

# VOICE OF THE RIVER

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2019

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# Who Are We: Henry's Fork Foundation

Established in 1984, the Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF) has grown in its first 35 years from a small, but dedicated group of volunteers to an experienced staff pioneering programs that inform real-time, science-based management and promote favorable streamflow, good water quality, healthy fish populations, and a positive fishing experience.

None of this would be possible without the support of the over 2,500 members of the Henry's Fork Foundation Community, who believe in innovative solutions to conservation challenges, ensuring the Henry's Fork is thriving for generations to come. To all of our founders, members, and partners along the way – **thank you.**

## New Faces at HFF

The Henry's Fork Foundation has welcomed some new and familiar faces to our staff in recent years. Here are a few members of the HFF team you may not have met yet:



### **Darcy Janssen**, *Finance and Office Administrator*

Darcy joined the HFF team in the spring of 2017 as the Finance and Office Administrator. She has the responsibility of managing the company's financial tasks such as payroll and budgeting.



### **Matt Hively**, *Conservation Technician*

Matt began working for the Foundation in February 2019 as a Conservation Technician. Matt operates and maintains watershed-wide monitoring sites and conducts crucial field work on the Henry's Fork.



### **Kate Warner**, *Aquatic Resources Coordinator*

Kate joined the foundation in June 2019. As the Aquatic Resources Coordinator she is responsible for overseeing HFF's water quality program and monitoring regulatory, permitting, and river access issues.



### **Devan Ence**, *Conservation Fund Coordinator*

Devan started with the Foundation in April 2019 as the Conservation Fund Coordinator. Devan assists with the development of HFF's fundraising and membership campaigns.



### **Kamberlee Allison**, *Education and Outreach Coordinator*

Kamberlee joined the Foundation as an intern in June 2018. After the internship, Kamberlee was asked to stay on for an additional year as a Conservation Technician. Starting in November 2019, Kamberlee will be a full-time staff member in a new position, Education and Outreach Coordinator, assisting with everything from internship program logistics and youth education to operations and outreach.





# Henry's Fork Season Recap

by Brian Berry, Teton Valley Lodge

2019 marked the 35th Anniversary of the Henry's Fork Foundation. The fishing on the Henry's Fork this year was a clear sign of how much positive impact this group has had on the fishery. What a year. Helped in no small part by the much higher than average winter flows on the river. Flows throughout the winter averaged over 500 cfs out of Island Park Reservoir. This made for fabulous winter fishing. Day in and day out throughout the winter months in 2019 fish were eating caddis, mayfly and stonefly nymphs along with some great streamer action. This was just the thing to help many of us get through the winter blues.

Spring was a bit unusual this year. With higher than average snowfall we all expected high runoff. But the cool spring brought the runoff down in a very even and mild manner. The rivers never flooded. Everything stayed full and clear for the most part. It worked out perfectly. We have always felt that higher water in the spring is the best



recipe for great fishing on the Henry's Fork. May of 2019 was perfect. Big fish on stonefly nymphs and caddis and bluewing olive dries produced big fish on the lower river through the spring.



As Memorial Day approached the water became a bit of a problem. Everyone anticipated a large runoff and this caused water discharge out of Island Park to be quite high in April and May, with the runoff being so temperate flows were required to be dropped right at the time of the salmon fly hatch in order to fill the reservoir. This was disappointing as it caused the hatch to pop sooner and more rapidly. Despite this hiccup, the fishing was outstanding and produced many big fish on the big bugs we all love.

