow, glacial blue water, mountains, and a red-faced guide were a colorful scene we'll never forget.

What do you do when you aren't fishing?

We travel back and forth between Austin and our cabin on Cherry Butte overlooking the Henry's Fork, with a few side trips each year to different destinations. Whether in Austin or outside Ashton, however, Cathy tends her vegetable and flower gardens and I work on the property cutting wood and killing weeds.

Gary and Cathy on their honeymoon in 1977.

What's Happening at the Chester Fish Ladder?

HFF has been monitoring the Chester Fish Ladder camera regularly over the past month. In six total hours of viewing, twenty-four rainbow trout and two mountain whitefish have been observed using the ladder to move upstream.

Water-Quality: Where We Are and What We've Learned

By Melissa Muradian, HFF Post-Graduate Research Associate

Photo credit: James Chandler

In 2014 the Henry's Fork Foundation initiated a long-term water-quality monitoring program in order to build a context for understanding how physical and biochemical properties of water affect wild trout. We developed a network of instruments called "sondes" that record key water-quality parameters in different reaches of the river. Our sondes can be left in the river 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for up to 3 months at a time, and they record data every 15 minutes. This yields water-quality data more regularly than could be obtained by manual water sampling. We have installed 7 sondes throughout the watershed, each located in a major and unique reach of the Henry's Fork.

The sonde network yields a wealth of information on physical, chemical, and biological processes. Water-quality is governed in some reaches by natural hydrologic and physical characteristics of the river and in other reaches by management of the river via reservoirs, irrigation diversion, and other man-made factors. To illustrate this point, let's investigate dissolved oxygen (DO) in 5 reaches of the river (Figure 1). In order to put DO in perspective, adult trout need at least 6 mg/L of DO (orange dashed line in Figure 1) to support regular metabolic processes; anything below this is stressful and can result in mortality. During late summer to early fall of 2015, DO remained above this minimum in most river reaches from Flat Rock downstream to Ashton Dam. A glaring exception is immediately below Island Park Dam. Observers may also notice several daily lows below 6 mg/L at Pinehaven.

One of the first things we learned from the sonde data was that DO levels fluctuate every 24 hours due to daily cycles of photosynthesis and respiration. Like terrestrial vegetation, aquatic plants photosynthesize (produce oxygen) only during the day while the sun is shining. However, all living organisms in the river, including plants, continue to use oxygen at night after the plants have ceased photosynthesizing. These processes result in daily highs and nightly lows in DO levels that are clearly identified in the sonde record. The daily DO cycles are tied to the productivity of a given river reach in two ways: 1) the daily highs reflect abundance of plants, which, among many important ecological functions, provide physical habitat for insects and fish, and 2) the amplitude of the cycles (difference between daily high and daily low) indicates how much life is present in that reach by revealing how much DO is used through the night.

In Figure 1, we see that the reach above Island Park Reservoir (Flat Rock), which is spring-fed, has relatively stable average DO levels and daily fluctuations throughout the summer and early fall. This reach provides a good baseline for what we might expect to see above Box

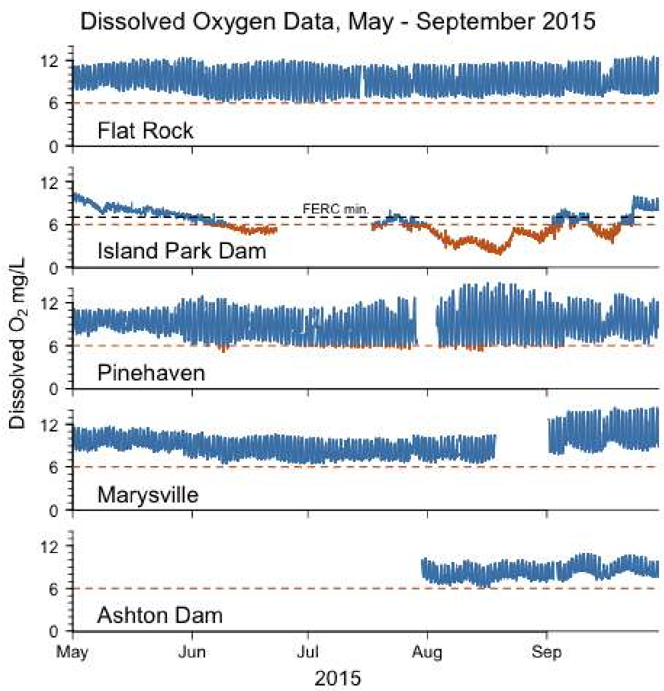

Figure 1 *- Sonde data of dissolved oxygen (DO) measured in mg/L from May through Sept. 2015 in 5 reaches of the river. Blue lines denote DO levels above the biological minimum of 6 mg/L (orange dashed line) needed for adult trout growth and survival in warm summertime waters, orange denotes periods of concern when DO dropped below this biological minimum. The FERC minimum of 7mg/L (black dashed line) only applies to water downstream of the Island Park power plant; more on this in the following story.*

