

# Henrys Lake State Park

**Introduction:** Nestled among three mountain ranges on the continental divide, Henrys Lake is a paradise for anglers and vacationers alike. The beautiful blue lake is set in a valley surrounded by some of Idaho's most spectacular scenery. At an elevation of 6,470 feet, Henrys Lake State Park has the distinction of being at the highest elevation of all the parks in the State Park System. Henrys Lake is the natural home to Idaho's state fish, the Yellowstone cutthroat trout. It is also home to the "Henrys Lake Lunker," a cutthroat-rainbow hybrid that easily weigh up to 10 pounds. Many visitors are attracted to the park for the chance to land a trophy trout. And at Henrys Lake general fishing (not just fly fishing) is available and the fishing does not necessarily have to be "catch and release." The lake and its fish keep this park busy throughout the summer season.

**Getting There:** From Ashton, Idaho, take Highway 20 north for about 38 miles to Henrys Lake State Park. The access road to the park will be on the left side and is well marked.

## Major Features:

The Lake: Henrys Lake was named after explorer and fur-trapper Major Andrew Henry. The lake is 4 miles wide and six miles long. The lake is 28 feet at the deepest point with an average depth of 12 feet and 6,000 surface acres. It is fed by springs and six different streams; Duck Creek, Targhee Creek, Hope Creek, Timber Creek, Kelly Creek, and Howard Creek. Henrys Lake is one of the sources of the Henrys Fork of the Snake River. The fertile waters of Henrys Lake provides ideal fish habitat and has earned the label "World Famous Trout fishing Area."

Henrys Lake has been managed as a trophy fishery since 1976. Cutthroat Trout, Idaho's state fish, are native to Henrys Lake. These lake-dwelling cutthroat commonly grow to about 20 inches and can weigh as much as 20 pounds. Most of the cutthroat in Henrys Lake weight three to five pounds. Other game fish species living in the lake include mountain whitefish, eastern brook trout, rainbow trout, and rainbow-cutthroat hybrids. But these are introduced species that thrive in the lake. The state's largest brook trout ever caught weighed 7.2 pounds and was caught here at Henrys Lake.

The Landscape: If you look up and across Henrys Lake to the southwest, you can see Sawtell Peak. An extinct volcano over 27 million years old, it along with the whole area was carved by glaciers some 19,000 years ago. It was named after Gilman Sawtell, a rancher and commercial

fisherman, who was the first permanent settler on Henrys Lake.

**The Park:** Henrys Lake State Park is 586 acres in size and is located in the south east corner of Henrys Lake. About 114,588 visitors come here annually. About 21,682 come to camp for a total annual visitation of about 136,270. For its small size, it is quite popular.

**Campground:** The park campground has 58 campsites with electrical and water hookups, 17 campsites with only electrical hook-ups and 8 campsites with electrical, water and sewer hook-ups. The campground has two improved restrooms with flush toilets and showers. There is also a vault toilet located at the end of the Caddis Loop. There are three camping cabins available. An RV dump station is located near the entrance station.

**Day Use Area:** the day use area has a vault toilet, boat ramp, two courtesy docks, one small fishing dock, a large paved parking lot with spaces for towing vehicle with trailers, and a picnic area with 6 tables

**Geology:** Henrys Lake is within the Island Park Caldera. A caldera forms when the pressure of rising magma pushes upward causing the overlying rocks to dome and crack. Then boiling magma violently explodes through the cracks spewing hot volcanic ash into the air. As the magma erupts, the dome collapses and forms a large bowl-shaped crater or caldera. The eruptions create a broad crater-like area when the top of the volcano collapses. After the collapse, more eruptions partially fill the caldera.

The Island Park Caldera is one of the world's largest calderas, with approximate dimensions of 36 by 40 miles. Its ashfall is the source of the Huckleberry Ridge Tuff that is found from Southern California to the Mississippi River near St. Louis. This super-eruption of approximately 600 cubic miles occurred 2.1 million years ago and produced 2,500 times as much ash as the 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption.

