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Get to Know Our Staff

Matt Hively, Aquatic Resources Coordinator

Did you know Matt is out on the river 2-5 days a week, year-round?

Some of Matt's work involves taking water quality samples, maintaining the Buffalo Fish Ladder, and calibrating HFF's water quality monitoring network of sondes. Matt also handles fishing access, monitors proposed stream bank alterations, and assists staff in furthering long-term datasets.



Cover photo: Brian O'Keefe

Aquatic Insect Monitoring – A.I.M. for Healthy Rivers



Every angler knows the thrill of a Henry's Fork hatch, when a cloud of bugs appears and covers the river like a blanket. Anglers see opportunity and keep their eyes peeled for rising fish. Trout see floating cheeseburgers and keep their eyes peeled for a good meal. For their role in our fishing days and in the river's web of life, it's no wonder we're so interested in the health of our insect populations.

9 Years of Monitoring Insects

HFF launched an annual aquatic insect monitoring program in 2015. Samples are processed by River Continuum Concepts in Montana, under the supervision of Brett Marshall, one of the most experienced aquatic entomologists in the country.

2022 Insect Populations

Yes, 2022 was a tough year, with the number of mayflies, caddisflies, and stoneflies at Last Chance lower than in recent years. Insect populations, like fish, are driven by conditions inherited from previous years, and water supply was below average over the previous 2-3 years. On the plus side, other factors that affect hatches—weather, turbidity, and streamflow—can improve dramatically in one year if weather and water supply cooperate.

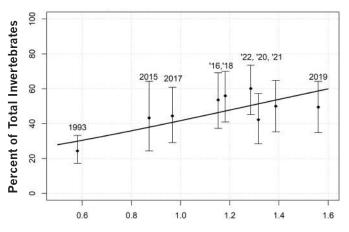
A Bigger Picture: 2015-2022

Between 2015 and 2022, the Henry's Fork averaged:

- 50,000 insects per square meter at Ashton
- 25,000 insects per square meter at Last Chance
- % of the population that were mayflies, stoneflies or caddisflies (aka %EPT*) was 65% at Flat Rock
- %EPT of 50% at Last Chance, Osborne and Ashton

This is among the best you will find in any trout stream anywhere. For reference, some indexes consider anything above 20% "good", and anything above 30% excellent.

Percent EPT (mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies) vs. Freshet Flow



Spring:Summer/Fall IP Outflow Ration

What is HFF doing to improve conditions?

- High springtime freshet flows increase the % mayflies, stoneflies, and caddisflies at Last Chance and Osborne, one year later.
- Work with partners has measurably improved water and habitat quality since the 1992 sediment event.

*A common scientific metric representing the 3 orders in which mayflies (Ephemeroptera), stoneflies (Plecoptera), and caddisflies (Trichoptera) belong.





While residents did not appreciate shoveling mountains of snow this winter, a good snowpack goes a long way for the river. In fact, it's enough to dig the watershed out of the hole left by low baseflows, and to look forward to slightly above average streamflows. This is the best news we've had in a while.

Snowpack

Snowpack peaked at 120 percent of average annual peak on April 24, which is 20 percent above average, and ranks 8th since 1989. In letter grades this winter would be a "B+". Remember, 100 percent of average is just average, or a "C" letter grade. What do we have to do to get an "A+" year? 1997 and 2011 were both "A+" years, with 164 percent of average and 145 percent of average snowpack, respectively.

Summer Water Supply = Snowpack + Baseflows

We know snowpack was good, especially in the upper Henry's Fork, but the other half of the equation is baseflows. We're putting strong snowpack on record low baseflow (25 percent below average in 2022), which is expected to result in 5 percent above average streamflow, or water supply (aka 105 percent of avg).

