



FLOATER USE OF THE BIG SPRINGS NATIONAL RECREATION WATER TRAIL

The Henry's Fork Foundation

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Outline

- Background
- Purpose and Motivation
- Objectives
- Methods
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- Initial Steps
- Next Steps

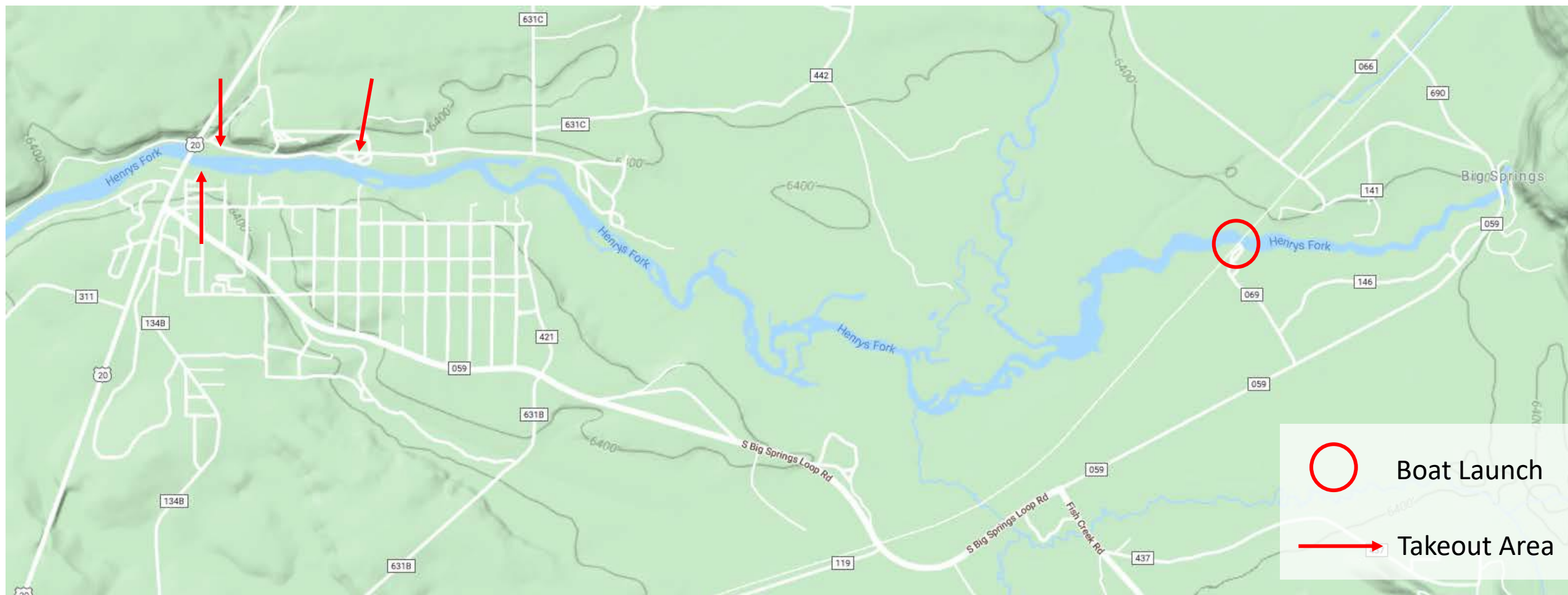


Big Springs Water Trail

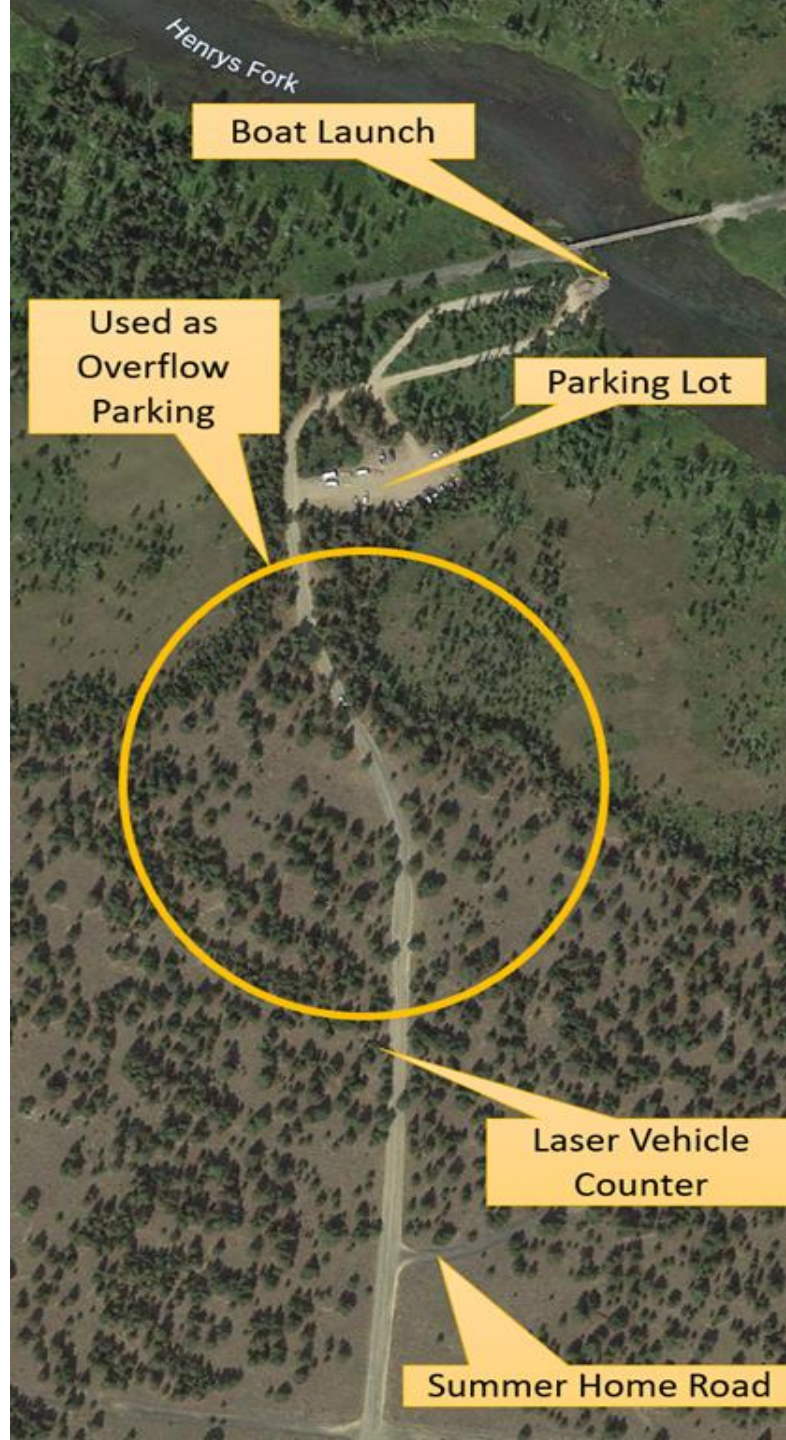
- Designated as a National Recreational Water Trail in 1981
- Managed and maintained by the USFS



Study Area



Study Area



Purpose and Motivations

- Increased use and exceedance of parking capacity at launch
- Long-time anglers reporting declines in fishery/fishing conditions
- Angler – floater conflicts
- Expiration of current livery permit
- Management could be effected by new hotel construction and aging wastewater treatment system
- Inform future management, planning, and conservation actions

Note: This study did not address potential ecological effects of floater use on the Water Trail

Objectives

1. Quantify floater use of the Big Springs Water Trail
2. Assess whether floater use is exceeding capacity of facilities
3. Determine floater characteristics and satisfaction with experience
4. Determine angler satisfaction with fishing experience on the upper Henry's Fork and attitudes regarding floater use



Methods

- 2019 - Memorial Day – Labor Day
 - May 25 – Sept 2, 2019
 - Random sampling – 20%
 - 25% of those days designated as angler survey days
1. Floater and vehicle use – Electronic recording devices
 2. Use and condition of launch facilities – Personal observation
 3. Floater characteristics and experience – Interviews at take-out
 4. Angler satisfaction and attitudes – Survey instrument

Methods – Floater Interviews

- Did they use Mack's Inn livery service?
- Floatation device rented or owned?
- Floater zip code
- Rate experience from 1-5
- Rate # of other people from 1-5
- Would they do this trip again?
- Would they recommend it?
- Note type of floating device and take- out location

Methods – Angler Surveys

- Questions on location, date, start time, and duration of fishing trip
- Quality of fishing 1-5 on given day
- Quality of fishing during survey year compared to all past years they fished the upper Henry's Fork
- Approve or disapprove of six potential fisheries and recreation management strategies
- Any other input on management of the upper Henry's Fork
- Satisfaction vs importance of: # of fish, size of fish, # rising fish, # other anglers, # non-anglers, quality of hatches, quality of habitat, and aesthetics.