Canyon, if the Reservoir were not there. However, we see that the reach immediately below the dam looks the least productive in two ways: by the relatively small amplitude in DO cycles and by low average levels of DO most of the summer. Both of these phenomena occur because processes in the reservoir, not in the river, determine water-quality immediately downstream of the dam. During the summer, more oxygen is consumed in the reservoir than is produced, resulting in low DO in the reservoir outflow. As a result, it is clear that the reservoir itself reduces water-quality for trout immediately downstream of the dam. HFF was able to partner with Fall River Rural Electric to identify and solve this problem.

At Pinehaven, the data shows this reach is the most productive in our network, thanks to the high density of macrophytes downstream of the dam (rooted, water-dwelling plants). The Buffalo River and plentiful riffles through Box Canyon mix additional oxygen into the river so the effect of the reservoir (on DO) is soon "reset", but without the plentiful macrophytes filling up the wide, shallow, and low-gradient channel in Harriman Ranch, we would expect DO in Pinehaven to look more similar to that in the Flat Rock reach. An interesting characteristic of Pinehaven is how it flirts with fulfilling the aphorism 'too much of a good thing'. As mentioned above, there are several daily lows that drop below 6mg/L. The very process that makes this reach the most productive also causes stressfully low DO levels for trout each night: the high density of aquatic plants temporarily supersaturate the water with DO, which encourages spectacular growth of insects and fish, but these species require even more DO

as they grow, draining DO through the night. Therefore, if macrophyte growth increases then the same habitat that produces the famous fat fish in the Ranch could become unfit for trout during parts of the summer.

By the time the Henry's Fork has dropped off the Caldera, water from Warm River and other spring-fed tributaries has mixed in, and the resulting DO record at Marysville (above Ashton) again resembles that at Flat Rock. However, this expected "natural" signature is again altered when the river hits Ashton Reservoir: the daily lows are similar to those in Marysville, but the daily highs have been dampened. Through Ashton Reservoir, the water is too deep for sunlight to reach plants rooted on the bottom, and the slower flow results in loss of aeration through fast-flowing riffles.

As we expand our network's coverage, we significantly increase our capacity for scientific research. This information is vital to HFF's ability to conserve and protect the unique fisheries of the Henry's Fork watershed, and is also proving valuable to our partner conservation organizations, agencies, and researchers now and into the future.

Fall River Rural Electric and HFF to Improve Trout Habitat

By Melissa Muradian, HFF Post Graduate Research Associate

HFF and FRRE staff worked for two weeks to complete real-time data transfer from our Island Park East sonde (shown) to FRRE's Island Park power house.

Last summer HFF set up an experiment to investigate differences in water-quality between the two outflow points from Island Park Reservoir. This study resulted in a collaboration with Fall River Rural Electric (FRRE) that will, in turn, result in improvements to fish habitat immediately downstream of the dam. HFF currently maintains two sondes there, each on opposite sides of the river. These sondes measure quality of water released from the reservoir through the gates on the west side and through the FRRE power plant on the east side. We indeed found differences in temperature, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen levels between the two outflow points during the hot summer months due to thermal, chemical, and physical stratification in the reservoir. However, the high quality data we are able to collect using the Island Park (IP) sondes not only provided ecologically informative insight into reservoir discharge and habitat upstream of Box Canyon, but also provided valuable information

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FRRE used to identify areas for improvement in their power plant operations. Hydroelectric power companies harness the potential energy of water that is publically owned, and therefore must ensure that the water flowing out of their power plant meets water-quality standards enforced by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

In the 1980s, participation by local stakeholders in FERC's environmental review process resulted in the standards that apply to the Island Park power plant. One of the primary standards requires maintaining sufficient levels of dissolved oxygen (DO) in power-plant outflow to support fish and other aquatic life downstream; this limit was set at 7 mg/L (black dashed line in 2nd panel Fig. 1, pg. 4). Unfortunately, the contractor FRRE had hired to conduct water-quality monitoring failed to maintain properly calibrated equipment, and resulting readings proved to be inaccurate. Our network of well-maintained sondes provided high-quality data that accurately recorded low DO in summertime power-plant outflow (2nd panel Fig. 1, pg. 4). As a result, FRRE and HFF entered into an agreement in which HFF collects and provides to FRRE real-time DO data that they will use to control their outflow aerators, ensuring FERC compliance and improving fish habitat downstream of the power plant.