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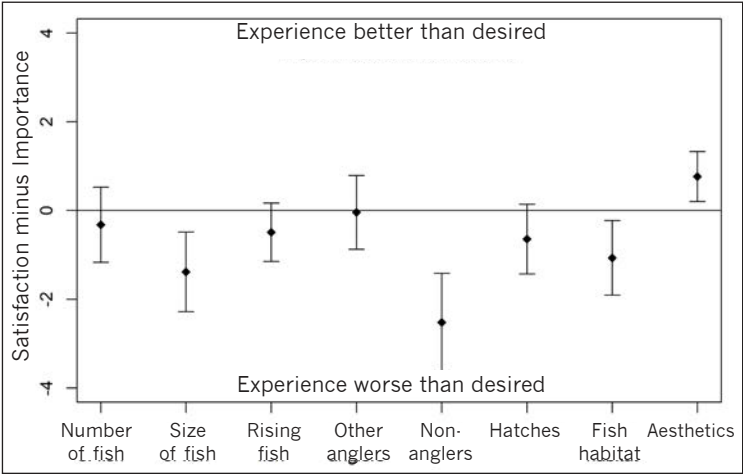


# US Forest Service and HFF Partner on Survey of Floaters and Anglers near Mack’s Inn

Many anglers can attest to the beauty of the Big Springs to Mack’s Inn reach, also known as the Big Springs Water Trail, with its towering pine trees and resident moose. However, angler concerns regarding floaters in that stretch prompted a partnership between the US Forest Service and Henry’s Fork Foundation (HFF). This summer, HFF conducted a recreational use capacity study to assess if floater use is exceeding capacity of facilities and to determine both floater and angler satisfaction with their experience. The study ran from Memorial Day to Labor Day 2019 and provided some unique insights including:

- Total use estimate was 37,187 floaters.
- 22 percent of floaters used Mack’s Inn transportation.
- 90 percent of floaters rating their experience as ‘very good’ or ‘good’.
- Over half of all floating devices used were kayaks, followed by tubes (about 20 percent) and canoes (about 10 percent).
- Anglers’ experience was worse than desired regarding size of fish caught, condition of fish habitat, and number of non-angling floaters on the river.

HFF will share a full report with the Forest Service to help inform future management of floaters, but HFF is also part of a study of the factors that might be impacting size of fish and condition of habitat in that reach. Hopefully, results can help improve fishing conditions in future years. To learn more about this study and HFF’s programmatic work in the upper river, email [rob@henrysfork.org](mailto:rob@henrysfork.org). 



Angler satisfaction relative to importance for various aspects of the fishing experience. For example, if an angler rated their experience with aesthetics on the river the day they fished as a 9, and rated the overall importance of aesthetics to their fishing trip as a 5, then we know their experience of aesthetics was better than desired.







## Water Year 2019: *A Historical Perspective*

Perspective can be difficult. We fish this river as often as we can and, over the years, the memories begin to blend together. Our fish of a lifetime, or “the one that got away”, stick with us, but otherwise it can be hard to remember if 1984 was a big water year or if 2000 had one of the highest trout populations (it was and it did). That’s where data comes in. That’s why we monitor water quality, why Fish and Game monitors trout populations, and why USGS monitors streamflow -- to provide that big picture perspective on how each year shaped up.

Here are a few things data can tell us about Water Year 2019\*:

- Record snow in February moved snow-water equivalent (SWE) from 78 percent of average at the beginning of the month to 120 percent by March 1.
- Mean April-June temperature was 2 degrees F below average. This cool spring preserved a solid snowpack well into July.
- After a dry summer, heavy rain in September moved water-year total precipitation from 106 percent of average to 114 percent of average in three weeks.
- Despite well above-average snowpack and precipitation, natural flow in the watershed ended up at only 98 percent of the 1978-2018 average.
- Water supply in the upper Henry’s Fork improved for the third year in a row and was above the 1930-2019 average for the first time since 2012.
- 2017-2019 was the highest three-year sequence of reservoir carryover since 1997-1999. This was accomplished with water years that were 111 percent, 104 percent and 98 percent of average in 2017-2019, versus 153 percent, 130 percent, and 124 percent of average in 1997-1999.
- Winter flow in 2018 and 2019 averaged 532 cfs, the highest two-year average since 1999-2000. We can look forward to a third year of above average winter flows in the range of 500-550 cfs in 2020.



*Aquatic Resources Coordinator, Kate Warner and Senior Scientist, Rob Van Kirk measure water quality in Island Park Reservoir.*

*\*Water Year 2019 runs from October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019.*

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The cool temperatures helped to prolong the hatch and gave us a good two and a half weeks of throwing the big dries.

