

VOICE OF THE RIVER

Summer Newsletter 2025

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Get to Know Our Staff


Daniel Wilcox, Farms and Fish Program Manager

Water Conservation | Collaboration | Sustainable Agriculture



Photo credit: Camrin Dengel

Please join us in celebrating Daniel's 5-year anniversary with the Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF)! Raised on a family ranch near the confluence of the Henry's Fork and South Fork rivers, Daniel pairs his expertise with unmatched passion, creativity, and commitment to finding win-win solutions for both farms and fish. From hosting soil health workshops to developing crop rotation plans that reduce water use, Daniel is all about partnerships that keep both agriculture and aquatic ecosystems thriving.

One of Daniel's major achievements includes spearheading the \$2.2 million Conant Creek Canal Lining Project—a game-changing effort that worked with multiple partners—to save over 1,500 acre-feet of water annually. Thanks to Daniel's leadership, the Farms and Fish Program has become a nationally-recognized model of collaboration, demonstrating how science-based solutions and strong local partnerships can lead to healthier rivers and more resilient farms. 

From Shore to Floor

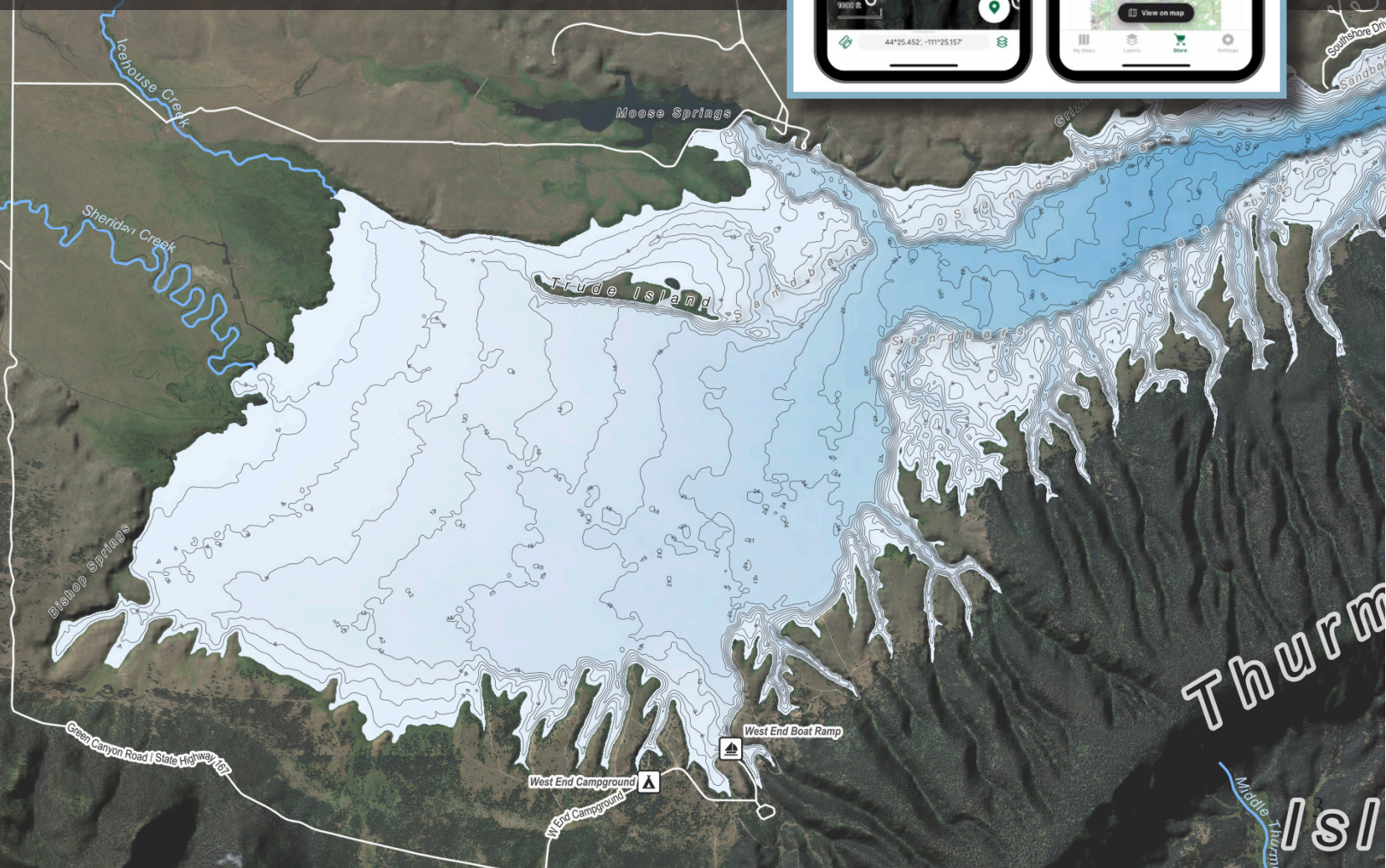
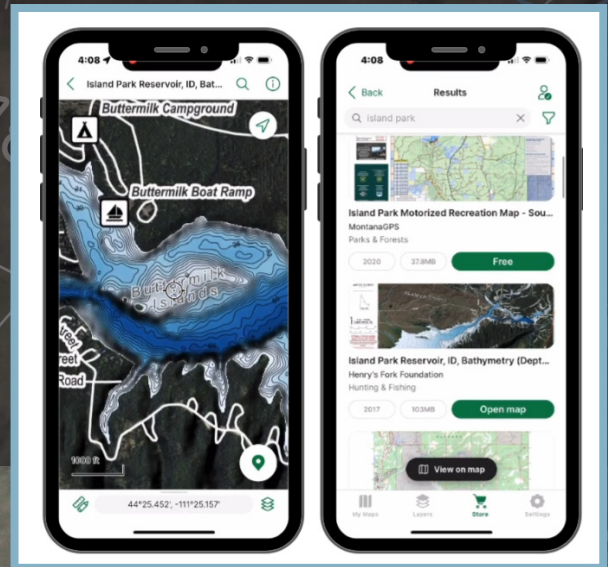
Meet the New Map of Island Park Reservoir