Rob Van Kirk and Mark Chandler of FRRE install a water-quality monitoring sonde.

Genetic Study Identifies Important Spawning Habitat

By Christina Morrisett, HFF Research Assistant

Photo credit: James Chandler

Over 120 spawning-sized rainbow trout have ascended the Buffalo River fish ladder since February 15. The 2016 spawning run is on track to being above average compared to the last decade!

In the 1930s, construction of the Buffalo River Dam blocked upstream fish migration to the only large tributary between Island Park Dam and Mesa Falls. A new fish ladder was built in 2006 to allow juvenile trout to access winter habitat in the Buffalo River and increase the number of spawning trout migrating upstream. Monitoring efforts over the last decade reveal the fish ladder has succeeded on both accounts.

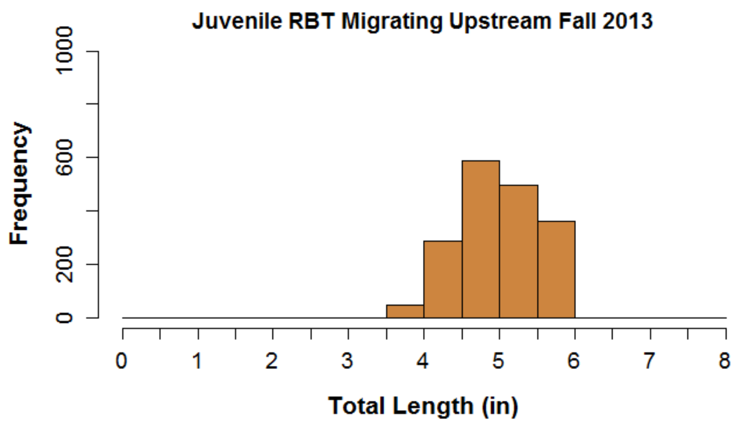
In 2013, our research focus shifted from monitoring effectiveness of the ladder in passing individual fish to quantifying if and how the Buffalo River contributes to the Henry's Fork fishery. We initiated a genetics study in partnership with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to better understand life histories of rainbow trout migrating between the Buffalo River and the Henry's Fork. We collected tissue for genetic testing from all upstream-migrating spawners (2014 and 2015), a sample of downstream-migrating juveniles (2015), and a sample of individuals of all ages in the Henry's Fork population (2015). In 2016 and 2017, we will collect genetic samples from age-2 fish in the Henry's Fork population. These samples allow us to infer parentage of migrating rainbow trout – whether they are the offspring of migrating

Henry's Fork trout, year-round resident Buffalo River trout, or a combination of the two.

In addition to the genetics study, we have continued monitoring migration via upstream and downstream traps, began tagging migrating rainbow trout with electronic tags, and installed a tag detector at the dam to track out-migration. Measurement of trout collected in the traps revealed a seasonal difference in the size of juvenile trout moving in and out of the Buffalo River. In the fall, the majority of juvenile trout migrating upstream are between 4 and 6 inches. Over the winter, we expect them to grow in size. However, juvenile fish migrating downstream the subsequent spring are between 2.5 and 4.5 inches, indicating the majority of the fish migrating downstream in the spring are not the ones that came upstream the previous fall (see graph). Tag data further support this conclusion, as less than 1 percent of the estimated 30,000 to 70,000 springtime outmigrating juveniles were fish tagged going upstream the previous fall.

The genetics study was critical to identifying the origin of these juvenile springtime migrants. Genetic analysis has determined that 80 percent of the downstream-migrating juvenile rainbow trout were individuals born from resident Buffalo River fish, migrating downstream after spending 9-12 months in the tributary. Eleven percent of the downstream migrants had only one parent that migrated from the Henry's Fork, while 9 percent were the offspring of two migratory parents.