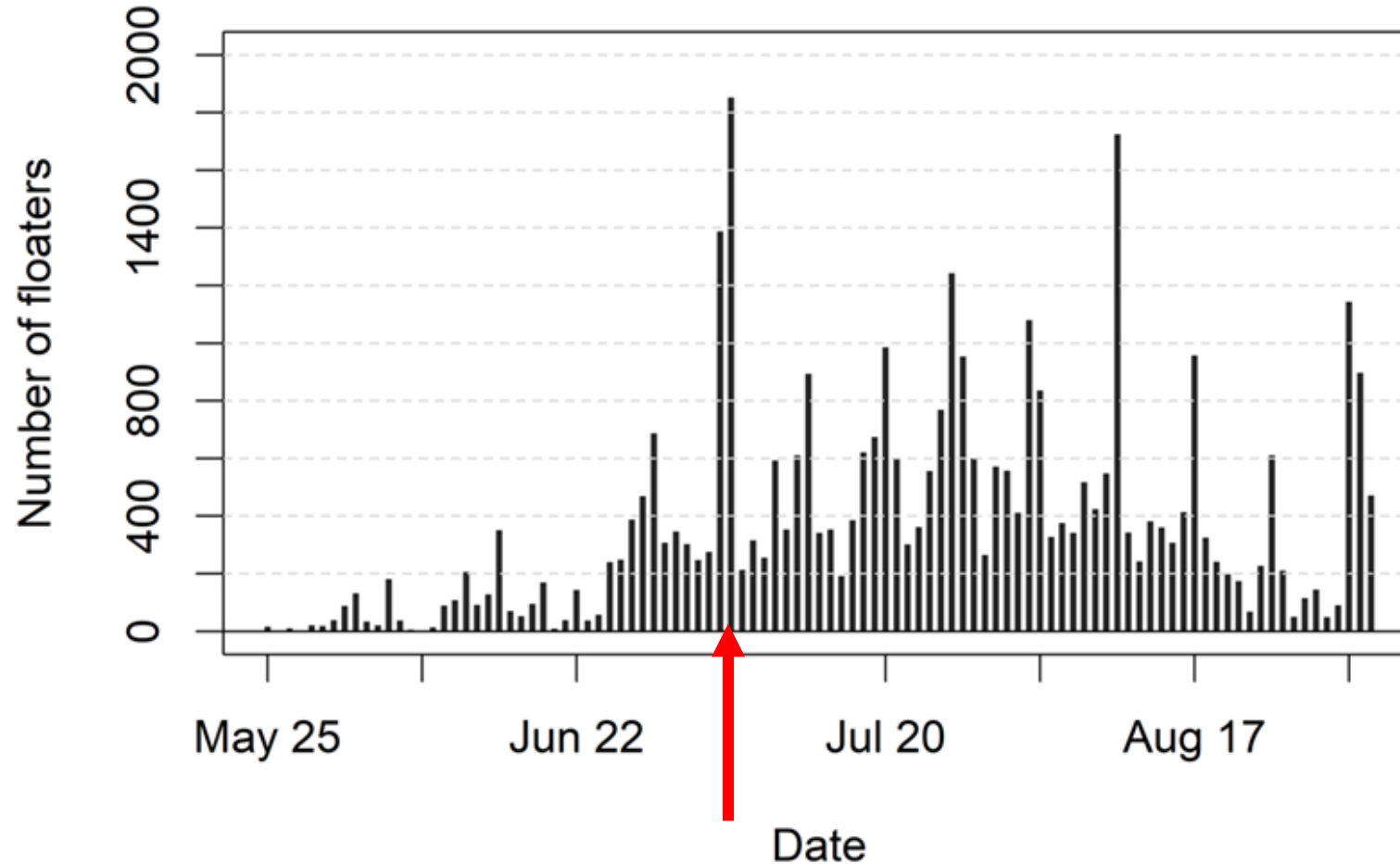
Results

- Floater Use
- Use of Launch Facilities
- Floater Characteristics and Satisfaction
- Angler Satisfaction