During the Pleistocene Era (about 12,000 years ago), glaciers began forming in the mountains surrounding Henrys Lake, designing the jagged peaks we see today. Henrys Lake was probably formed about 9,000 years ago during that last ice age, at about the same time the Great Lakes were created in the northern United States. Those huge lakes were probably formed by moving sheets of ice while Henrys Lake was created by a mountain glacier that dammed the Snake River valley between the Henrys Lake mountains and the Centennial Range. Also As the glaciers melted and moved south, they scooped out the 9 square-mile basin that is Henrys Lake. Erosion from the surrounding land and hills through the centuries carried tremendous amounts of glacial soils back to the lake, threatening it with a marsh demise. carved out Henrys Lake. Some geologists believe that there have been volcanic eruptions in the Henrys Lake area as recently as 2,000 years ago.

Henrys Lake in its original natural setting was much smaller than the lake we see today. Before construction of some dams on the outlet. Henry's Lake was only six feet deep. It had a thousand surface acres, and had several floating islands.

**Ecosystems and Plant Communities:** The elevation of the park is about 6,470 feet. This is the highest state park in the system. The 585 acre park encompasses five ecosystems/plant communities, including the montane sagebrush steppe, lodgepole pine forest, riparian, wetlands, and lake.

Montane Sagebrush Steppe: Sagebrush and rabbitbrush are common in the dryer sections of the park. These plants are the indicator species of the montane sagebrush steppe. This is the dominant plant community of the park. Many of these areas have porous volcanic bedrock covered by gravelly soil where water is quickly absorbed. These areas can be easily identified by their lack of surface tributary streams and a presence of big sagebrush.

The montane sagebrush steppe provides a habitat for many kinds of wildlife. The tall, bushy sage provides protection for small, burrowing mammals such as the pocket gopher, as well as upland game birds like the sage grouse and the sharp-tailed grouse. Deer, antelope and elk consider the sage and its associated plants as good eating. Badgers and ground squirrels can also be observed here.

Other plants that can be found in this community include white mule's ear (wyethia), wheat grass, needle grass, bitterbush, Idaho fescue, and service berry. The keynote species is white mule's ear (*Wyethia helianthoides*). This beautiful member of the sunflower family is notable for its large, white radiate flowers. White Mule's-ears was discovered in Idaho 1833 by the noted explorer, Nathaniel Wyeth. Its species name "helianthoides" means sunflower-like and the common name "mule's-ears," refers to its large leaves. Mule's-ears are fairly large, stout plants that arise from a woody taproot with 1-several stems per plant. The showy flowers can be 2.5-4.5 centimeters in size.

In springtime, White Mule's-ears are often seen in great profusion along moist meadows and foothills at moderate elevations in Idaho, eastern Oregon, northern Nevada, and western Montana. Their collective blossoms are showy and large. They can be seen in the moist meadows and interspersed in the sagebrush steppe of the park. The massed wyethias in bloom are a striking sight at the park. They also can be found in the understory of the lodgepole pine groves. They are also occasionally mixed in with other yellow-flowered members of the genus such as *Wyethia amplexicaulis*.

Wyethias can also be confused with another closely-related genus, Balsamorhiza (*Balsamorhiza*). The two genera are distinguished by the presence of cauline (stem) leaves in *Wyethia* and exclusively basal leaves in *Balsamorhiza*. Both of these genera have been used as food and medicine by native peoples.

Lodgepole Pine Forest: The Lodgepole pine forest at Henrys Lake consists of semi-isolated groves of lodgepole pine with some Douglas fir and aspen added to the mix. Undergrowth in these groves include: Rocky Mountain maple, wild strawberry, mountain ash, cow parsnip, fireweed, wild rose, and saskatoon. The forest floor is covered with forbs such as mule's ear (wyethia), penstemon, purple aster, golden aster, glacier lily, hooked spur violet, heartleaf arnica, Indian paintbrush, salisfy, goatsbeard, snow berry, starry false Solomon's seal, camas, lupine, and a variety of grasses.

Riparian: This plant community grows along the edges of the Henrys Lake. This diverse array of riparian plant associations are found to support a variety of wildlife. These riparian areas are very fragile and quite susceptible to change as a result of human activities and influence. Typical species of this plant community include cottonwood, alder, willow, bull rush, cattail, and sedges.

Wetland: The primary wetland in the park is Howard Slough and the park lands that immediately surround it. Wet and boggy in early summer, drier and meadow-like in late summer, this wetland is essential to the existence of many forms of wildlife. In fact, this low and poorly drained area of

saturated soil is literally teeming with life – from micro-organisms to ducks, geese and cranes – providing one of nature’s most fascinating ecological displays. Moose can often be seen browsing in the slough.

