



**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

UPPER SNAKE REGION  
4279 Commerce Circle  
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401

Brad Little / Governor  
Ed Schriever / Director

March 6, 2023

Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership  
Attn: Doug Nygren, Coordinator

Dear Friends of Reservoirs Grants Committee:

I have reviewed the proposal submitted by the Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF) to the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership to initiate a research project to develop and assess the potential plan of oxygenating the hypolimnion of Island Park Reservoir to improve water quality, fish habitat, and ultimately fish populations in the reservoir. I believe this novel research idea has merit and could potentially provide the necessary information to lead to more successful fish management on Island Park Reservoir. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) has been working to better understand and improve fish populations in Island Park Reservoir since the early 2000s. Specifically, much of our attention has been focused on kokanee. Historically, kokanee used to be abundant in Island Park Reservoir and the reservoir used to supply the IDFG hatchery system with all the requested kokanee eggs for stocking requests statewide from the early 1980s through 1990. However, the abundance of kokanee in the reservoir has declined drastically, such that stocking tens of thousands of kokanee fry into Island Park Reservoir to improve a consistently underperforming fishery may no longer be justified due to poor survival of hatchery kokanee and low return to creel rates.

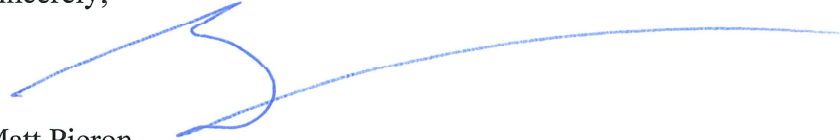
Staff from the HFF recently completed a study describing habitat suitability in Island Park Reservoir for kokanee salmon. This study documented that a habitat that provides kokanee with both suitable temperature and dissolved oxygen levels is extremely limited in the heat of summer. While there is an abundant area with cold water suitable for kokanee in Island Park Reservoir's hypolimnion during this period, it does not have enough dissolved oxygen to support kokanee because of stratification.

The proposed project would develop an oxygenation plan for the hypolimnion of Island Park Reservoir, evaluate the efficacy of the plan, monitor oxy-thermal habitat, and work towards implementation of the plan should evaluation and monitoring efforts yield favorable results. Admittedly, this is an ambitious project. However, given how much time, effort, and funds IDFG has invested in multiple management and research projects aimed to improve kokanee abundance with little success, the proposed project is appealing because it has the potential to successfully benefit fish populations because of the background research and information that has led to this point. While this project has the potential to succeed where past efforts have failed, a careful look at the feasibility and efficacy of an oxygenation project at a large scale should be made

*Keeping Idaho's Wildlife Heritage*

before full-scale project implementation due to the scope and expense of a full-scale oxygenation project at Island Park Reservoir. The proposed study by HFF would help accomplish this initial assessment. Thank you for your consideration to fund this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matt Pieron', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Pieron  
Regional Supervisor

bh/mp