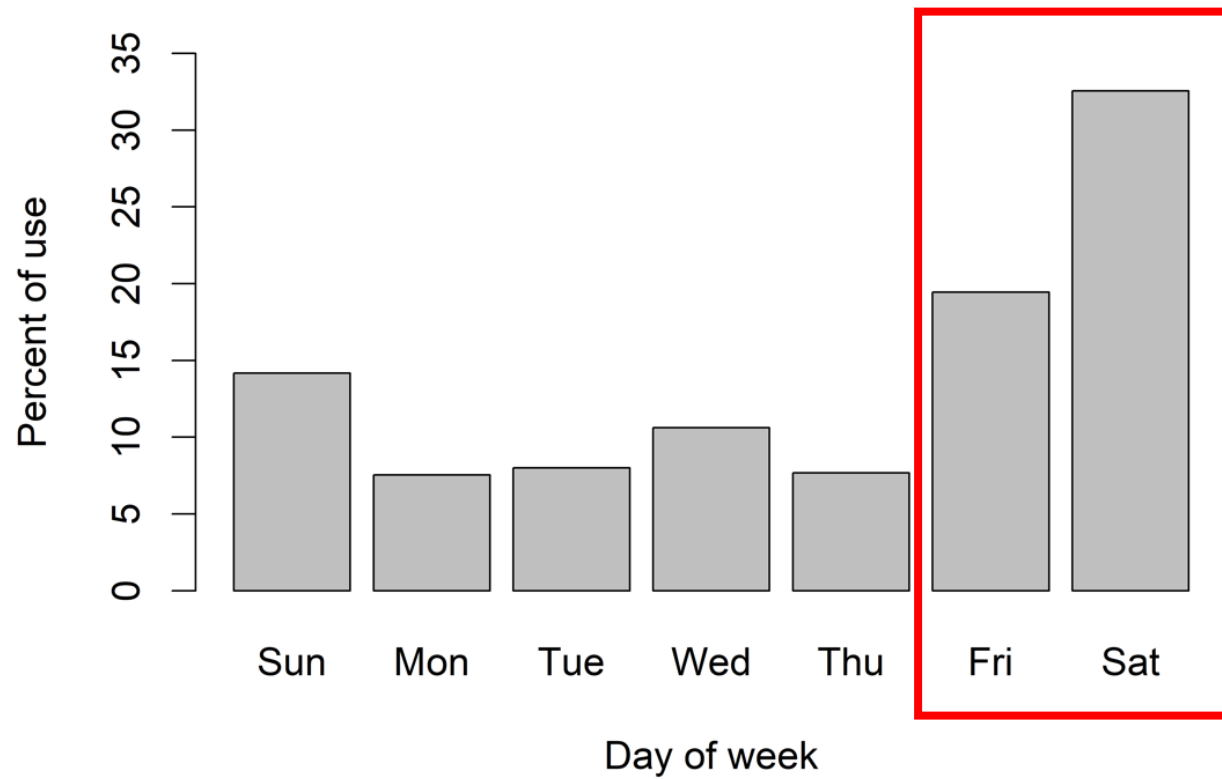
Floater Use

Use by day of the season

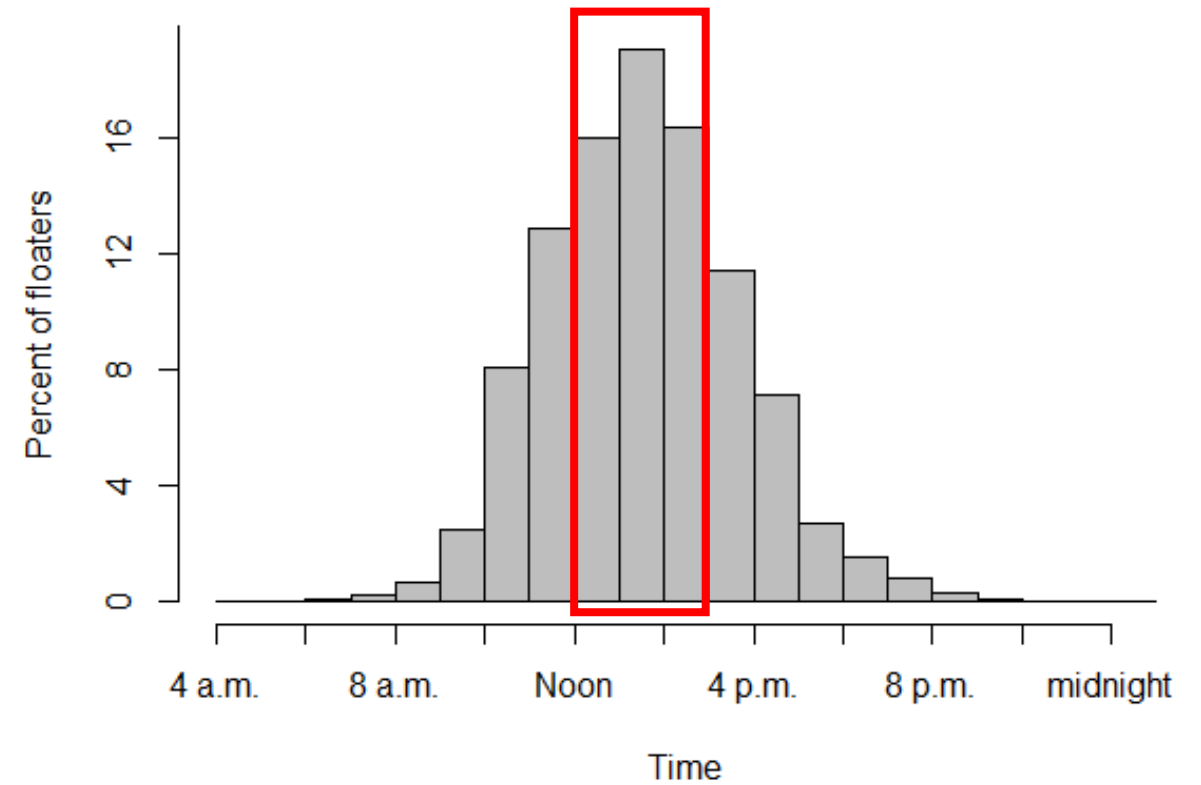


- Total estimated floater use: 37,187

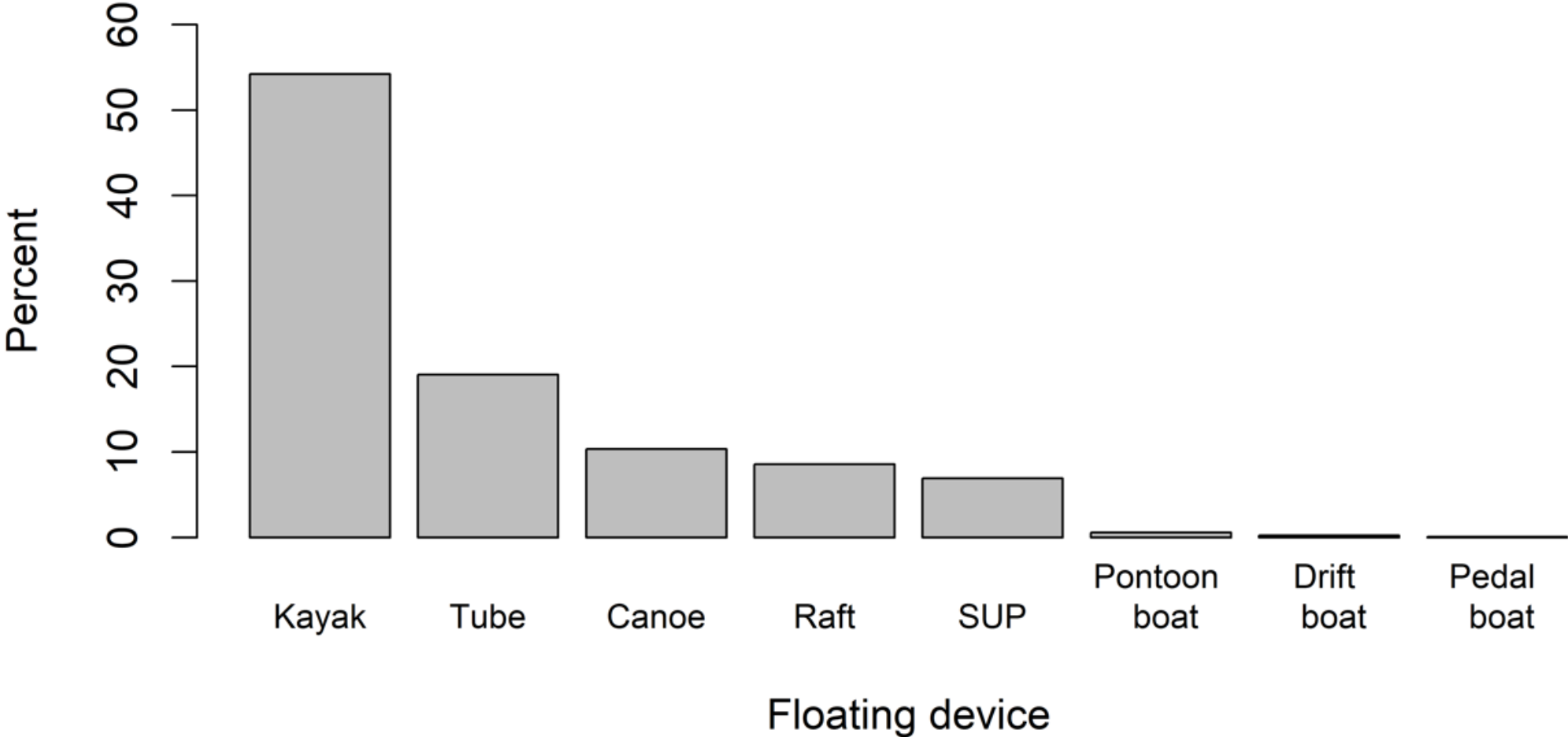
Distribution of floater use across days of the week



Distribution of floater start times



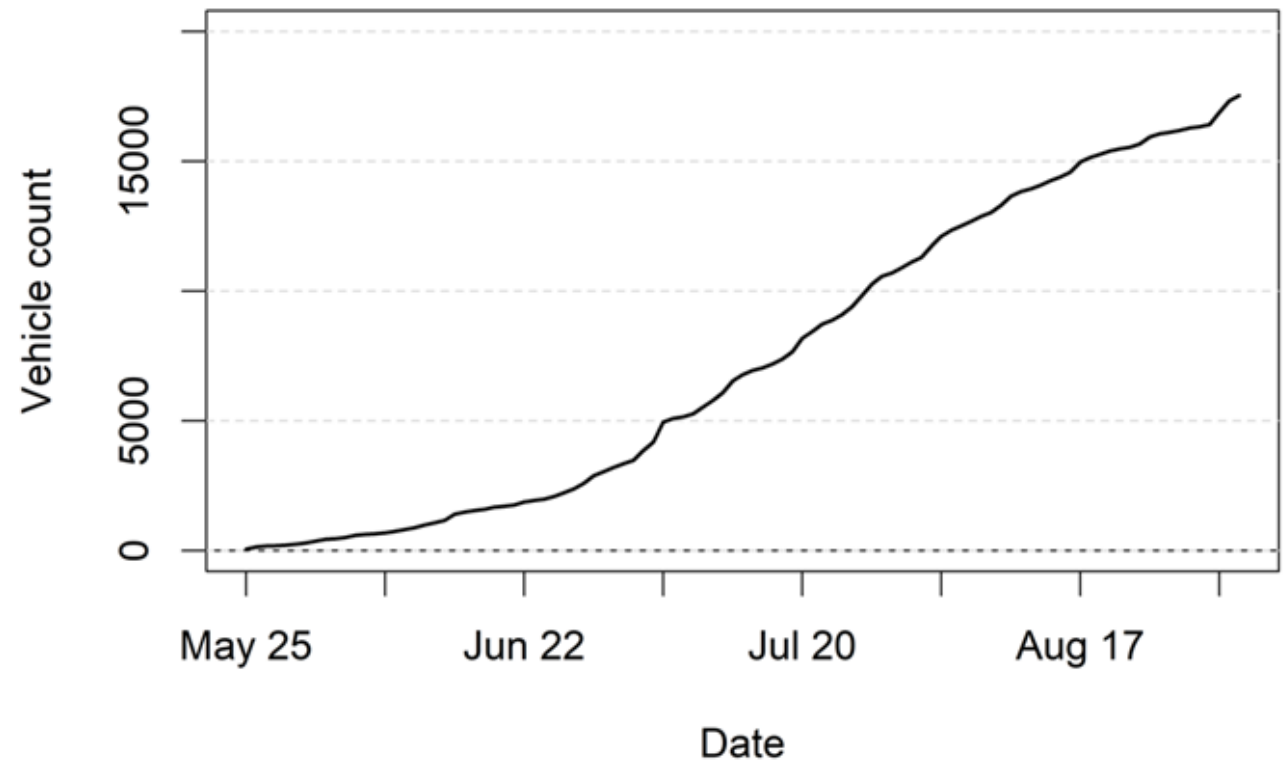
Types of floating devices used on the Water Trail



Use of Launch Facilities

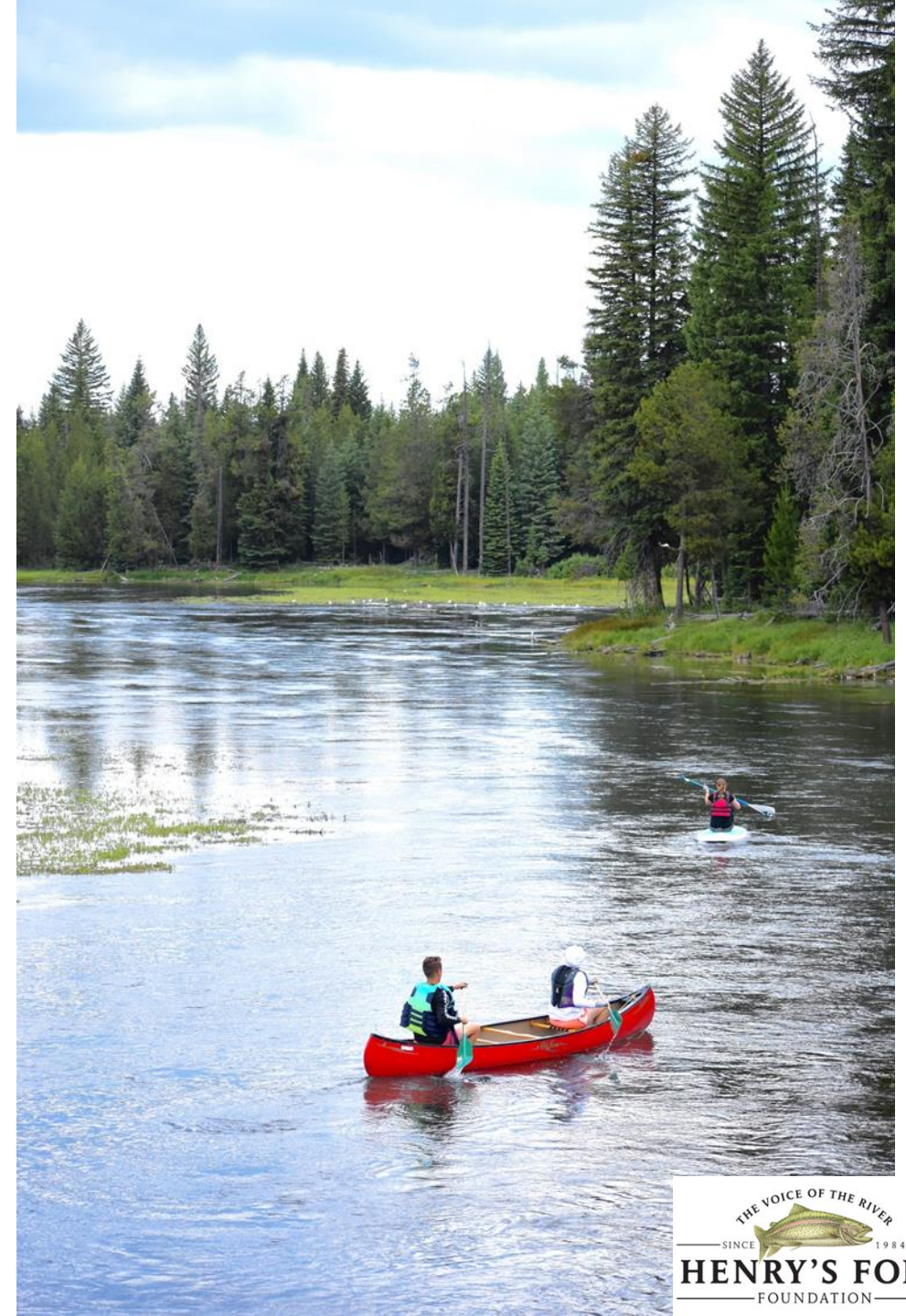
- Median # of vehicles in parking lot – 3, maximum 35
- Median # parked outside parking lot – 0, maximum 102
- Vehicles parked outside the parking lot 33% of the time
- Median waiting time to launch – 0, maximum 18 minutes