Howard Slough is a marsh which is a complex community of living things, each dependent on the others for food and energy. Every living organism in the marsh uses the energy that comes from the sun and passes it on in a continuing cycle. Green plants capture energy from the sun and use it to produce glucose, the basic food of life. Animals cannot capture solar energy, but obtain it instead from plants. Plant-eating animals, both large and small, obtain their energy from the plants. As energy is passed from one consumer to another, some of it is used to maintain the processes of life, while some is stored. Meat-eating organisms initially obtain energy from plant eaters, but may in turn be eaten by larger meat eaters, including man. Even dead plants and animals can supply energy to the insects and bacteria that decompose organic matter. The decomposed matter then transmits minerals and chemical compounds to nourish plants, and the cycle starts all over again.

Lake: Henrys Lake is home to many forms of wildlife. The stream and spring fed lake has crystal clear waters with an abundance of aquatic life. This very high quality environment makes it a perfect place for a trophy trout fishery. It is the ancestral home of the native Yellowstone cutthroat trout that still thrives here. Other non-native game fish species that also are present in the lake include mountain whitefish, eastern brook trout, rainbow trout, and rainbow-cutthroat hybrids. Abundant aquatic vegetation makes the lake a favored feeding spot for waterfowl, and riparian areas along the shores provide cover for nesting.

Any lake or pond is a temporary feature in the landscape. If dams had not been built to bolster the water storage capacity of Henrys Lake, it probably would be rapidly moving towards becoming a marsh that might eventually become a forest. A young lake begins to fill with life almost as soon as it forms. As plants and animals die, their remains form a fertile layer at the bottom that gradually thickens and becomes soil. When the lake is nearly filled in, it becomes a wet meadow, damp and boggy, choked with water loving plants. As the site of the lake becomes drier, the rushes and cattails are replaced by grasses and sedges. Eventually seeds from nearby trees are carried into the meadow and take root. Within a few years, almost all traces of the original lake have vanished.

### **Wildlife:**

Mammals: The mammals present in the park include: moose, mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, black bear, grizzly bear, badger, raccoon, bobcat, coyote, wolf, river otters, muskrat, mink, beaver, skunk, fisher, weasel, red squirrel, porcupine, yellow-bellied marmot, red fox, American marten, and little brown bat.

Birds: The birds present in the park include: osprey, great blue heron, American avocet, American white pelican, Canada geese, bufflehead. Red-tailed hawk, bald eagle, sandhill crane, Rocky Mountain bluebird, western tanager, black-capped chickadee, dark-eyed junco, olive-sided flycatcher and yellow warbler.

Reptiles and Amphibians: The reptiles and amphibians present in the park include: Columbia spotted frog, western toad, and garter snake.

Fish: The fish present in the park include: Yellowstone cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, rainbow/cutthroat hybrid, brown trout, brook trout, mountain whitefish and Rocky Mountain sculpin.

The keynote species is the Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Onchorynchus clarki bouveri*). The Yellowstone cutthroat trout is a subspecies of the cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii*). It is a freshwater fish in the salmon family (family Salmonidae). Native only to a few U.S. states, their original range was upstream of Shoshone Falls on the Snake River and tributaries in Wyoming, also across the Continental Divide in Yellowstone Lake and in the Yellowstone River as well as its tributaries downstream to the Tongue River in Montana.

The Yellowstone cutthroat trout is a prized game fish. Fly fishing is the most popular angling method because the subspecies feeds primarily on insects as adults. Most varieties of cutthroat trout are less wary and selective than other trout species, thus angler success rates are higher.

Yellowstone cutthroat can be distinguished from other subspecies by their larger black spots that are clustered towards the tail, and by their gray, gold, or copper hues. Spawning males, especially, typically wear golden brown colors. All cutthroats can be differentiated from rainbow trout by red, pink, or orange marking beneath the jaw that give the species its name. Depending on habitat, Yellowstone cutthroat can range from six to twenty-six inches as adults, with six to ten inches common in high-elevation, high-gradient tributary streams and the largest fish found only in lakes or in spawning tributaries that feed lakes or emerge from them, such as Henrys Lake.