Then something magical happened. The elusive green drakes showed up. They didn't just show up, they showed up in numbers day after day like I have never seen before. There were more sea gulls than during the salmon fly hatch. Bugs flying from mid-morning until late in the day. Fish rising up and down the river, bank to bank with little regard for boats or waders. A literal feeding frenzy that lasted what seemed like forever. These were some of the most memorable and best fishing days I have had on the Henry's Fork in my entire life. I am already excited about next year.

During the month of July we focused more on the South Fork and Teton rivers than the Henry's Fork, though we did venture up north a number of days and the river always produced.



In August the river became one of our favorite destinations again as the hoppers invaded and the big browns and rainbows keyed in on them. As we gathered nightly for dinner with guides and guests after a day's fishing, it was more often than not pictures of large trout from the Henry's Fork that got the most attention. The stories of

casting to one fat brown under a bush until it finally rose to the offering would be told and retold nightly from the anglers that chose to try their luck on "the Hank".



September and October continued to produce these quality trout on hoppers and streamers. Nymphs in the canyon sections continued to pop out big numbers of beautiful bows that put smiles on customers' faces.

Teton Valley Lodge is celebrating its 100th season of guiding fly fishermen. We began guiding the Henry's Fork in earnest in the late 60s. I personally guided my first trip on the Henry's Fork 23 years ago. In my time on the river I can honestly say it is in better shape today than it was back then. A lot of the credit has to go to the Henry's Fork Foundation and the amazing work that they have continued to do on the river in the last 35 years. I am personally very thankful for all that they do to protect and enhance this amazing river.

There are few rivers, if any, in the world that have the variety of water along with the number of fish and hatches that the Henry's Fork does. I feel lucky to call it my office and my home. 🐟







# What Can Science Tell Us About How to Improve Lower River Habitat?

In 2019, Utah State University PhD student and former HFF intern, Christina Morrisett began a long-term project on the lower Henry's Fork to assess surface water and groundwater impacts on fish and insect habitat to help inform water management for the benefit of fisheries. She wants to help managers meet irrigation needs, while also having enough water in the river for fish and aquatic species. Here is a sneak peak at what she's learned in her first year of the project.

- Fishing below St. Anthony is great in the fall, but turns off in the summer. This is because despite managing this section for a summer low-flow target, the target does not account for irrigation diversions downstream that take additional water from the river.
- When Christina and HFF staff collected streamflow data between St. Anthony and Parker from July-October, they found that the river gained water in that stretch in mid-July, when diversions from the river were highest and flow was lowest.\*
- In late July, the average temperature of groundwater seeping into the lower Henry's Fork was 58 degrees F, whereas the average temperature of the river was 65 degrees F. These groundwater seeps may provide refuge for trout from warmer water during summer months.

To learn more about the lower river project, email [christina.morrisett@aggiemail.usu.edu](mailto:christina.morrisett@aggiemail.usu.edu) or follow [@lowerhenrysfork](#) on Instagram. 🐟

*\*In future years, Christina will be investigating return flows that might be contributing water back into the river.*



*Christina and HFF staff measure streamflow using an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) unit provided by Fremont-Madison Irrigation District (FMID) as part of ongoing partnership. Thank you FMID!*





## Help Support Crucial Work to Enhance the Upper River

The Henry's Fork near Mack's Inn is full of cool, clear water with abundant insects, so why is that upper river fishery less productive than the Ranch, for instance? With continued development in the Mack's Inn area and limited knowledge about the fishery there, HFF began a four-year project assessing factors that might be limiting fishery production. Led by PhD student, Jack McLaren, the project is tackling a few key questions:

- In Box Canyon, we know winter flows are the most significant factor influencing trout populations. What is the equivalent of “winter flow” for Mack's Inn?
- Existing research indicates nutrients from a wastewater treatment plant may increase aquatic plant growth, but how might plant growth affect trout populations and individual fish growth?