Cumulative Vehicle Use at Big Springs Launch

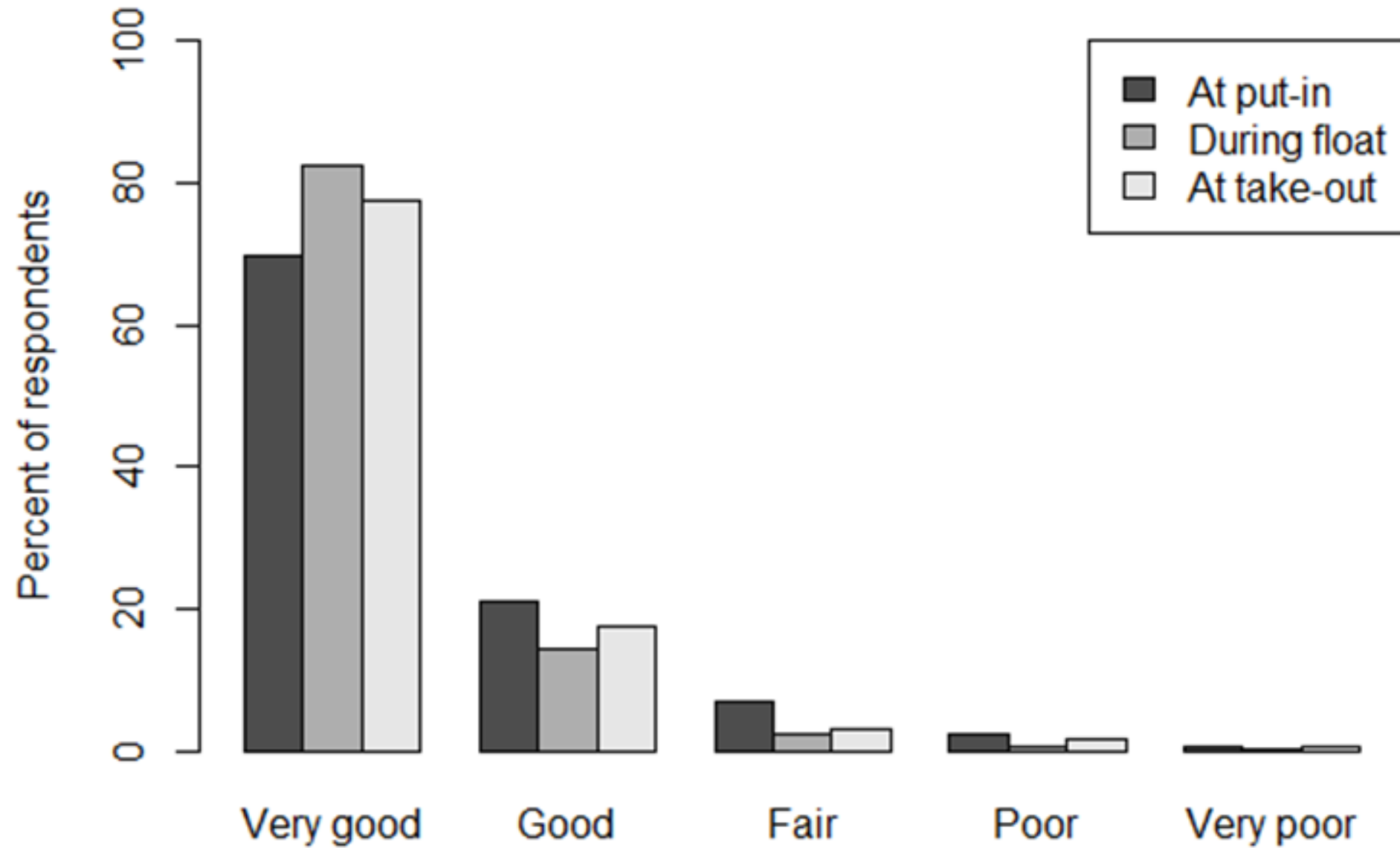


Floater Characteristics

- 18% used Mack's Inn livery service
- 82% came using personal/rental vehicle
- 64% took out at Mack's Inn
- 23% took out at Café Sabor
- 13% used designated take-out on USFS land
- 2/3 used private floating device
- 1/3 rented floating device



Floater experience, rated on a 1-5 scale



Floater opinion on the number of people they saw during their float.

	Saw way too few	Saw too few	Just Right	Saw too many	Saw way too many	Did not matter
Percent of Respondents	0.2%	1.3%	53.5%	15.6%	5.6%	23.8%

Reasons why a floater would choose to do the float again.

“scenic”

“tradition”

“fun”

“relaxing”

“wildlife”

“family”

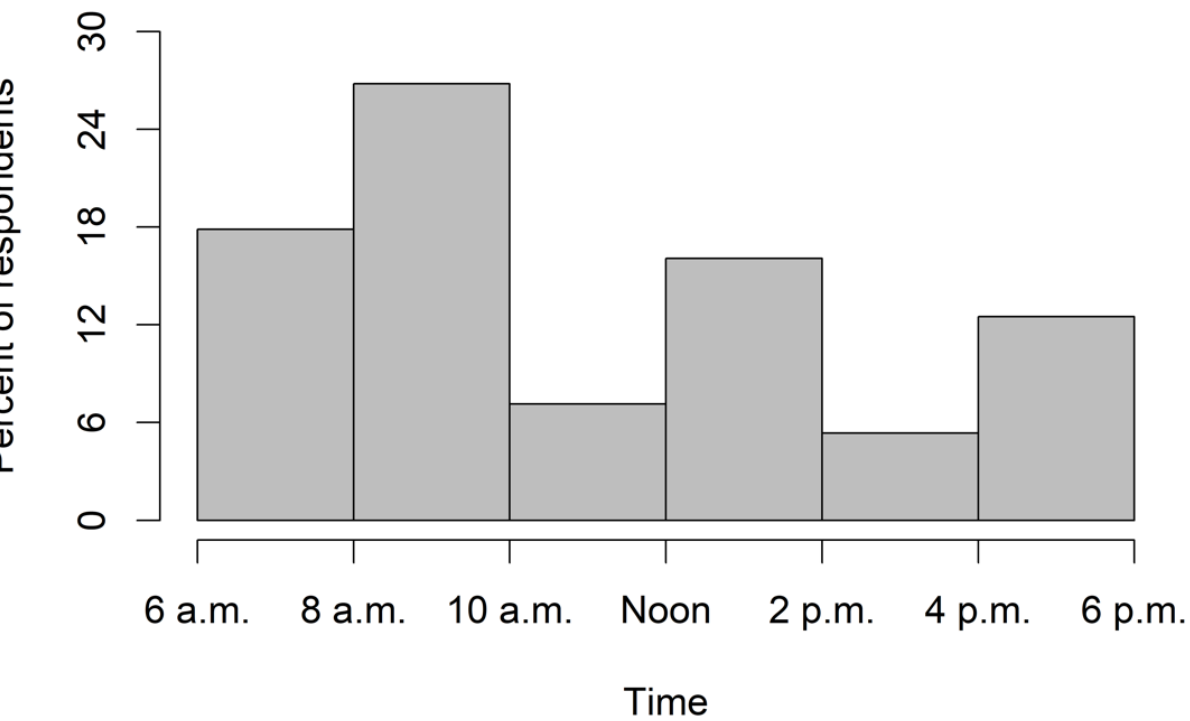
- **99%** of interviewees reported they would do this **float again**
- **98%** said they would **recommend the float** to someone else

Angler Satisfaction

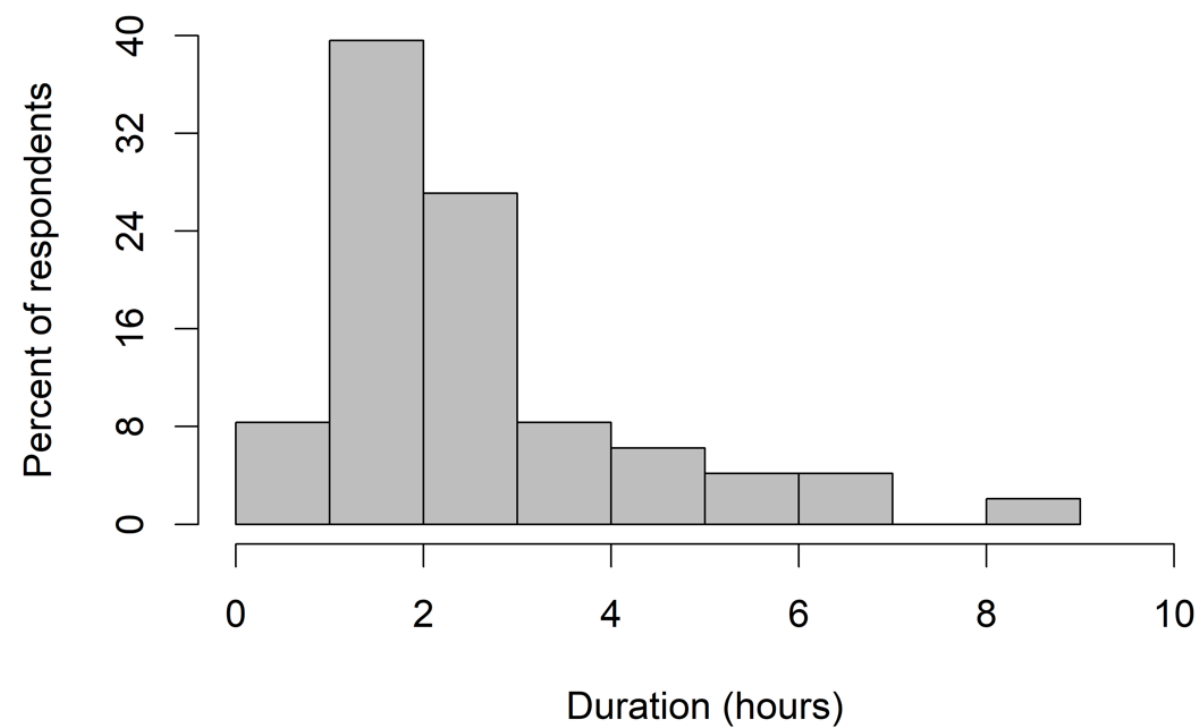
- Half of surveys completed by club members
- 24 anglers who fished upstream of the Mack's Inn bridge
- 26 anglers who fished downstream of the bridge
- First fished the upper Henry's Fork: 1946-2019
 - Median = 2008
- 40% of respondents have fished the upper HF for 20 years or more



