

VOICE OF THE RIVER

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2018



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Member Profile: Ralph & Meggan Hamm

"The Henry's Fork watershed and the greater Yellowstone Caldera is one of the few places where work stress fades away."

Ralph and Meggan Hamm first visited the Henry's Fork the summer of 2000. They were introduced to the area, fishing the Henry's Fork (specifically the Railroad Ranch section), and HFF by a lifelong friend, Clay McDaniel. The Henry's Fork continues to be an annual meeting spot for a group of their close friends and this past September marked their 19th year. In 2008, the Hamms bought a place in Pinehaven and bring their family to the region at least once a year to fish and experience the multitude of outdoor activities.

When asked why the Henry's Fork was important to them and why they give, Ralph said, "The Henry's Fork watershed and the greater Yellowstone Caldera is one of the few places where work stress fades away. The Henry's Fork is the life blood for farmers, ranchers, business owners, and outdoor enthusiasts in Fremont County. We really appreciate HFF's approach in balancing the health of the watershed and conservation with needs of varying constituents. It is our hope that the Henry's Fork watershed will continue to be the critical resource for residents and visitors to Fremont County for future generations." 🐟



Guide Profile: Tim Fischer

"I feel lucky to have ended up as a guide on one of the world's greatest trout streams."

Wherever his angling adventures lead him, Tim Fischer is dedicated to achieving, then sharing, a profound understanding of the fishery. A self-proclaimed dry fly addict, it was inevitable that Tim would make his way to the Henry's Fork. In addition to guiding for TroutHunter for the past 5 years, Tim has supported conservation through HFF's River Ambassador Program, by donating trips, and by lending his skills for Youth on the Fly 2018. Tim is dedicated to this fishery as an angler and a conservationist. 🐟



Photos courtesy of Danny Lane

Henry's Fork Season Recap

by Danny Lane, Guide at Three Rivers Ranch

2018 proved to be a phenomenal year for fishing the Henry's Fork. For the second year in a row, we enjoyed a higher than average winter snowpack. This made for some high and dirty water early in the season, but seemed to help keep plenty of cool water running downstream throughout the summer. The big water year also provided for excellent grey drake fishing on the often-overlooked lower reaches, downstream of Saint Anthony.

The guide season started in early May with strong caddis activity, and willing fish from Warm River all the way down to Saint Anthony. The small bugs lasted well through the beginning of salmonflies, and then it started to rain. The rain began in mid-May in Fremont County, and I don't think it stopped until July 1st. Salmonflies came, and though there was some great fishing, a few days of heavy rain introduced a lot of mud into the lower river during prime time. Even though a day or two was lost to mud,



the big bugs prevailed and golden stones fished well from Ashton Dam on down to Fun Farm until mid July, and in Box Canyon until mid August.



Aside from the big stoneflies, the Henry's Fork saw heavy green, brown, and grey drake hatches during the month of June. These hatches are always fun to fish, and though short, they make work easy on a guide. Generally after the stones, caddis, and mayflies stop, the river downstream of Ashton Dam shuts off, but not this year. It felt like the grass was more manageable in 2018 than in previous years, and perhaps that contributed to the river holding out as well as

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Fish, Farms, and the Future of Water Conservation

While farming and fisheries don't always seem like a natural pair, bridging local agricultural producers and the Henry's Fork fishery will bring significant benefits to water resources and the health of the river. Thanks to the success of the recently completed Community Campus, HFF is now in a position to work with major agricultural producers and landowners in our area to reduce irrigation demand and keep water in Island Park Reservoir for the benefit of fisheries and water quality.

A new collaborative, the Upper Snake Farms and Fish program, will be led by HFF, Friends of the Teton River (FTR), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Trout Unlimited (TU), and will be the first of its kind in Idaho. The Farms and Fish program will employ a variety of

tools, including creative irrigator-to-irrigator water leases and/or forbearance agreements, on-the-farm changes in crop production, soil-health enhancement, and alternative markets as components of an overall suite of strategies to benefit instream flows and keep water in Island Park Reservoir.