Overall, we have learned that the Buffalo River's largest contribution to the Henry's Fork fishery may be spawning habitat and not overwintering habitat. The trout that migrate from the Henry's Fork to the Buffalo River to spawn produce 6,000 to 14,000 fry each year, providing insurance in years with low spawning success in the Henry's Fork. On the other hand, it appears the Henry's Fork itself is providing the majority of winter habitat for juvenile trout, which is why it is so important to maintain winter flows as high as possible in Box Canyon.



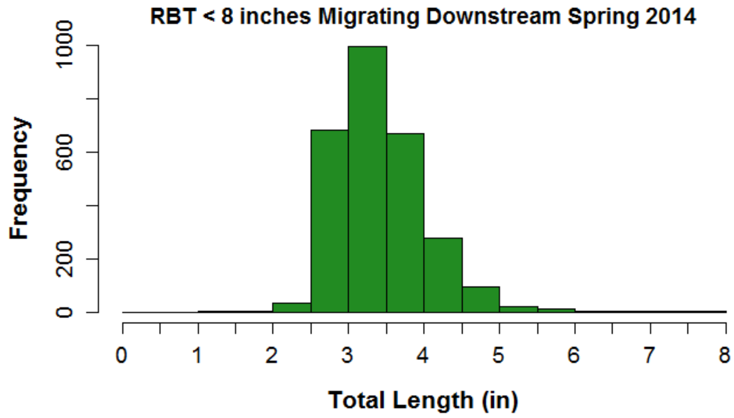


Photo credit: James Chandler

Riffles: Notes from the Field

Photo credit: Bob Kloskowski

The Harriman Canal Project

By Brandon Hoffner, HFF Executive Director

A framework for addressing concerns over Railroad Ranch trail erosion was presented at the HFF Membership Meeting in June 2015 and covered in a past newsletter. The Harriman Canal project is now rounding into form, but as HFF dug further into the issues surrounding the state of trails downstream of the “logjam” and observation deck, the project became more intricate. A late October 2015 tour of the project with engineers and hydrologists brought new questions to light and dictated further prep work be accomplished.

With additional input from Harriman State Park, Idaho Fish and Game, and local ranchers, HFF recently awarded a contract to Forsgren & Associates from Rexburg, ID to complete a comprehensive plan that will achieve several goals: establish a final project budget, direct restoration and maintenance of Harriman Canal to deliver irrigation water and prevent water seepage to angler trails, protect Harriman State Park water rights, increase irrigation delivery to Harriman State Park pastures, and protect the canal and trails from future bovine hoof damage. Issues identified pertaining to entrainment of fish from the river into Harriman Canal will be dealt with separately as the logistics of that issue are very complicated. HFF is hopeful the trails can be protected without additional infrastructure, such as boardwalks, but post project monitoring will be the determining factor for additional steps to fix the core issues with the angler trails.

If you are fishing the Ranch late in the summer you might see various equipment working on the canal and surrounding infrastructure, such as the fencing. Harriman State Park and HFF anticipate work will continue on the project for the next 2 to 3 years, but direct disruption to river access should be minimal.

Our Livestock Fencing Plan

By Brandon Hoffner, HFF Executive Director

HFF staked its early existence on the fencing of the Henry's Fork and the riparian fence in Harriman was a marquee project. Surveys of the river banks in the early 80's showed wear and tear from congregating cattle and volunteers lined up to assist with fence construction. Interestingly, early management of the Railroad Ranch under the Harriman family prohibited cattle from the river banks during the growing season and for much of the fall, but the advent of shipping cattle away from Island Park for the winter brought on a transition. The new management scheme allowed cattle on the banks of the river for a portion of the summer season since stockpiling hay was no longer necessary.

Recent struggles with cattle in the river have necessitated a reboot of HFF fencing operations. HFF, Harriman State Park, and local permittees partnered together to better handle the fall grazing season. The triangle partnership has led to a fencing project this summer that will replace the entire fence on the east side of the river from the logjam fisherman's parking lot to Osborne Bridge and a section of fence north of Pinehaven in Harriman East.

HFF has worked with its partners to provide the funding necessary to build fences better designed to handle elk crossings and to utilize work on the Harriman Canal to more efficiently irrigate pastures. Additionally, an HFF intern will be designated to work on fence issues from August through October, hopefully providing an even quicker response to bovine breakouts or gates accidentally left open.