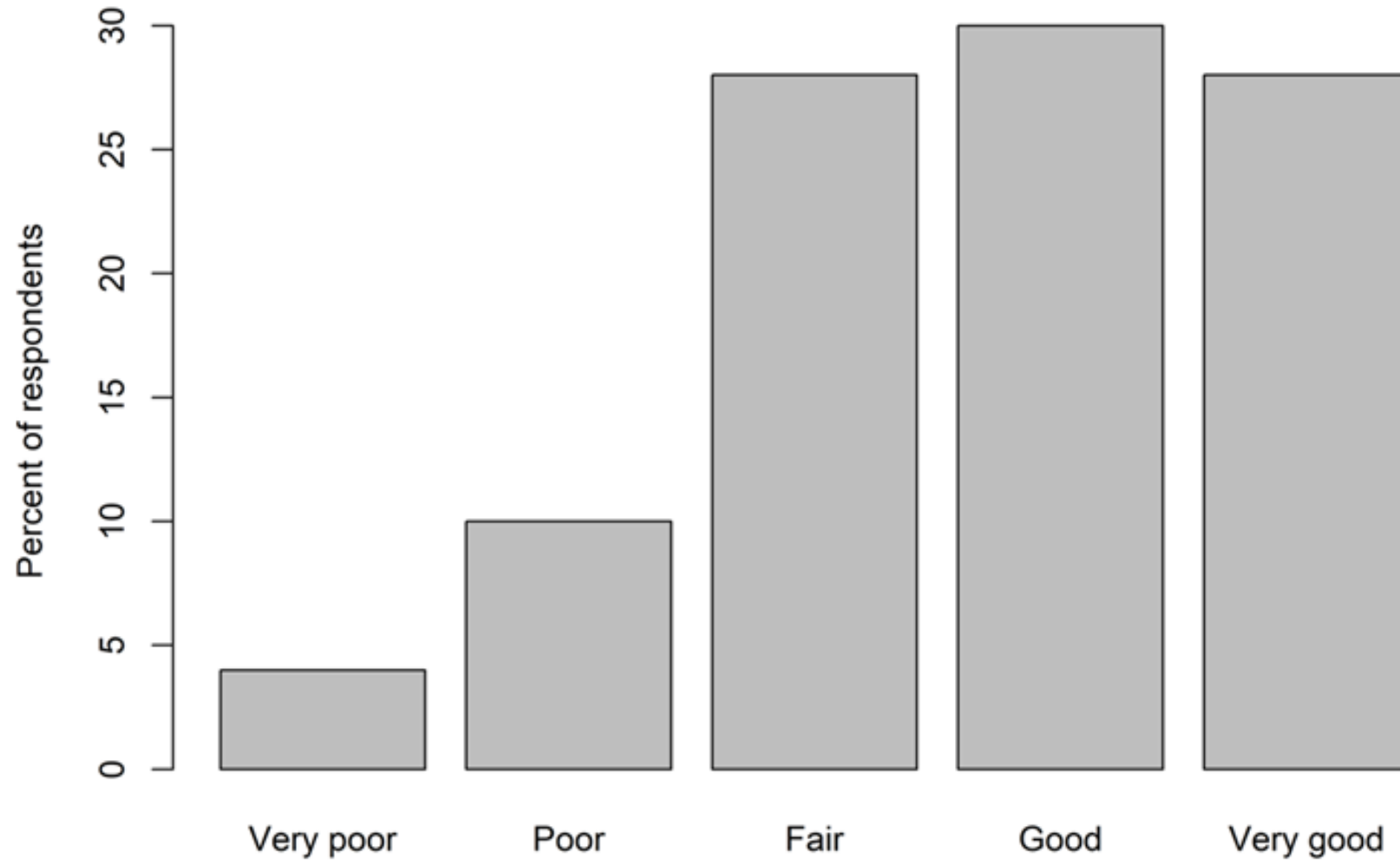
Start time of angler fishing trips.



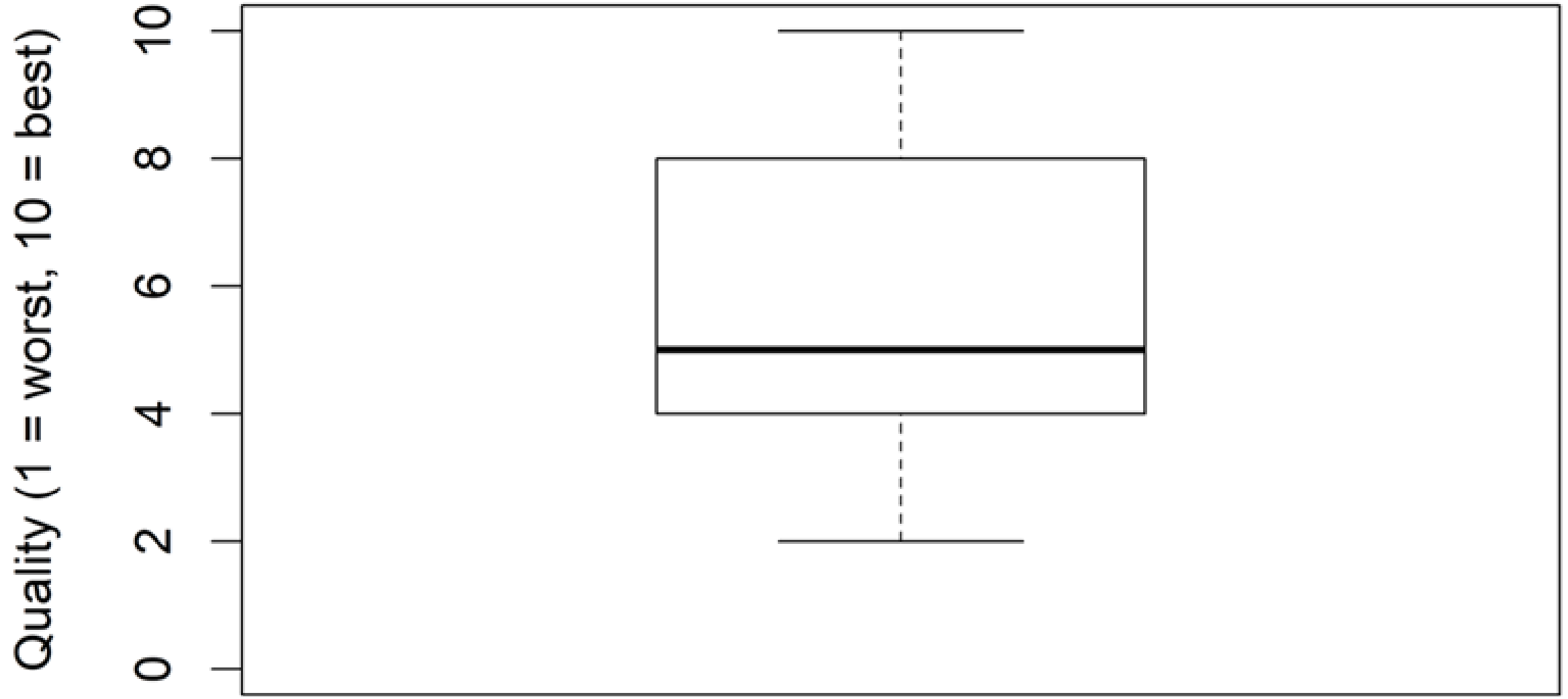
Duration of angler fishing trips.



Anglers' opinion of the quality of fishing on the upper Henry's Fork on the survey day.



Anglers' opinion of the quality of fishing compared with past experience



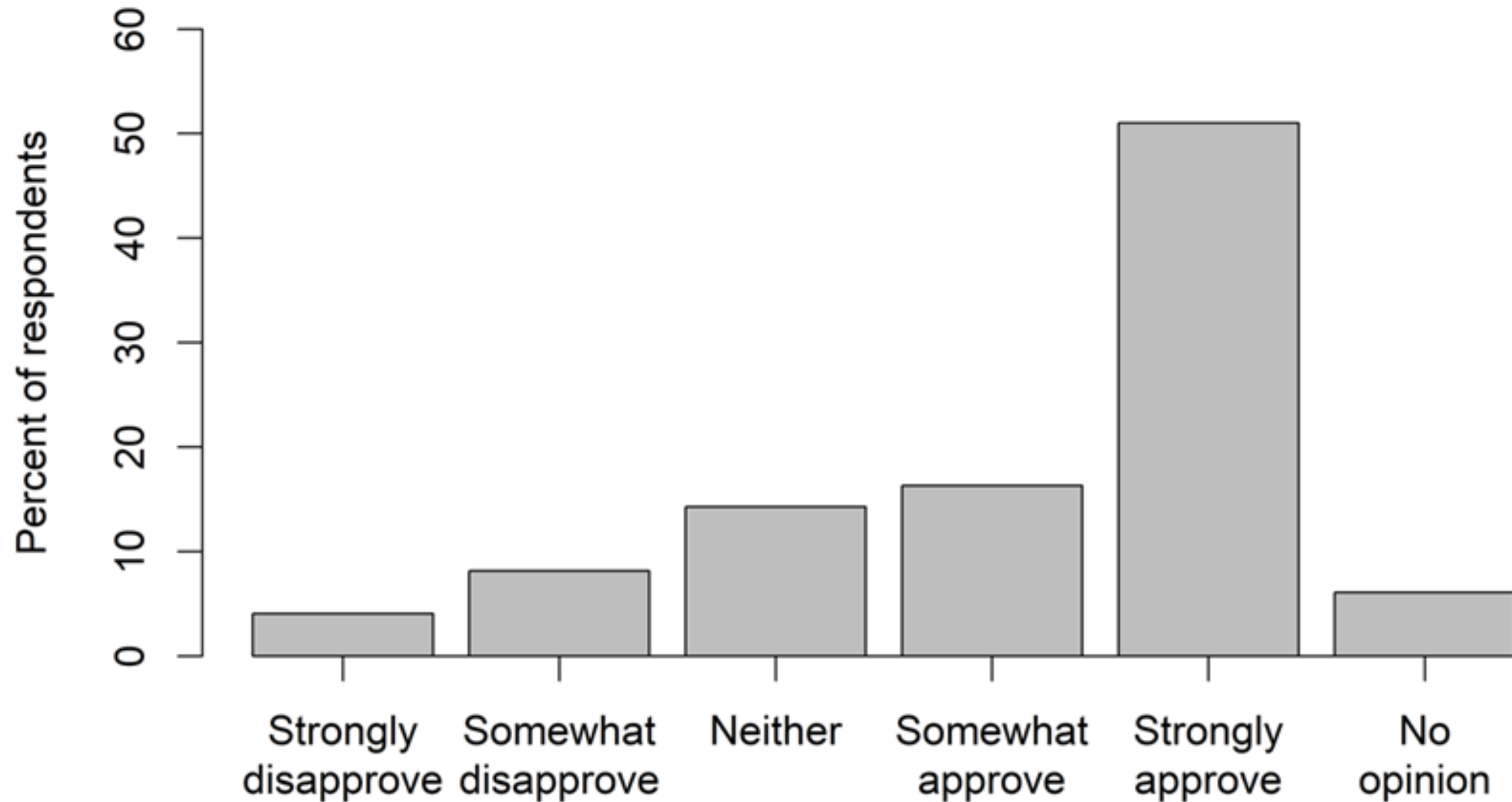
Angler satisfaction relative to importance (gap scores) for various aspects of the fishing experience.