Water is not managed in a vacuum and, what happens across eastern Idaho, and even the West, can affect the Henry's Fork watershed. We need a broader approach to conservation that involves looking past our own boundaries and, in this case, working together with farmers and irrigators to find innovative solutions to water issues that can benefit fisheries at a more significant scale than ever before. 🐟



Water Year 2018: *Precision and Partnerships Benefit Trout*

Water year 2018 was a bad news-good news story. The bad news is that a dry summer turned an above-average water year into one that was just average. The good news is that careful management of Island Park Reservoir guarantees another year of good winter flow.

After heavy late-winter snow and abundant spring rain, the spigot turned off in June, beginning a period of dry weather that lasted through October. Water-year precipitation ended up at 102 percent of average and natural streamflow at 105 percent of average. Delivery of storage water from Island Park Reservoir began on July 3—right on average—but continued until the end of September, two weeks later than usual. However, Fremont-Madison Irrigation District

and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation managed the irrigation system with a great deal of precision.

As a result, Island Park Reservoir ended the water year 73 percent full, compared with an average of 43 percent full, where it would have ended 2018 without precise management. This precision saved over 40,000 acre-feet of water, which guarantees a second consecutive year of good winter flow. December-February outflow is predicted to be 400 cfs, compared with an average of 350 cfs.

HFF and its partners will continue to refine use of real-time data to increase management precision, ultimately benefiting winter flows. 🐟



Introducing the South Fork Initiative

Many of us, on our adventures in Henry's Fork country, have also taken a trip south to explore the South Fork of the Snake River. However, during your travels you might not have realized how interconnected flows and management of the Henry's Fork are to flows and management of the South Fork.

The South Fork from Palisades Dam to the Henry's Fork confluence is roughly 60 miles long, supports robust populations of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, Rainbow Trout, and Brown Trout, and flows through cottonwood stands, canyons, and a braided flood plain. Management of the South Fork system, especially in regards to water management, can directly affect streamflow in the Henry's Fork.



So, when a group of South Fork outfitters and concerned citizens approached HFF and asked us to expand our brand of research and collaboration to the South Fork, we took note. They expressed concerns about how fluctuations in South Fork flows might be affecting macroinvertebrates

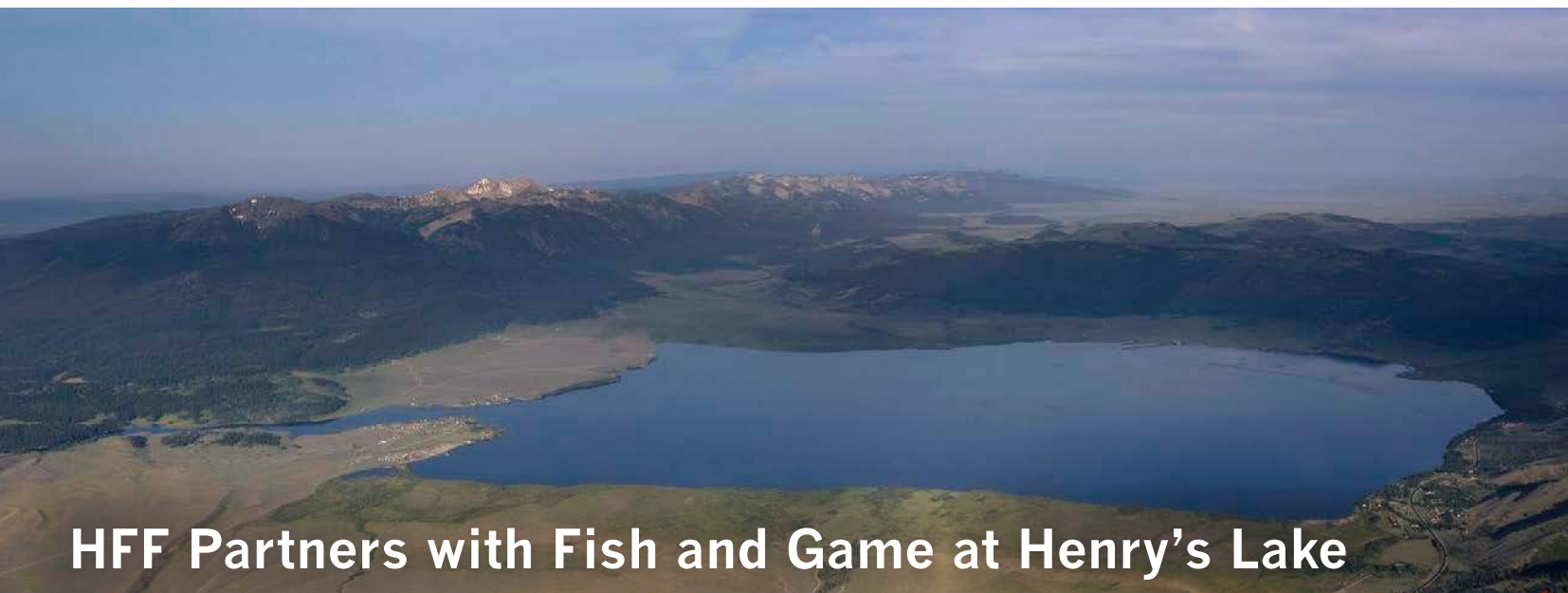
and fish habitat, and if restoration projects could boost trout populations and the fishing experience, while still meeting irrigation demand.