All Yellowstone cutthroat trout require flowing water to spawn successfully. Therefore, ponds and lakes must have an inlet or outlet stream for cutthroats to spawn and sustain populations. Genetically pure, Yellowstone cutthroat occupy only 10 percent of the streams where they were historically found. These fish are the only trout native to the Henrys Fork watershed. The decline of the Yellowstone cutthroat trout was caused primarily by hybridization with rainbow trout, competition with brook trout and the degradation and fragmentation of habitat. Their range has been further reduced by overfishing and habitat destruction due to mining, grazing, and logging. However the most serious current threats to the subspecies are interbreeding with introduced rainbow trout (resulting in cutbows) in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem,

Although once widespread, Yellowstone cutthroat trout numbers have declined to the point where the subspecies has been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. However, the listing was declined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service because there were major efforts already underway to ensure the continued existence of this subspecies.

The Idaho Legislature declared the Yellowstone cutthroat trout to be the "State fish" on April 5, 1990.

**Cultural History:** Artifacts indicate that Native Americans inhabited the area around Henrys Lake for at least the last 10,000 years. Shoshone, Bannock, Blackfoot, Crow, Flathead and Sheepeater tribes either migrated through here to fish or hunt bison, deer and elk, or made permanent encampments here.

As changes in the environment led to the extinction of many of the species that they hunted, more reliance was placed on the gathering of plants. Small groups of families left winter villages along the upper Snake River and followed the developing vegetation into the mountains during the spring and summer. In the fall the Indians began to hunt mountain sheep and other

game, following the animals down to winter range near their camps. Small and large game, fish, berries, lodgepole pine and other resources were harvested seasonally. One of the resources most sought after in the reaches of the Henrys Fork was the American bison or buffalo. This resource would attract tribes of several ethnic backgrounds to the region.

When the first white explorers and trappers arrived early in the nineteenth century, they found mounted bands of Shoshone and Bannock Indians who crossed the mountains of the Targhee to hunt bison on the northwestern Great Plains. The first explorers also found groups of horseless Shoshone scattered through the mountains, gathering plants and hunting. These Indians they called the Sheepeaters. Generally, the Shoshone and Bannock tribes subsisted as hunters and gatherers, traveling during the spring and summer seasons, collecting foods for use during the winter months. They hunted wild game, fished the region's abundant and bountiful streams and rivers (primarily for salmon), and collected native plants and roots such as the camas bulb. Buffalo served as the most significant source of food and raw material for the tribes. After the introduction of horses during the 1700s, hundreds of Idaho Indians of various tribal affiliations would ride into Montana on cooperative buffalo hunts. The last great hunt of this type occurred in 1864, signaling the end of a traditional way of life.

The Nez Perce people were also known to be occasional inhabitants here. They had engaged in hunting and raiding while in the region. One of their hunting trails was followed by Chief Joseph's band of Nez Perce during the Nez Perce War of 1877. Chief Joseph and his band were on the run and evading U.S. Army troops under the command of General Oliver O. Howard. The Nez Perce band followed the trails through Montana and into Idaho at Bannock Pass and then turned eastward and headed toward Henrys Lake. Howard's route paralleled them to the north in Montana on the other side of the Continental Divide. Howard hoped to intercept them at Camas Creek near Dubois, Idaho. But he was a day late.

Howard marched to Camas Meadows on August 19, 1877. The Nez Perce had departed earlier that day, continuing eastward. Howard set up camp there that night, calling it Camp Callaway, and took "great pains" to "cover the camp" with pickets in every direction.

The exceptional precautions Howard had taken for the protection of Camp Callaway were observed by Nez Perce scouts. Upon returning to their own camp, they reported what they had seen to the chiefs. They decided to carry out a raid with the objective of putting Howard's cavalry on foot.

About 4:00 a.m., several Nez Perce dismounted and crept among the picketed horses to cut them loose. Then two things happened simultaneously. As the mounted column approached the soldier's camp, a sentry shouted, "Who goes there?" At the same moment, a foot scout named Otskai accidentally discharged his gun in the midst of the camp. Thus, an alarm was sounded from two places before many horses had been released from their picket lines. However, two hundred mules were freed and the Indians concentrated upon stampeding them northward.

General Howard mustered a strong force in order to pursue the raiders and recover the stock. Within minutes, three companies of cavalry were assembled. Under the command of Major Sanford, nearly 150 horsemen were galloping northward in pursuit of the raiders, who had several miles' head start. In addition to the mules, about 20 horses were missing as well.