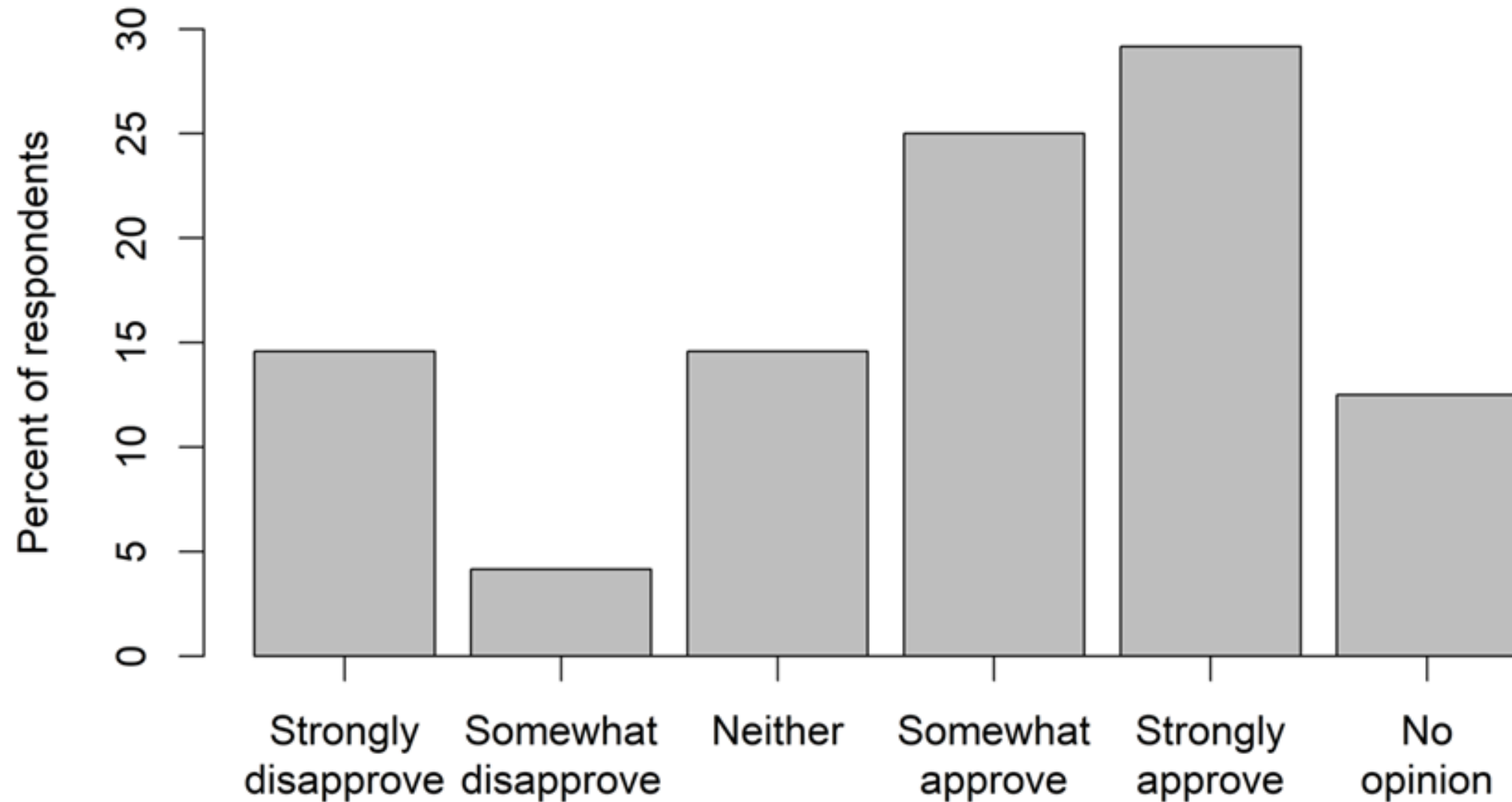
What factors did overall quality of fishing depend on?

- Fishing upstream vs downstream of Mack's Inn bridge
- Number of non-angling users on the river
- Size of fish caught
- Number of fish caught
- Quality of insect hatches
- Number of opportunities to fish to rising fish
- Number of other anglers on the river
- Condition of fish habitat
- Aesthetic qualities of the river
- Number of years anglers had fished the upper Henry's Fork