Spring Runoff

With the amount of snow in the watershed, especially up in the mountains, periods of high outflow from Island Park Reservoir were inevitable this spring as the snowpack melts. This might not be ideal for spring fishing, but naturally high flows during the spring are good for the whole river system, especially for aquatic insects and clearing out sediment. In fact, HFF was incredibly fortunate

to be able to design and negotiate a planned, or managed, spring freshet from April 25-27 of this year, which should have a beneficial effect on insect communities and fishing conditions starting next year. It will also reduce the chance of rapid increases in outflow from Island Park Dam later in this spring.

What does that mean for spring and summer fishing conditions?

- Natural Flow: 5% above average (105% of avg)
- Last year = 30% below average (70% of avg)
- May June flows: 600-1,000 cfs
- July peak flows: 800-1,200 cfs
- Hatch timing: Headed towards average timing
- Much can change depending on summer weather, but this year will be most similar to 2019

Visit the "Fishing Conditions" page on the HFF website for more detailed predictions, plus HFF's Hatch Timing data site.





From Trout in the Classroom to field trips and visits to HFF, it's been a fantastic spring for the youth education program!



Starting in January, 5th grade students at Ashton Elementary raised their own Rainbow Trout to the Fingerling stage through the Trout in the Classroom Program. A lesson was taught every other week, where students learned about the life cycle of trout, habitat, the food web, camouflage, and trout anatomy.



In March, 4th grade students from South Fork Elementary school took an interactive tour of the HFF Community Campus. Students broke into groups and toured the interpretive center, watched an educational video, learned about water quality, and looked at macroinvertebrates through a microscope.



HFF staff also visited Swan Valley School to teach 7th and 8th grade students about conservation and the watershed. Students learned about water quality, participated in a Whitefish dissection, and much more.



What's the difference between turbidity and sediment?

Not all turbidity is sediment. Turbidity can be mineral sediment, or organic matter from growth of algae and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae).

Turbidity floating in the river's water column may impact an angler's experience, but thankfully it doesn't directly harm insects or trout. It can even be a positive if it's caused by sediment moving out of a given reach, benefitting insect habitat.

What are the causes of turbidity in Island Park Reservoir and below the dam?

- High outflow through the dam gates
- Erosion of exposed shoreline sediment by rain
- Mobilization of exposed shoreline sediment by strong wind waves or heavy boat waves
- Heavy rain or snowmelt runoff that delivers sediment from tributaries into the reservoir
- Erosion of sediment on the bottom of the reservoir by river inflow

What can we do to decrease turbidity?

After nearly a decade, we now have the data to better understand this issue. A few strategies being used now include:

- Spring freshet to clear settled sediment
- Reducing irrigation-season outflows
- Minimize flow through gates, maximize through powerplant
- Keep Island Park Reservoir as full as possible all summer (less algae blooms and exposed shoreline)





Is there a pile of sediment building up behind the dam?

Research indicates sediment is not building up from inflows to the reservoir. Rather than more coming in, more is being moved from the shallow west end.

- Graduate research bathymetric survey shows reservoir volume hasn't measurably changed in 85 years
- Significant sediment export events (i.e., 1992) balance relatively small amounts of natural deposition
- River channels, roads and check dams are still visible on the reservoir bottom (not enough to bury them)
- During the '23 freshet, turbidity returned to baseline within 3 hours (note clarity of water in photo above)
- If sediment were built up at the dam, it would have continued to exit for the entire freshet
- High turbidity lasts longer during summer events, timing up with cycles like erosion of exposed shoreline (when reservoir level is low) from wind and waves on the west end

Planning Ahead

Additional data collection and a whole suite of options are being considered to keep sediment from being mobilized on the west end, from moving to the dam, and possibly removing sediment when it does end up at the dam. But, none of these actions are simple. Stay tuned.