The rear guard of the Nez Perce detected the horsemen and set up an ambush eight miles north of Camp Callaway. Several warriors continued driving the mules on to camp, and others deployed among hillocks of black lava and broken terrain dotted with aspen trees and sagebrush. A few Nez Perce deployed in a thin skirmish line in a grassy meadow about a half mile wide. The meadow was bordered on the opposite side by a lava ridge 18 feet high and 500 to 600 feet long.

Sanford and his three companies took up positions behind the ridge and dismounted to return long-distance fire from the Nez Perce.

The distance between these lines was too great for effective marksmanship, but when a shot struck Lt. Benson in the hip the soldiers discovered that the Indians in the meadow were serving as a decoy, while others had been creeping forward on both flanks to attack the troops. Hence, Sanford ordered a bugler to call a retreat. Captain Randolph Norwood with 50 men, however, declined to obey immediately the order to retreat, but instead backtracked slowly to a strong position where he was forced by the encircling Nez Perce to halt, establish defensive positions, and fight it out. The other two companies had abandoned him. For the next two to four hours the two sides sniped at each other.

Meanwhile, Howard proceeded to the battle site with reinforcements. He found the two retreating cavalry companies. Major Sanford professed ignorance as to the location and fate of Captain Norwood. Howard pushed forward and, mid-afternoon, came upon Norwood and his men crouching in their lava rock rifle pits located a few rods apart along the top and on the edges of a series of ridges that enclosed a protected area for their horses. The Indians melted away and the battle was over.

The U.S. Army had one dead, two mortally wounded and six to nine wounded. The Nez Perce had only one or two wounded..The Nez Perce were disappointed that the spoils of their raid had been mostly mules, but the loss crippled Howard's mobility. Howard had failed to defeat the Nez Perce on several occasions and now, after the battle, he failed to pursue them aggressively.

Later, the Nez Perce fought a holding action on Targhee Creek against Howard's troops and tradition has it that a Bannock chieftain allied with Chief Joseph was killed. There are some accounts that say that a distortion of his name Tyee, was given later to the creek and the Targhee Forest.

After learning that the Nez Perce were headed into the wilderness of Yellowstone National Park, Howard called a halt to the chase and rested for several days at Henrys Lake. Meanwhile, Howard's superior General Philip Sheridan was collecting more than one thousand experienced soldiers and Indian scouts from many tribes to defeat the Nez Perce when they emerged from Yellowstone.

The Fort Hall Reservation had been established by an Executive Order in 1867 and the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes were forcibly moved there. Later the Northern Shoshone bands were also forcibly moved to Fort Hall. The Shoshone-Bannock treaty with the United States was executed in 1868.

**History:** Europeans first came to Henrys Lake in 1810. Major Andrew Henry, a partner in the Missouri Fur Trading Company, brought between 50 to 80 men to what is now St. Anthony to establish a trading center. After a bitter winter, 27 men had either died or been killed; many suffered from snow blindness; and all of them were forced to eat their horses to survive. In spring 1811, Henry and his surviving men trudged to Montana where they had been trapping before coming to this area.

Wilson Price Hunt lead a party of Astorians, employees of the American Fur Company through Idaho in 1811. He passed through Fort Henry on his way to the mouth of the Columbia River. Wilson Price Hunt named the North Fork of the Snake and its lake headwaters for Henry.

The Raynolds expedition passed through the area in 1860. It was headed by William F. Raynolds and guided by famous mountain man Jim Bridger. Congress appropriated \$60,000 and

instructed Reynolds to find the best way for a road and/or railroad to the plains of Montana and the Idaho mines. They explored Jackson Hole, Wyoming, but were turned back, passed through the Island Park country and discovered Reynolds pass which he recommended as the route into Montana because it had a grade of less than 50 feet to the mile. It was 1,500 feet lower than South pass and so level it was difficult to locate the point where the waters divided.

