

# Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

## Fall Newsletter 2016

### Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal

Rainbow River Conservation will hold its annual meeting the morning of December 3<sup>rd</sup> starting at 9 AM at the American Legion Hall at 10730 South Highway 41 on the north end of Dunnellon. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Robert Palmer whose topic will be “Springs Protection Advocacy and Legislative Proposals”. Dr. Palmer holds a Ph.D. in Marine Biology and he worked on the staff of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the U.S. House of Representatives for 26 years, including 12 years as Staff Director. He will discuss the history of the Florida Springs Council and its various activities, especially those related to State agencies and the Florida Legislature.

This is membership renewal time. Enclosed are a 2017 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 so we can email future newsletters and other pertinent correspondence.

### Education Program

RRC’s Education Program, chaired by Nathan Whitt and Jon Brainard, continues for a third year to offer 4<sup>th</sup> graders hands-on experiences to help them understand and appreciate the source and health of our drinking water and water supply to our spring-fed rivers. These children are brought from local schools to the Rainbow Springs State Park to perform some simple scientific experiments and become acquainted with the water cycle and environmental factors influencing the nature of the Rainbow River and its wildlife. This year five groups of students from Romeo Elementary and Dunnellon Elementary will be on hand in early November. If you enjoy watching young minds get excited in learning about nature please volunteer by contacting Jon Brainard at 407-491-8158 or [jonbrainard@gmail.com](mailto:jonbrainard@gmail.com).

This year educators from Marion, Citrus and Levy counties are being invited to participate in the Springs Awareness for Educators forum to be held in the afternoon of December 7<sup>th</sup>. In-Service Points can be earned by attending this forum. Noted speakers from the environmental community will address the forum and packets of information and resources will be supplied to the participants. Contact Jon Brainard for more information.



Turtle shell demonstration



Springs Awareness for Educators event

## Rainbow River Ranch

The saga of the 258 acre Rainbow River Ranch is not over. Jim Gissy purchased 57 acres on the west end of the property including 2300 feet of river frontage. Mr. Gissy is interested in building a lodge on the high ground overlooking the East Blue Cove to cater to environmentally-minded recreationists. He has stated that he will protect and preserve the waterfront. The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) is interested in buying 117 acres for preservation on the north and east ends of the property including 2430 feet of river frontage on the north end. The agency is waiting for state required land appraisals before an offer can be made. At this time it appears that Gerald Dodd will retain the remaining 84 acres including the old Cubbage homestead on the river and a portion of frontage on CR 484.

## Summer Recreation

Recreation on the Rainbow River this past summer was catastrophic. Thousands of tubers clogged the river on weekends and holidays preventing any semblance of normal navigation for boats or paddle craft. Parking lots were full and roads were often clogged at the entrances to the State tuber entrance, KP Hole, and Blue Run Park. Off-site vendors were transporting tubers to and from the river without limitation. Little, if any, law enforcement was practiced on the river.

The river and parks are not being treated as places of passive recreation. Observation of the summer weekend traffic on the river reveals a party atmosphere, not serene appreciation of the natural setting. Furthermore, contrary to espousal of some, the river does not simply recover in the off-season. The careless uprooting of native grasses that provide habitat for wildlife, and can be seen floating in large mats down the river, do not recover. They are more and more being replaced by invasive algae. It is long overdue that a cooperative effort between legislative and enforcement agencies seek protective measures for the Rainbow River and its environment.

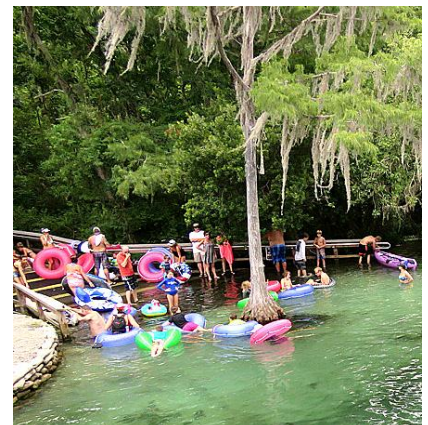
## Rainbow River BMAP and MFL Plans

Rainbow River has the highest nitrate pollution level of any Outstanding Florida Water. The Department of Environmental Protection has developed a *Basin Management Action Plan* identifying the sources of the nitrate pollution and some actions that can be taken to curb the pollution. For the Rainbow 19% of the nitrate pollution to the spring shed that feeds the river comes from septic tanks while 66% comes from agriculture. At this time only a small portion of the 82% target reduction is being addressed.

Recently released is a draft of SWFWMD's *Minimum Flows and Levels* (MFL) study for the Rainbow River. Based on criticized models the agency has decided that there is an excess of 6% of the flow that can be diverted to other uses including pumping of groundwater for piping to other parts of the state and future development. This is dependent upon an arbitrary allowance of 15% environmental harm, what seems to be a comparison to an inappropriate period of historic flow, and an erroneous estimate of present aquifer pumping. The results are very adverse to the Rainbow River Restoration Plan developed for RRC by the Florida Springs Institute in 2012. A reduction in flow would only exacerbate the high nitrate problem. RRC should oppose this MFL conclusion and seek to restore flow to the Rainbow River instead.



Summer river activity



Blue Run Park ramp congestion