Spring Freshet Success

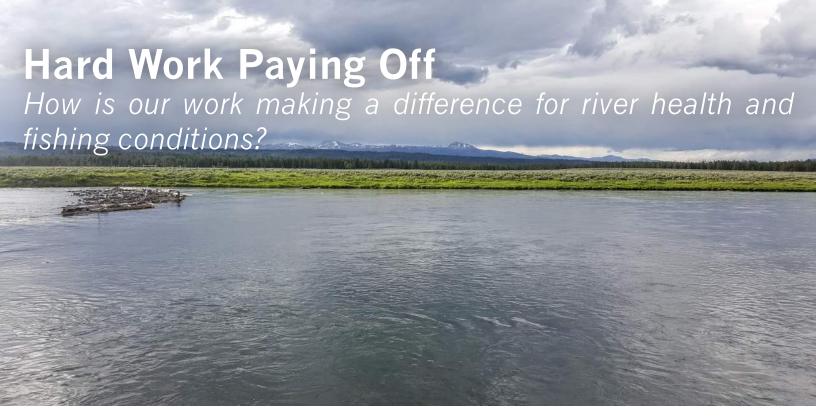
Moving Sediment and Benefitting Insects





- Water managers approved an HFFdesigned spring freshet this year for April 25-27
- Prerequisites: decades building trust, a respected, professional staff, and conserving 40k acre-feet of water in 2022
- Result: 320 tons of sediment moved out of the Island Park Dam

 Pinehaven reach, half the amount usually moved in an entire year in just 4 days and equal to about 64 elephants worth of sediment
- Result: Aquatic entomologists and HFF data suggest we can expect a real, positive response in insect populations next year



Now, more than ever, we have so many reasons to be hopeful for the Henry's Fork. The collaborative conservation work you are making possible is having a measurable difference and that's something to be proud of.

Together, we have:

- Increased winter flows (by 115 cfs)
- Improved trout populations (nearly 1,000 trout in Box Canyon annually)
- Increased habitat in Island Park Reservoir
- Lowered irrigation season outflows (by 135 cfs, improving fishing conditions)
- Decreased turbidity (from sediment and organic matter) and water temperatures in summer
- Improved aquatic insect populations and habitat (through spring freshets and water conservation)





It's hard to overstate the significance of these accomplishments. This kind of measurable impact on river health and fishing conditions is unprecedented in the West. Thank you for making this possible!



HFF Summer Events

We're excited to kick off another summer season on the Henry's Fork. Visit henrysfork. org/events-and-raffles or email jasper@ henrysfork.org to learn more.

June 14 - August 9: Summer Seminar Series every Wednesday, 3-4 PM at the HFF Campus

June 16: Membership Meeting, BBQ, and Bear Spray Giveaway

June 17: Henry's Fork Days XXXVIIII

June 22: Henry's Fork River Clean Up #1

July: Big Springs River Clean Up

July 20: Henry's Fork River Clean Up #2

July/August: Henry's Fork Watershed

Festival (exact date TBD)

September: Big Springs River Clean Up



The South Fork Initiative, an Independent Program

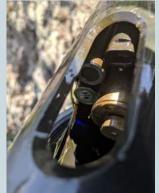
The South Fork Initiative was kick-started by a group of dedicated South Fork anglers, outfitters and citizens. They provided their own funding, so that no resources were taken away from the Henry's Fork. In fact, since its start in 2018, this initiative has allowed for more grant and funding sources, relationships and capacity to be directed to the Henry's Fork than ever before. With Palisades Reservoir situated as the center of the Upper Snake Basin water storage system, it pays to have a stake in the South Fork.

Some of the South Fork Initiative work ongoing includes:

- Rainey Creek Restoration Phase 2: 500 feet of stream restoration completed since February, where channel was narrowed, floodplain reconnected, and large wood structures installed
- Annual aquatic insect monitoring: in March 2023 at lower, canyon and upper reaches of the South Fork
- Rainey Creek Caboose Culvert Project: initial planning to remove a fish passage barrier, including design alternatives from consulting firm Biota
- Water quality monitoring: 3 sondes sites on lower, canyon, and upper South Fork

• Rainey Creek Restoration Phase 1: Design of educational kiosk for the site







Contributions: October 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023

\$10,000+

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In Memoriam

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