HFF is thrilled to share a free digital depth map of Island Park Reservoir. This detailed, data-packed resource was designed to help people better understand the unique landscape of Island Park Reservoir.

In 2017, Dr. Jack McLaren—now the Aquatic Ecology Program Manager but then a graduate student—used a fish finder, a GPS, a boat, and a great deal of scientific dedication to crisscross the entire reservoir, collecting the data that would eventually produce this map nearly eight years later. Jack personally collected bathymetric (a.k.a. underwater topography) data using sonar, then modeled the information to produce a high-resolution digital depth map. The end result? A visually stunning and incredibly useful tool for anyone interested in finding the perfect fishing spot, avoiding common hazards, and deepening their appreciation for this special place.


The best part? It's totally free and easy to access via the Avenza app. Learn more at henrysfork.org by clicking "Access Sites and Maps." Dive into the details and give a digital high-five to Jack for turning months of fieldwork into a resource the entire community can use!

Note: Island Park Reservoir, ID, Bathymetry (Depth) and Recreation Map © 2024 by Henry's Fork Foundation is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0



What to Expect on the Henry's Fork in 2025

Photo credit: Brian O'Keefe

A man wearing a wide-brimmed hat, glasses, and a plaid shirt is smiling while holding a large brown trout in a river. The fish has a yellowish-brown body with dark spots and red-orange spots. The background shows a river with green reeds on the left and a rocky shoreline with trees on the right under a blue sky with some clouds.