One of the first settlers at Henrys Lake was Gilman Sawtell. He came west from Massachusetts after fighting in the Civil War. Sawtell and Levi Wurtz came to Henry's Lake in 1867 to ranch cattle for the Montana Gold Rush towns of Virginia City, Bannack, and Helena. The flies on the marshy shores of Henrys Lake proved to be too heavy for cattle but the two entrepreneurs quickly realized they could market Island Park's abundant elk, moose, antelope, and bighorn sheep to hungry miners in Montana. In the cooler months, they could harvest trout from Henrys Lake. Sawtell developed a commercial fishery, sometimes catching 90,000 pounds of cutthroat a year. He sold the fish in Butte and Virginia City, Montana, and packed it on ice for a train ride to Ogden, Utah, where it sold for nine cents a pound. Sawtell built a wagon road from Virginia City to his ranch and would pack fish and game on ice and haul them to the new mining towns. He could harvest as many as 40,000 fish a year. Sawtell eventually built six log buildings, a residence, a blacksmith shop, a stable, a storage shed and an ice house. He built his residence big enough to accommodate 20 people and used it as a hotel of sorts. In 1871, he guiding a group of men from Virginia City and Deer Lodge on a tour that covered the geyser basins, Yellowstone Lake, and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Because of this trip, Sawtell is credited with beginning the first commercial Yellowstone guide. Although, his wife and son were still living in Iowa in the 1870 census, they joined him at Henrys Lake by the 1880 census. Patent to his original homestead claim for 151 acres was issued to his son Eben Sawtell in 1896. Gilman Sawtell died in Spokane, Washington in 1899 and his son Eben was living in Montana in 1900.

The Congress set aside Yellowstone as a "public park reservation" in 1872. This set about a turn of events around its boundaries for access of tourists. The primary entrance was at Gardiner, Montana, but before too long the western approach would gain some interest. Gilman Sawtell was already offering guiding services out of his ranch at Henrys Lake in 1871. The Utah and Northern Railway was completed to Monida, on the Montana-Idaho border, in March of 1880. Stagecoach service was provided from train stops at Beaver, Spencer, and Monida east to the park. The 85 miles from Monida to the west boundary of the park was an arduous trip, requiring four changes of horses.

The Island Park region became a center of activity of battles and skirmishes in the Nez Perce War of 1877. Frontiersman and Army scout, George Rea, passed through the Island Park area then when guiding General Howard and his troops in pursuit of Chief Joseph and his people. He returned to settle on Shotgun Creek and became the first homesteader in Island Park. Rea's post office was one of the stage line stations of the Bassett lines from Spencer to West Yellowstone with the Arangee Company Hotel as a stage stop. The Monida-Yellowstone-Western stage line made the run through Red Rock Pass. The Gilmore-Salisbury stages from Spencer to Yellowstone used Salisbury ranch near Henrys Lake as a stage station. The Arangee Company Hotel later became the summer home of one of the earliest visitors to appreciate and extol the beauties and potentials of the region, Alfred S. Trude, the eminent Chicago lawyer.

The Island Park area was opened to homestead settlement in the 1880s. Although the Homestead Act was meant to provide farms for the more common man, the attractiveness of the Island Park area and the abundance of fish and game soon attracted affluent hunters and fishermen from out of state. By 1890, several families were making use of the first summer



homes in Island Park.

John, Thomas, and Jenny Bishop homesteaded south of Rea in about 1885.

By 1888 the Arangee Company had founded the Swiss Colony in the Island Park country, reminiscent of the Swiss Alpine region. A sawmill, a handsome two-and-half-story hotel, topped by a cupola, and flagpole were built. Stocked with imported Holsteins and peopled by Swiss emigrants who started up a cheese factory, made this an impressive beginning for a settlement.

In 1889, E.F. Hopf purchased the homestead of John Kooch and he and his associates established the Arangee Land and Cattle Company.

The Arangee Land and Cattle Company and its land holdings were sold to famous Chicago attorney Alfred S. Trude in 1890. His purposes was to maintain these properties as a hunting and fishing retreat. His brother Charles moved to Island Park to operate the ranch.

When Idaho outlawed the sale of wild trout in 1890, Joe Sherwood built a fish hatchery on Henrys Lake to raise rainbow trout for commercial sale. This well-educated, enterprising entrepreneur also operated the first cruise boat on Henrys Lake and ran Island Park's first sawmill. His most notable achievement, however, was the invention of the world's first snowmobile – for which he held the patent – developed right here at Henrys Lake.

In 1905, The Congress passed a law that created the U.S. Forest Service. The new Forest Service would take over management of all the federal lands that had been designated forest reserves. On July 1, 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt designated 45 new forest reserves (National Forests) scattered throughout 11 western states. The Targhee National Forest was included on this list. Management of all the federal lands within the boundaries of the new National Forest was now transferred from the General Land Office to the Forest Service. For all intents and purpose, this action would mark the end to the settlement era on forest lands in the Island Park area.