Photo credit: James Chandler

Anglers Take Advantage of New Winter Season

By James Chandler, HFF Intern

During the winter and spring of 2016, we have been conducting an angler use survey to monitor two newly opened segments of the Henry's Fork and gain knowledge of fishing activity on these sections. The first, Ashton Dam to Vernon Bridge, has seen consistent use since its opening in January. On the second, from the southern border of Harriman State Park to the Riverside Campground, we had yet to observe any fishing as of April 26.

Based on data collected during the first two sampling periods (January 16 through February 12, and February 13 through April 1, respectively), we estimated that angler effort on weekdays was 73 angler-hours during the first period and 184 angler-hours during the second period, for a total of 257 angler hours. During weekend days, anglers invested a total of 218 angler-hours over the first two periods, with 42 of those hours occurring during the first period and 176 during the second.

Thus far in the season, we have observed a total of 475 angler-hours, recorded 62 fish caught, and estimated a catch rate of 0.793 fish per hour over all species. Catch was 58 percent rainbow trout, 29 percent mountain whitefish, and 13 percent brown trout. This corresponds to catch rates of 0.46 rainbow trout per hour, 0.23 mountain whitefish per hour, and 0.11 brown trout per hour. Once the new winter season ends on May 27, we will estimate total catch over the whole season and interpret that in context of trout population dynamics. This survey sets a foundation for further studies. Currently, IDFG is planning a comprehensive angler-use survey encompassing the entire Henry's Fork for the 2017 season.

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Will Godfrey
Kevin Moriarity
Thomas Grimes
Peter Grisley
Bill and Debby Hackett
Dave Hall
Jonathan Heames
Henry's Fork Anglers
Henry's Fork Lodge
Rouel Herico
High West Distillery and Saloon
John and Vicky Hoagland
Jon Hodge and Karyn Howcroft
Heather Holbrook
John Hudgens
Steve and Susan Hyde
Idaho Fly Company
Intermountain Gas Industries
Nelson Ishiyama
Andy Jenkins
John and Mary Juracek
Rod Kellom
Brent and Jennifer Kelsey
Lauren and Todd Kelsey
Jim Klug
David and Rachel Knickrehm
Don and Joy Knickrehm
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Cal Kosberg
Kype Magazine
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LOOP USA
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Tim Mansell
John Mauldin
John and Pam McCosker
Jeff and Alanna Metcalf
Jesse Meyer
Bill and Janet Miller
Kenneth Miller
Cynthia Mills
MK Flies
Brooks Montgomery
Nelson Spring Creeks
Sandy Neville
Jerry Nielsen
Northwest School of Fly Fishing
Outcast Sporting Gear
Rich and Millie Paini
Ponds Lodge
James C. Poulton and Bobbie Armor
TJ Powell
Chris and Kristi Preston
Proper Brewing and Burger Company
Bruce Raskin and Kathleen Boone
Red Canyon Lodge
George and Rebecca Revel
Rice Basil Restaurant
Jack and Janet Roberts
Terry Ross
Richard Slaverstrin
Gaucho Dick Sander
James Scherer
Paul and Martha Schmidt
Steve and Ann Schmidt
Russ Schnitzer
Scotland Yard
Scott Fly Rod Company
Simms Fishing Products
Andy and Lois Skaff
Ben and Samantha Smith
Mark and Glenna Smith
Dale Spartus
Jonathan and Jodi Stiehl
Nick Teynor
The Garden Store
Three Rivers Ranch Outfitters
Tyler Treece
TroutHunter, LLC
Uinta Brewing
K.C. Walsh
Jon Wold
Wasatch Academy of Wine
Wasatch Touring
Waterworks-Lamson
Western Rivers Green River Guides
Debby White
Mark and Debbie White
Willow Creek, Boise
WorldCast Anglers
James Wypijewski
Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures

In Memoriam

RJ Cardwell of Ponds Lodge

THE VOICE OF THE RIVER
SINCE 1984
HENRY'S FORK
FOUNDATION

PO Box 550
Ashton, ID 83420

www.henrysfork.org

<Smart Addressee>
<Address Line 1>
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HENRY'S FORK DAYS
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, JUNE 17

8:00 — 9:30 AM
Breakfast on the Henry's Fork
$10 per person

9:30 AM — NOON
HFF Projects Update and Member Meeting

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

4:00 PM
Host Bar, Reception, and Silent Auction

5:30 PM
Rib Eye Steak and Grilled Chicken Dinner
$50/Ticket or $500/Table of 10

7:00 PM
Silent Auction Closes, HFF Awards,
and Live Auction with Will Godfrey

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