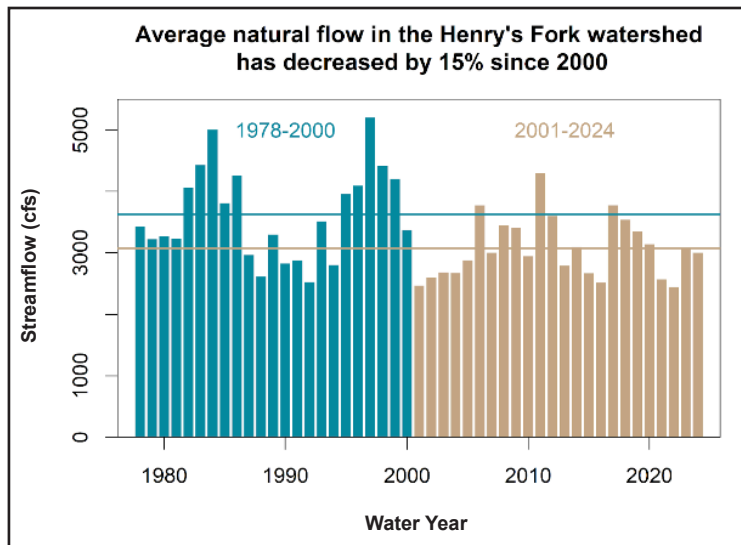
It's that magical time we look forward to all year, summer on the Henry's Fork. The sun is shining, wildflowers are blooming, and a light breeze waves through the tall grass as we meander to our favorite fishing spots that feel like a second home. Our deep connection to the Henry's Fork makes the impacts of change feel deeply personal, but also fuels our resolve to protect and preserve this iconic place.

Over the last few decades, the watershed has seen warmer summers and lower natural water supply. Summer air temperatures have ticked up by about 1°F per decade, while water supply has decreased by 15% over the past 40 years.

These changes can affect everything from streamflow to aquatic habitat, and they make HFF's work to understand and address these issues more important than ever.

After a warm, dry fall and early winter, January–March was cooler and wetter than average. Snowpack across the Henry's Fork watershed peaked at 8% below average. However, less water is seeping into the ground to recharge groundwater springs, like Big Springs, so natural water supply is expected to run about 20% below average.

Going into the summer season, we're seeing similarities to



years like 2024, 2020, and 2014. We anticipate that high summer outflows for irrigation from Island Park Dam will begin in late June—with any luck, a few days later than last year. But remember, a lot can change between now and then depending on rain (more is good) and temperatures (cooler is better).



Fishing Outlook: Island Park Dam to Riverside (Including the Ranch)

We're fortunate that the Henry's Fork still offers an incredible fishery, but this stretch is more sensitive to changes in climate than others in the watershed. Anglers should still find great fishing opportunities at certain times of the year, during cooler parts of the day, and in specific areas within the Ranch. That said, we also expect:



- Murkier water (higher turbidity) in mid-to-late summer
- A few weeks of high dam outflow in July
- Warmer water temperatures in July and August
- Continued shifts in the timing and location of insect hatches

Fishing Outlook: Mesa Falls to St. Anthony (Including Ora to Vernon)

This section of the river continues to offer good conditions similar to recent years. Fish and insect populations here have remained stable and are less affected by changes in water supply. While day-to-day weather may add some unpredictability, we're not expecting any major changes this summer.

Here's to another great summer on the Henry's Fork. 🐟

Before You Hit the Water!

These forecasts offer a helpful snapshot, but on-the-ground conditions can always change. When you roll into town, check real-time river conditions at henrysfork.org and stop by a local fly shop for the latest updates.

Education and Outreach

Trout in the Classroom

Jasper Davis—HFF’s Education and Outreach Coordinator—taught Trout in the Classroom to four classes across Fremont County School District. Starting in January, students raised Rainbow Trout from eggs to fingerlings and released them into Ashton Reservoir in mid-May to continue the remainder of their life cycle. Through this program, HFF mentors 150 students and teaches invaluable lessons about trout, water, and our local watershed so that the students become river stewards for years to come.

Field Trips (March–April 2025)

Students from South Fork Elementary, Hibbard Elementary, and Madison Junior High visited the Henry’s Fork Foundation’s Community Campus to learn about aquifers, test water quality, observe aquatic insects through a microscope, and discover how science supports the rivers they love.

Teton Valley Earth Day

We love to participate in community events! In our second year at Teton Valley’s Earth Day Festival, we taught kids and adults alike about water quality, groundwater, and aquatic insects. Attendees got to make their own art project to take home and participated in a collaborative art piece to celebrate how we can all be advocates for our local watersheds. 🐟



Volunteer Opportunities

We need your help with
critical work in 2025!

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Data entry: From the HFF office or the comfort of your own home, learn about HFF’s aquatic insect monitoring program and help catalog and enter data from years past.

River cleanups: Join us on one of our river cleanups this summer (upper river and lower river)!