The North Fork Reservoir Company was created in 1916 as a nonprofit corporation. It supplies water from Henrys Lake to six canal companies in the St. Anthony area, irrigating about 47,000 acres of farmland. Farming and ranching are vital to eastern Idaho's economy. Henrys Lake was dammed in 1923 which increased the size of the lake from 1,500 acre feet to 79,600 acre feet. The dam was rebuilt in 1964, increasing the lake's capacity to 86,000 acre feet. The lake level fluctuates little and is dependent upon irrigators' needs and climate changes, like prolonged drought.

**Park History:** The park was established in 1967. The park lands were acquired from the Idaho Department of Lands in 1973. Some

#### **Please Remember**

- There is a \$5.00 per vehicle per day fee required for access to the area. This is required even if the entrance station is closed.
- Campfires are only allowed in the provided fire rings.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times and are not permitted in the buildings.
- Motor vehicles are to stay on established roadways unless directed otherwise.
- Personal floatation devices are required for any water craft, including float tubes
- All watercraft must display a current invasive species decal.
- Please stay on walkways and trails.
- The open fishing season is the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through January 1.
- The trout limit is 2 and brook trout must be counted in the limit.

electrical and water hook-ups were added to the campground in 1989. The Caddis Loop was added to the campground in 2014. This loop included 50 new campsites with RV hook-ups along with a new improved restroom and a vault toilet.

### **Recreation Activities:**

Scenic Viewing: The area surrounding Henrys Lake has spectacular scenery. The park is only 15 miles from Yellowstone National Park, one of America's greatest natural wonders.

Camping: The campground has 83 campsites with many featuring RV hook-ups. The campground has two improved restrooms with flush toilets and showers. There are three camping cabins available. Many visitors come to the park in the summer season to fish the lake and most use the campground for overnight lodging.

Picnicking: There are 6 picnic tables available in the day use area.

Water Sports: motorized and non-motorized boating is allowed on Henrys Lake. All sort of boats, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, etc. can be launched at the park boat ramp. Two courtesy docks are provided at the ramp. All watercraft must display a current invasive species decal. Personal floatation devices are required for any water craft, including float tubes.

Fishing: Fishing is the most popular activity at the park. The fishing season The open fishing season is the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through January 1. On opening day, the park can become very crowded. The game fish in the lake include Yellowstone cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, eastern brook trout, rainbow trout, and rainbow-cutthroat hybrids. The trout limit is 2 and brook trout must be counted in the limit.

Nature Study/Birding: The three mile Aspen loop Nature Trail is open to hikers and bikers. The first one-quarter mile near the campground is a paved surface. A trail guide brochure is available that provides information about the numbered posts.

Trails: There 3 miles of unimproved trails in the park. Visitors can access some of the undeveloped parts of the park by hiking the trails. The trails are also open to foot traffic and bicycles.

**Resource Management Issues:** A master plan for this park is not available. The park is known to have the following invasive and noxious weeds: thistle, black henbane, tansy, and spotted knapweed.

**Suggestions for the Future:** Those recommendations that represent very favorable enhancements for Henrys Lake State Park as follows:

- IDPR should continue with their plans to add 2 new camper cabins
- IDPR has plans to remodel the boat ramp restroom. As this facility is an older vault toilet, the improvement is overdue. IDPR should consider making this into an improved restroom with flush toilets and sinks.

- Although swimming in the lake is allowed, there current is no developed and marked off swimming area. There is a small strip of sandy/gravelly beach on the west side of the spit near the boat ramp. Additional sand material could be brought in to improve this beach.
- IDPR should consider expanding the park lands to include more shoreline of the lake. This could be done by acquiring all the IDL lands (200 acres) that are currently not part of the park that are contained within section 22, T 14 S, R 43 E. Then IDPR could make an Recreation and Public Purposes Act application for the 80 acres of BLM public lands in the northwest corner of Section 27, T 14 S, R 43 E. and also the approximate 100 acres of BLM public land that is located along the south shore of Henrys Lake in section 20 and 21, T 14 S, R 43 E. Blocking up these important open space lands with lake access may become critical in the future as private development spreads out.