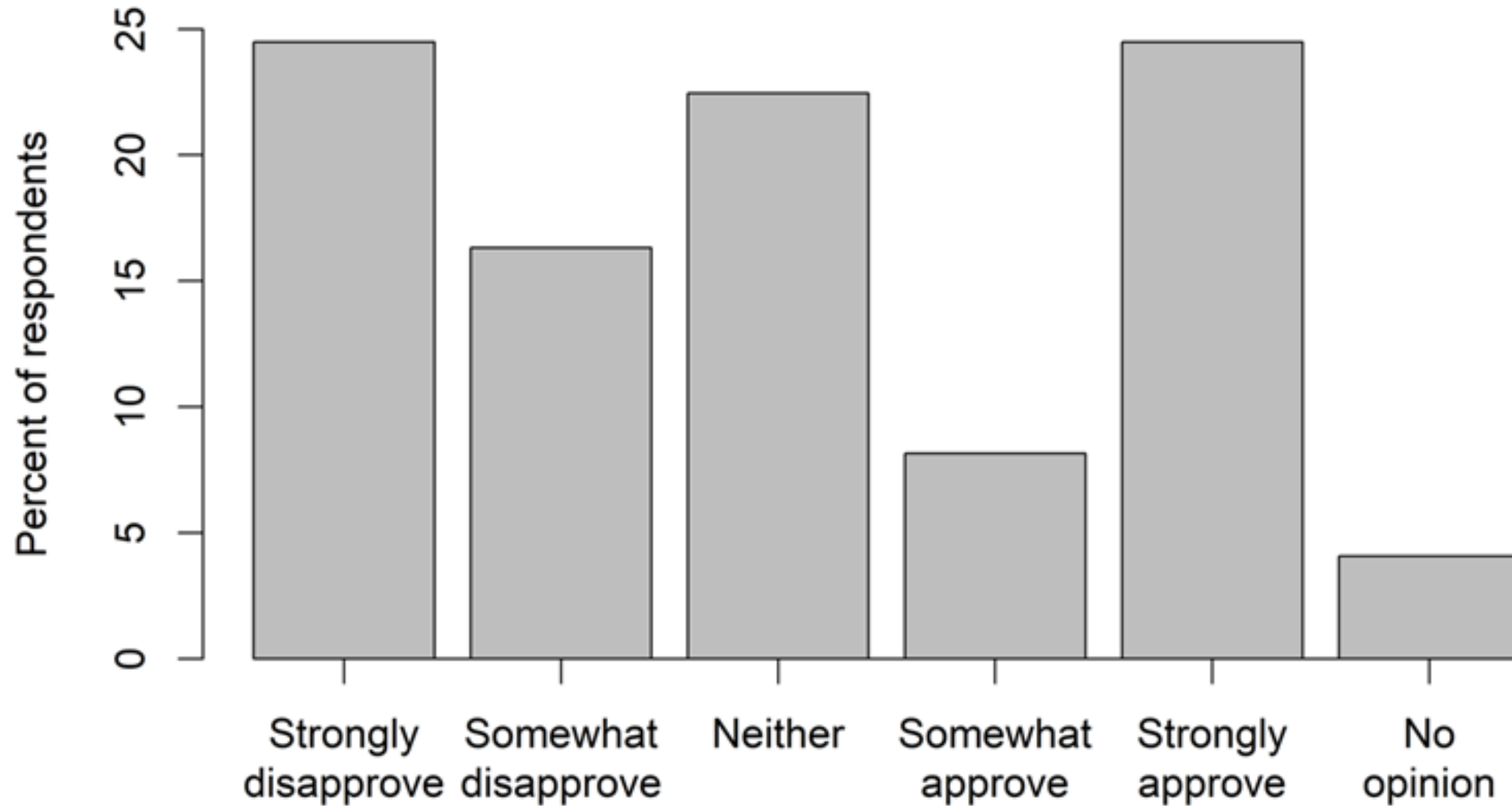
Change to Catch-and-release



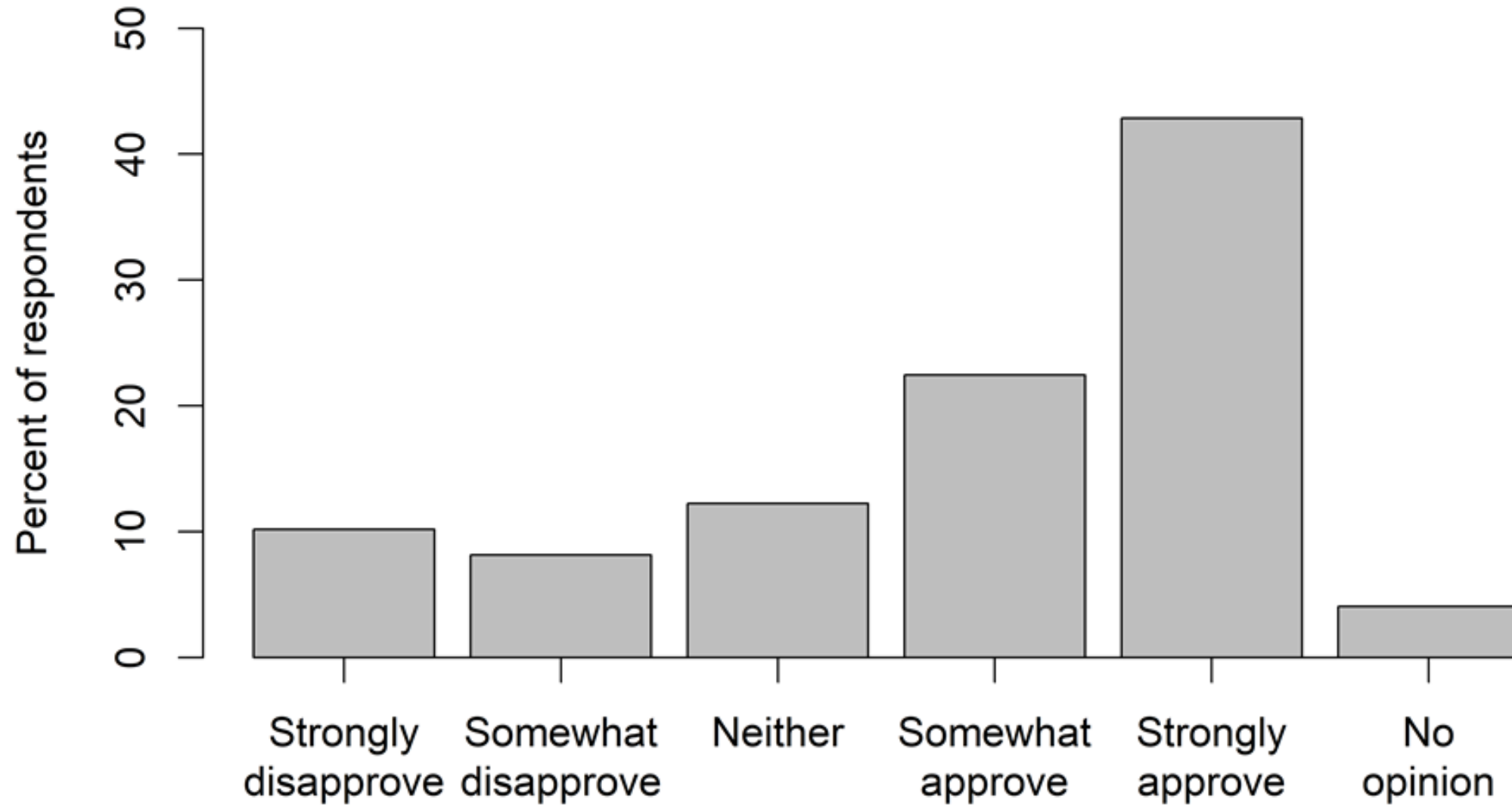
Change to Two-Trout Limit



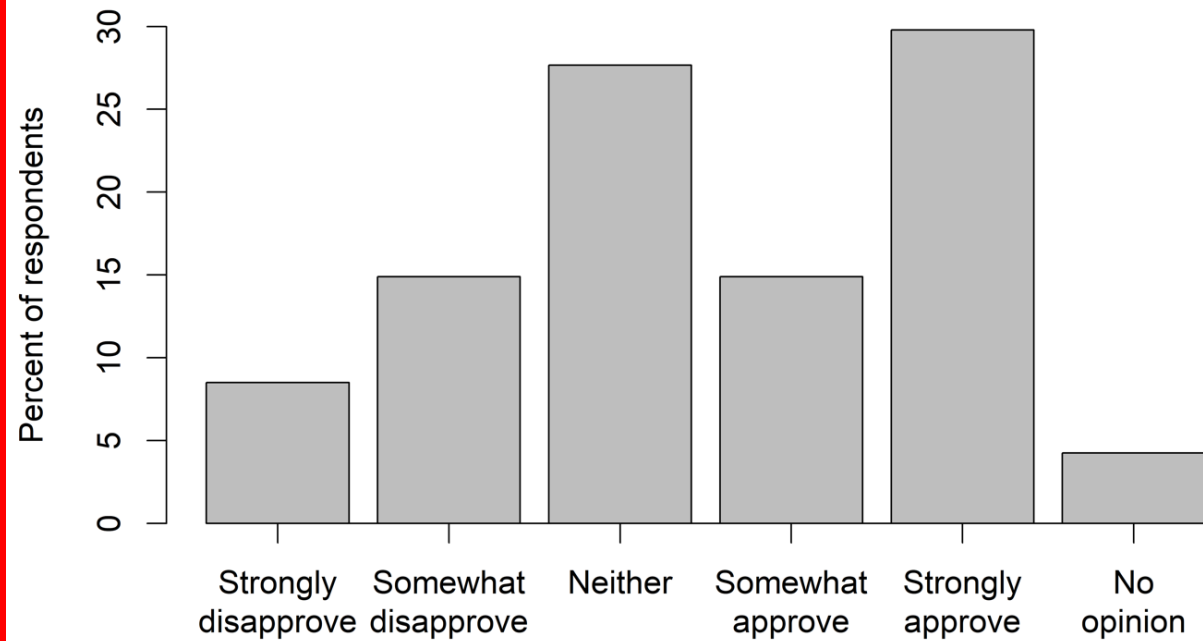
Eliminate Stocking



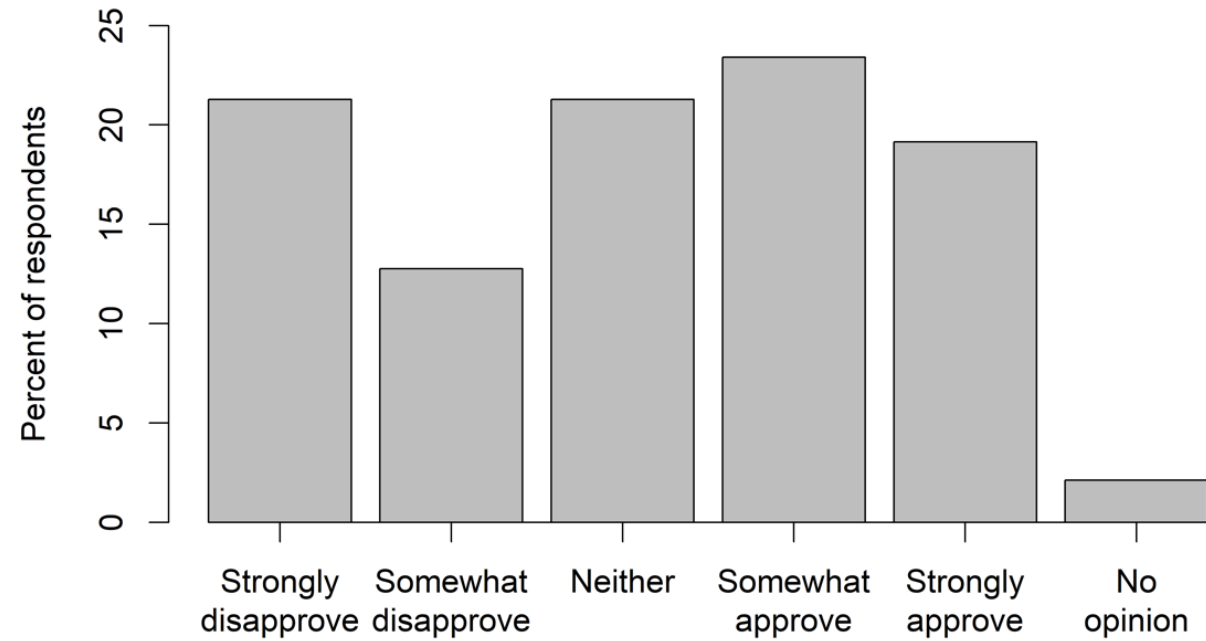
Limit Floaters



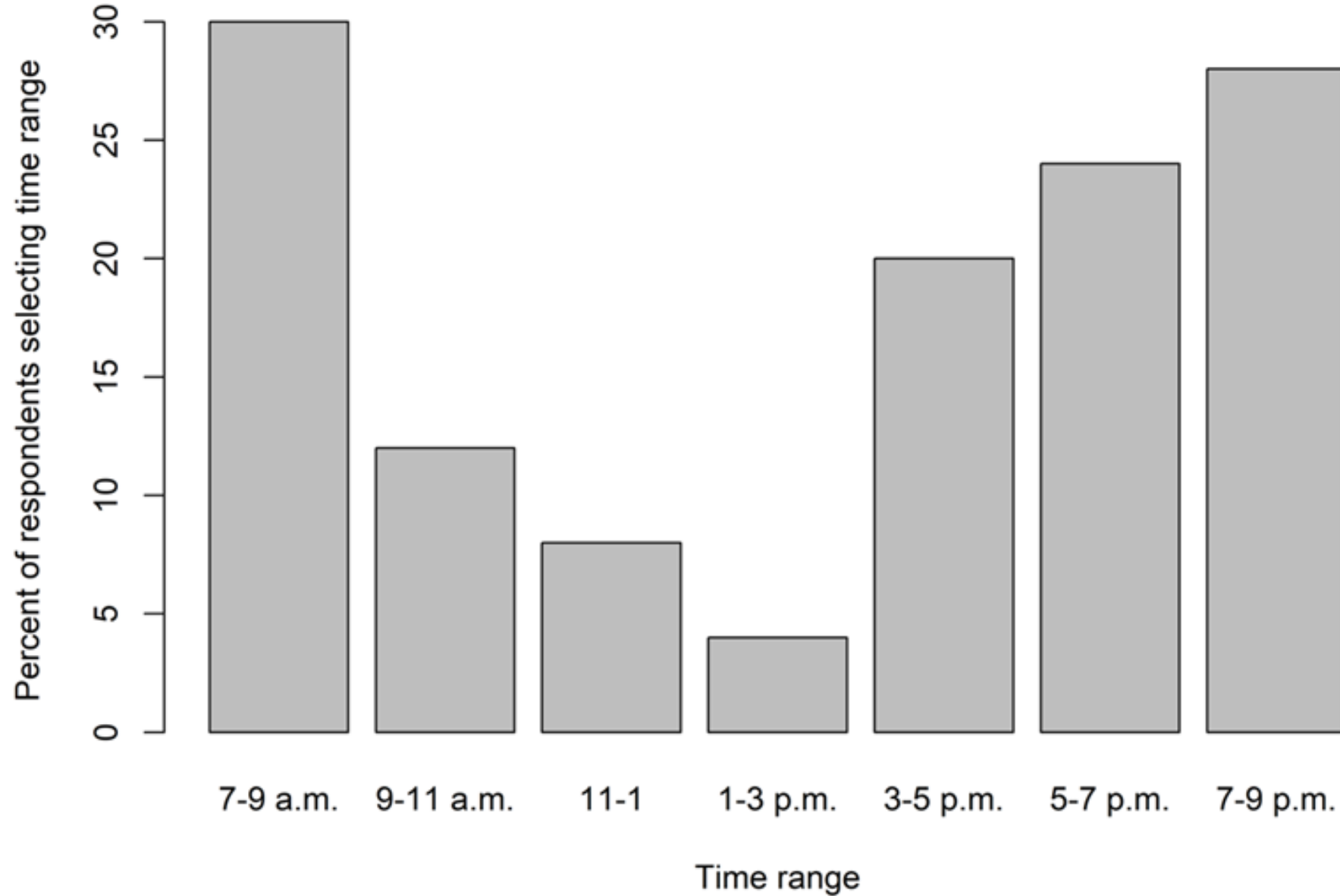
Prohibit Floating Certain Times of Day



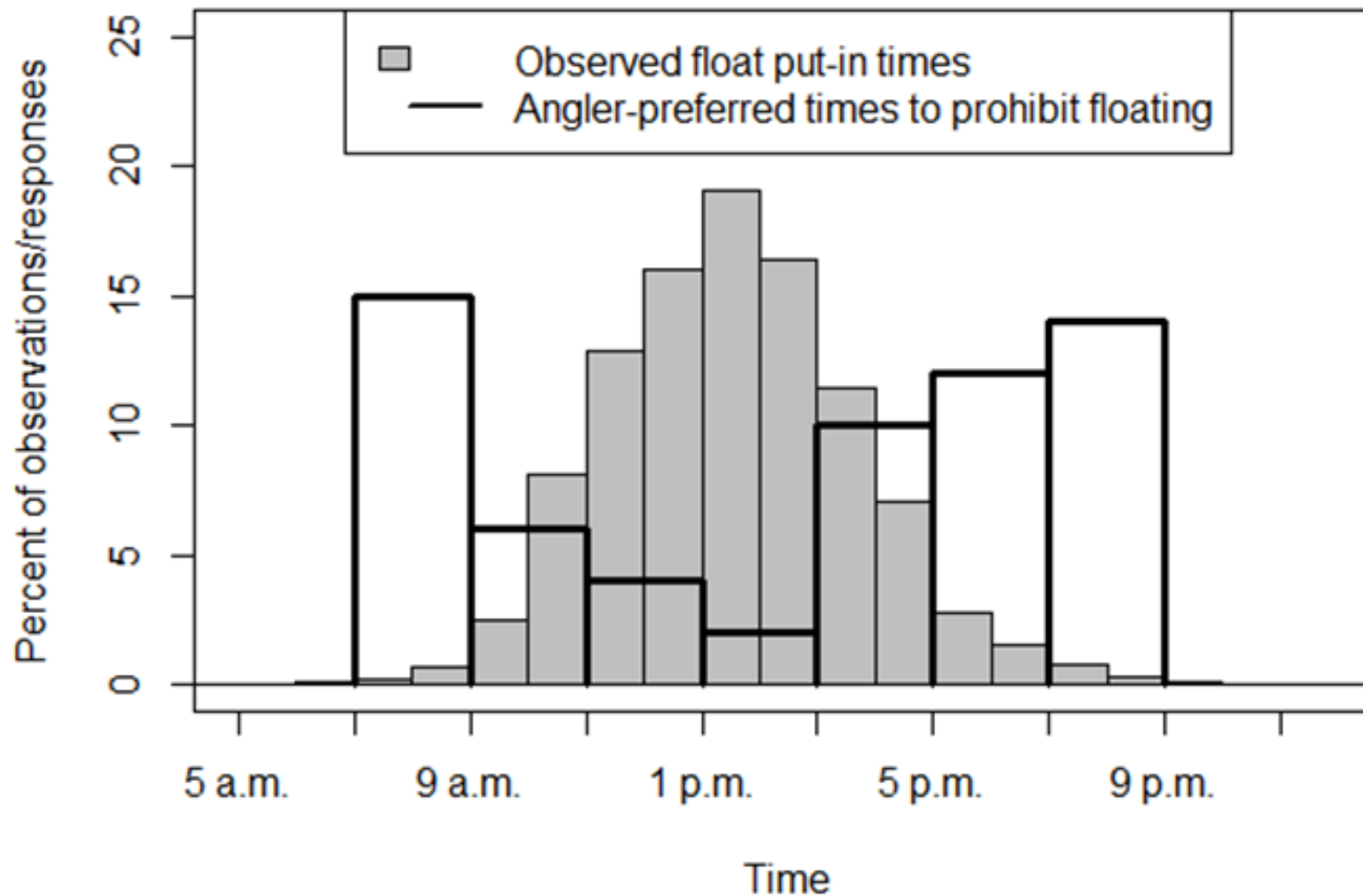
Prohibit Floaters on Certain Days



Angler-Preferred Times to Prohibit Floating



Floater Times vs Preferred Times to Prohibit Floating



Overall Angler Satisfaction

- **Dissatisfaction with # of non-anglers** was most negative aspect of fishing in 2019
 - But, not a significant predictor of overall angler satisfaction
 - And, did not differ between anglers who fished above/below Mack's Inn bridge
- Overall angler satisfaction did not differ between anglers fishing above/below the bridge
- 63% of anglers were in favor of limiting floaters, but 67% were in favor of catch-and-release regulations

In 2019

- Box Canyon Rainbow Trout population 4th highest on record (1978-2019).
- Coffee Pot Club members reported best fishing on upper HF in 20 years.
- Large numbers of Kokanee Salmon returned to upper HF for first time in 20 years.



Photos courtesy of Alex McDonald and Spike Booth, Coffee Pot Club

Summary of Results

- 37,000+ floaters
 - Five fold increase in floater use since early 1980s