Reservoir sampling: Hop in HFF’s jet boat and assist the field team as they measure turbidity on Island Park Reservoir.

If you are interested in volunteering for one of these projects, email jasper@henrysfork.org.

What's Hatching?

HFF has been monitoring aquatic insects—macroinvertebrates—for a decade, working with experts at River Continuum Concepts.

Data show Henry's Fork insect populations are healthy, so why are anglers noticing changes in their favorite hatches? The trick is, there can be millions of healthy aquatic insects living underwater for 360-days a year, but that doesn't guarantee a fantastic hatch during any given 5 day stretch—we know the quality of a hatch can vary based on weather, streamflow, and water clarity.

To learn more about how hatches are changing, we need your help. Your observations help HFF improve our hatch-timing tracker and increase our understanding of insect behavior on the Henry's Fork.

Submit your observations to tinyurl.com/hfhatchreport after each and every river visit, whether you saw bugs hatching or not. Thanks for helping protect the river, the fish, and the insects we all love!



What We Need from You

- 1) Date and time of your river visit
- 2) River reach you visited
- 3) What insects you observed (if anything at all)

Voice of the River

As development proposals increase across the Henry's Fork watershed, so does the importance of keeping water—and fish—in the conversation.

Henry's Lake Flats: Subdivision Application on Hold

Last year, a proposed airport on the Henry's Lake Flats drew significant attention. The community spoke up in opposition and the Fremont County Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission denied the application. A new proposal has since been introduced to develop a subdivision on the same parcel. Following a March meeting, the proposal is on hold as the P&Z Commission awaits feedback from key agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Idaho Department of Water Resources—insights that are critical for assessing potential impacts on natural resources. We'll continue to monitor how these concerns are addressed.

Lower Watershed: Staying Engaged for Fish and Flow

Planning and Zoning activity in the lower watershed—such as development proposals near the Red Road Bridge—continues to be on HFF's radar. When there's potential for impacts to fisheries or aquatic resources, we participate in the formal public process by submitting written comments and delivering verbal comments at hearings. In November, HFF's Aquatic Resources Manager, Matt Hively, spoke before the Planning & Zoning Commission to share concerns about how land use decisions could affect water supply and groundwater return flows.

Bringing Science to the Table

Since December, HFF has encouraged Fremont County to update its Development Code and Comprehensive Plan with water in mind. HFF is also meeting with County Commissioners to discuss what we're seeing—rising temperatures and reduced water supply—and the economic stakes for agriculture, angling, and property values. We're not advocating for or against specific developments. Instead, we're showing up as a science-based resource to support the county's decisions with solid data and local knowledge.

Thanks for standing with us as the Voice of the River. Stay tuned for more updates as these conversations move forward. 🐟



Photo credit: Devan Ence



Notes from the South Fork



Aquatic Insect Sampling with Trout Unlimited

In March, the South Fork Initiative resumed its annual monitoring of aquatic insect populations with help from volunteers from the local Trout Unlimited Chapter, the Snake River Cutthroats. This important data will help us better understand, not only the health of the insect community, but also the overall condition of the river ecosystem.



Custom Design for Water Quality Monitoring

After enduring some high flows on the South Fork, installations for two in-river water quality monitoring devices (sondes) are due for an upgrade. Thanks to the expertise of HFF Board member Shane Wootan, a new custom-designed housing is being developed and built to ensure these devices can continue to gather real-time data—no matter what the river throws at them.

Save the Date: South Fork Gala

Mark your calendar for the annual South Fork Gala—Friday, August 22nd at 6 PM! Join us in celebrating the South Fork community and supporting vital conservation efforts. RSVP or learn more at henrysfork.org/events-and-raffles. 

Contributions: October 1, 2024–March 31, 2025

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HENRY'S FORK DAYS XLI

Saturday, June 21, 2025 | Fisherman's Access | Last Chance, ID

4:00 PM
Reception and Silent
Auction Open

5:30 PM
Ribeye Steak and
Chicken Dinner

7:00 PM
Silent Auction Closes, HFF
Awards, Live Auction

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Thursday, June 19, 2025 | 4:30–5:30 PM | Harriman State Park

801 Main Street
PO Box 550
Ashton, Idaho 83420
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