

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

Fall Newsletter 2015

RRC continues in its efforts to protect and preserve the Rainbow River and its environment.

Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal

RRC will hold its annual meeting the morning of December 5th starting at 9 AM at the Rainbow Rivers Club (see map at www.RainbowRiverConservation.com). Guest speaker is **John Moran**, Florida's Premier Nature Photographer, whose topic will be **Our Water, Our Future**. Please see attached flyer. This will be a most outstanding presentation. There will also be a silent auction for some donated fine artistry. Do you have something to donate for this purpose? Let us know at burtano@bellsouth.net.

This is membership renewal time. Enclosed are a 2016 membership renewal form and a return envelope. Please send your membership fee and mail the completed form as soon as possible. Please provide us an email address if you have one so we can email future newsletters and correspondence.

Education Program

RRC's Education Program, chaired by Nathan Whitt and Jon Brainard, was a great success. About 50 Marion County school teachers attended the Springs Awareness for Educators Forum and four classes of fourth graders attended the field studies. Plans are being finalized for a repeat performance with the Educators Forum scheduled at Rainbow Springs State Park October 22nd and seven classes of fourth graders from Dunnellon Elementary School, Dunnellon Christian Academy, and Romeo Elementary School attending the field studies in November. This program has been strongly supported by Marion County Schools, Friends of Rainbow Springs, Rainbow Springs State Park, Florida Springs Institute, and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. If you would like to volunteer to help with this program please contact Jon at jonbrainard@gmail.com.



Jeff Sowards showing rivers critters to Marion County educators

Rainbow River Ranch Litigation

The intervenors had 70 days after notice to file a legal brief to appeal the circuit court decision in regard to its decision to deny an evidentiary hearing and to accept the settlement agreement between the developer and the City of Dunnellon. The 43-page brief was filed September 30th alleging that the circuit court failed to satisfy the statutory criteria of the Bert Harris Act and did not protect the public interests served by Florida's Community Planning Act. The arguments are strong and the circuit court's decision should be overturned.

Rainbow River Studies and Plans

The 2015 Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan is nearing completion. This is a document which identifies adverse conditions and suggests management strategies for improvement, addressing quantity, quality, and natural systems. It includes completed, ongoing, and proposed projects to achieve improvements. RRC members have proposed projects which have been thus far included such as the Rainbow River Corridor Project, Acquisition of the Rainbow River Ranch, and a Carrying Capacity Study for the river. Marion County has recently been informed that their \$2.3 million project to run a force main along SW 180th Avenue to replace poorly functioning package sewer plants has been funded by FDEP. When completed, this force main will connect several of these sewer systems to the Dunnellon sewer plant, thus alleviating some of the nitrates entering the aquifer and finding their way to the Rainbow River.

The Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) is in its final draft as well. This is a FDEP sponsored plan to identify nitrate sources in the Rainbow River recharge basin that contribute to impairment of the river resulting in excessive algae growth. Projects and management plans are identified and funded which will reduce the high level of nitrates entering the aquifer and the river. This is a long range plan which, at present, relies on voluntary compliance. Considering the target reduction of nitrates is 82% it seems that stronger enforcement will be necessary.

The Florida Springs Institute (FSI) recently completed an initial baseline assessment of a portion of the Rainbow River with the assistance of about a dozen RRC volunteers. Chemical, biological, and mechanical measurements were made over a two week period to set a baseline for comparison to future measurements. The purpose is to see if conditions in the river improve over time.

Blue Run Park

RRC, in cooperation with the City of Dunnellon, Marion County, and Office of Greenways and Trails has continued to make improvements to the Blue Run Park. New kiosks, benches, and signs have been installed recently. Hikers and bikers are using the Blue Run Trail to access the Dunnellon Trail over the new and beautiful Withlacoochee River Bridge. A counter at the bridge registered 827 people passing during the last week of September.

River Conditions

The nitrate levels in the Rainbow River remain high. However, the substantial rains of the past spring and summer have boosted the river flow to 500 million gallons per day, the highest it has been in the last decade. Let's hope that such healthy flows remain.

Final Note

If you shop on Amazon please use AmazonSmile identifying RRC because we get a small cut of the proceeds. You can also make tax deductible donations to RRC by going to www.guidestar.org or including extra in your member renewal check. Thank you for your dedication to RRC's efforts to protect the river and its environment.



New kiosk and trail map at Blue Run Park