Your support of HFF's science-based approach has allowed for collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies to conserve the Henry's Fork. Now, the headwaters of the Henry's Fork needs that support again to ensure this crucial project continues. To help us enhance the upper river fishery and to pledge your support, email [brady@henrysfork.org](mailto:brady@henrysfork.org). 🐟







# Restoration Project Update



*Before restoration work, Third Creek was wide and shallow, with warm water temperatures and no fish present.*

Last year, HFF's South Fork Initiative (SFI) assisted Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), Rockin' T, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Wild Waters Restoration, with a restoration project on Third Creek in the South Fork Watershed.

The goal of the project was to restore natural stream function and improve habitat for native trout. Data collected by IDFG prior to the project showed August temperatures of about 71 degrees F and no fish present in that reach. The year after the project, August water temperatures were an amazing 61 degrees and 51 trout were present.

In an effort to continue to improve habitat for native species in the South Fork Watershed, the SFI and partners worked with local landowners to complete the design and assessment for three additional restoration projects along

Rainey Creek, anticipated to begin in 2020. In total, the three projects would restore roughly one mile of river and riparian habitat. Thank you to the landowners and many partners who made this important work possible.

To learn more about these projects or to support restoration work on the South Fork, email [bryce@henrysfork.org](mailto:bryce@henrysfork.org) or visit [henrysfork.org/south-fork-initiative-0](https://henrysfork.org/south-fork-initiative-0).

Also, follow us on social media and keep an eye out for HFF's Annual Report to learn more about SFI's other recently completed projects, including macroinvertebrate sampling and a real-time water quality monitoring network. 🐟




*Restoration work increased sinuosity in the creek, made the channel more narrow, and increased water velocity, resulting in cooler water temperatures and improved trout habitat.*



Thanks to improved water supply for the upper Henry's Fork and crucial collaborations with water managers, fishing in the upper Henry's Fork and trout recruitment below Island Park Dam should be better in 2020 and 2021 than at any time since the late 1990s.

This work to monitor conditions, analyze data, and

inform real-time water management for the benefit of our fisheries would not be possible without your support of HFF's programs and collaborative efforts. Thank you for ensuring this river has a healthy future. If you'd like to learn more and support these programs, please email [brady@henrysfork.org](mailto:brady@henrysfork.org) or visit [henrysfork.org/donate](http://henrysfork.org/donate). 



## Thank You to our HF Days XXXV Award Winners

Each year, the Henry's Fork Foundation awards three incredible members custom, hand-crafted wooden bowls for their support and contribution to the Foundation and the Henry's Fork Watershed. Congratulations to our 2019 bowl award winners:

**Tom and Joan Brown**  
Manlove Award Recipients

**David and Sherri Quinney\***  
Conservation Award Recipients

**Lynn and Joan Rice**  
Volunteer Award Recipients

*\*Not pictured*



*Manlove bowl in its new home in Wyoming*



*Lynn and Joan Rice with their bowl at Henry's Fork Days*





# Contributions: July 1, 2019 - September 30, 2019

## \$10,000+

Lonnie Allen  
Steve Millham  
Mark Rockefeller

## \$5,000+

Jeff and Karin Armstrong  
Conant Valley Ranch  
Crystal Springs Foundation  
Joseph Davenport  
Flat Rock Club  
Shane and Lorre Fleming  
John and JoAnne Gaynor  
Bill and Debby Hackett  
JP Hayes  
Ron Malone  
Susan McDowell  
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Jeff and Amy Roberts  
Jack and Janet Roberts  
John and Adrian Robinson  
Mark and Teri Snell

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Lyman and Carol Casey  
William and Melissa Connelly  
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Peter and Rachel Taylor  
Three Rivers Ranch Outfitters

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The Fly Rod Co.  
Trails Inn Restaurant  
Josh Udesen  
Westbank Anglers  
Wooden Nickel  
WorldCast Anglers  
Tony Wratney  
Dimmis Zeigler

## In Memoriam

Robert Schettler Howell  
Marianna Schulte Hoy  
Kathi Sara





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