- Boat launch parking lot capacity exceeded around 1/3 of the time
- Floater satisfaction with experience is very high
- Anglers dissatisfied with size of fish caught, quality of fish habitat, and number of non-anglers on the river

Discussion

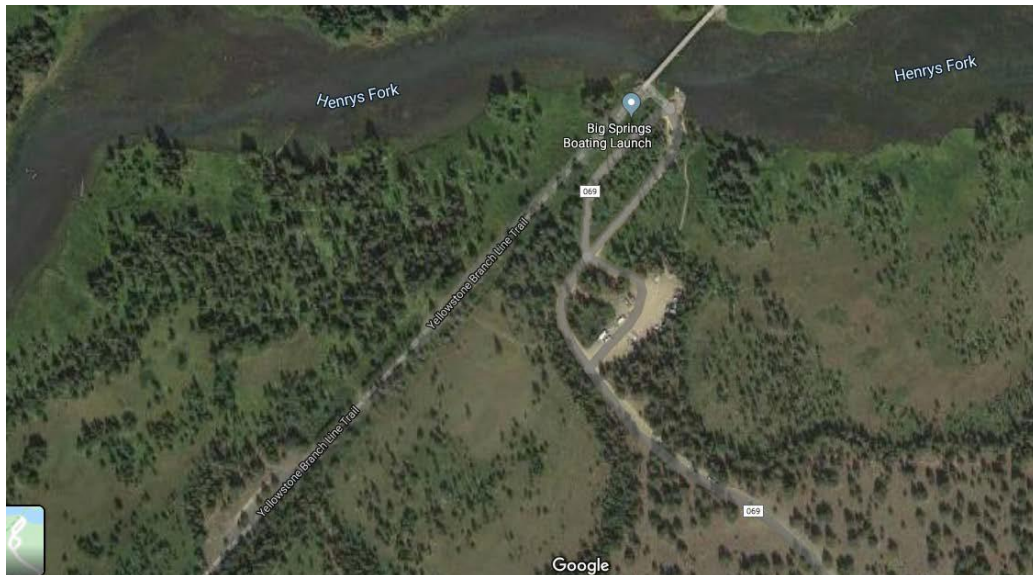
- Floater satisfaction –
 - No different in 2019 than in 1997
 - No correlation between number of floaters and satisfaction with floating experience
- Angler satisfaction -

	1998	2019
Rated fishing experience on the survey day as better than “fair”	85%	58%
Expressed approval for limiting floating	33%	63%
Have fished more than 20 years	22%	40%



2 Management Problems

1. Parking lot at the launch is too small
2. Decreasing angler satisfaction with fishing experience
 - USFS only has control over one of the factors having negative effect on angler satisfaction



Initial Steps

- Meetings with USFS, key members from fishing clubs, Upper River private property owners, IDFG
- USFS improving takeout area



Next Steps

- More frequent surveys with consistent methodology
- Engage a larger group in the discussion
 - 2021 Intern dedicated to these issues
 - Fremont County, Anglers, Floaters, Business in the Mack's Inn area, other river stakeholders
- Ecological Impact Study?

Acknowledgments

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Questions?