If we look back five, ten, or twenty years, these same questions were being asked about the Henry's Fork. In fact, understanding the answers to these questions were a significant driver in building the innovative and advanced science program HFF currently maintains. It made sense that this group approached HFF to help conserve the unique fisheries, wildlife, and aesthetic qualities of the South Fork—HFF has been doing this for nearly 35 years on the Henry's Fork.

That is why, after serious consideration, HFF has launched the South Fork Initiative (SFI). Not only will this new endeavor provide the opportunity to influence broad-scale water management for the benefit of the Henry's Fork and the South Fork, maintaining a healthy South Fork fishery will help disperse fishing pressure and ensure great fishing opportunities for both rivers.

Funding for SFI related projects comes directly from grants and donations designated for the SFI. Donations and funds for the Henry's Fork are not, and will not, be used for SFI projects. If you'd like to support the SFI by making an additional donation, feel free to contact us.

Stay tuned for updates on SFI projects and progress. 🐟




HFF Partners with Fish and Game at Henry's Lake

Long-time Henry's Lake anglers have much in common with their counterparts on the river. They expect their favorite water to live up to its international reputation. Among more colorful terms, these anglers described the 2018 Henry's Lake opener as "disastrous." Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) acknowledged that the fishery had been in decline for years. Anglers had their own theories, but IDFG's prime suspect was poor water quality.

HFF science staff learned of the opening-day disaster from news coverage and immediately offered our water-quality expertise and lab facilities to help. With a grant from the Idaho Fish and Game Commission and donations from the Henry's Lake Foundation and individuals, HFF and IDFG

launched a water-quality investigation in August.


Using the same instruments and sampling techniques HFF has been using for years on the Henry's Fork and Island Park Reservoir, the intensive study will investigate dissolved oxygen, temperature, nutrients, and algae growth at five different locations around the lake over a full year, winter included. When added to IDFG's data, the water-quality study will help identify factors limiting trout survival and what can be done to address those factors.

In addition to bringing more stakeholders and resources to HFF's work, the Henry's Lake project will strengthen HFF's efforts to improve water quality and fishing opportunities throughout the watershed. 

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it did. Though the dry fly fishing died off in the second half of July, the river as a whole fished very well.

With dry flies a distant memory, hoppers showed up just in time to finish up the season. A short walk through the launch parking lots in August revealed plague level hopper activity, and the fish took notice. From Harriman State Park to Hibbard, fish ate hoppers consistently into late September. Finally, mid-September to mid-October showed great Baetis numbers with some challenging, but rewarding dry fly fishing.

The Henry's Fork is a long river, and I enjoy being able to show off all the different qualities it has to offer, from the fast moving, pockety stuff in Box Canyon, the long flats of the lower river, to the braids below Saint Anthony. 



Join Us in Celebrating Our 35th Anniversary!

A year of thank you and celebration. Look forward to anniversary events including BBQs, fly-tying demo days, a women's float, and family day. Not to mention HFF throwback gear and gifts, and much more!

All we do is made possible by you and in 2019 we want to say Thank You!



Contributions: July 1, 2018 - September 30, 2018

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