

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

Fall Newsletter 2019

Annual Meeting

RRC will hold its annual meeting a little early this year in an attempt to avoid conflicts with other scheduled events in the community. The meeting will be held from 9 am to noon November 16th at the Rainbow Rivers Club at 2000 San Jose Blvd in Dunnellon. All members and guests are welcome to attend to partake of snacks and musical entertainment as well as to hear some important information about efforts to protect the Rainbow River. Our guest speaker this year will be Ryan Smart, Executive Director of the Florida Springs Council, a consortium of 53 organizations throughout the state dedicated to the protection of Florida's natural springs.

Blue Run Park

Good news! The City of Dunnellon approved permits for the construction of a bathroom facility at Blue Run of Dunnellon Park. Marion County Parks and Recreation found money to construct the facility. It should be completed by next spring. We realize that everyone will miss those classic port-a-potties but will somehow adjust to the new accommodations.

River Traffic

This past summer was again a wild melee on the river with thousands of tubers and boaters. Again, a substantial amount of damage was done to the aquatic vegetation and we hope that the river will recover some in the off season. RRC still believes, for the long term sake of the river, that this summer onslaught can be reduced.

River Mishaps and Response

There were a couple of unfortunate mishaps on the river this summer with two people drowning. It needs to be emphasized that people with medical or physical limitations should not be recreating on a fast flowing river with limited accessibility. Nevertheless, in hopes of improving EMT response times for such emergencies, both RRC and Marion County have proposed affixing numbered markers along the river so that a 911 call-in can better pinpoint emergency locations. RRC has received a modest grant from Duke Energy to allow numbered markers to be affixed to our Wood Duck boxes distributed along the river. RRC members will develop a map and GPS coordinates corresponding with the numbered wood duck boxes. The County has proposed to place numbered markers on the docks along the river which, for EMT purposes, will tie in to street addresses.



River Congestion

4th Graders Education Program

RRC is entering its 6th year of cooperating with Friends of Rainbow Springs in offering springs education to local 4th grade students. These students are brought from the local schools to the Rainbow Springs State Park to spend time collecting and analyzing water samples, building a shoebox model of porous materials to simulate rainfall washing pollutants into the aquifer, and learning about the indigent wildlife of the springs. The next program will occur November 13-15. If you would like to help this program, even to just usher the students, please call Jon Brainard at 407-491-8158.

Climate Strike

One of our youngest active RRC members, high school senior Meagan Siegfried, led a local contingent of climate strikers holding signs on September 20th in front of Dunnellon City Hall adjacent to US 41. About 100 students and some parents (and a few of us elders) were there with many messages but all were trying to convey the importance of believing science in the fact that earth's rising temperature is creating havoc with weather, sea levels, and other long-term deleterious effects that threaten our well-being. Maybe these youths can energize our politicians to address the hazards of continuing on our present path of destroying our lands, water and air.

Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs)

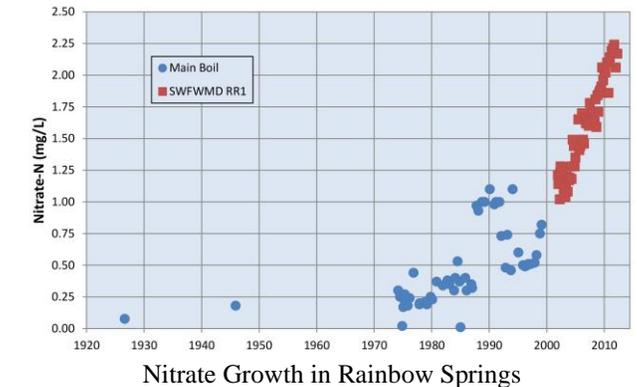
We have discussed previously that several organizations petitioned against the BMAPs proposed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for several spring-fed rivers, the Rainbow being one of them. The issue is that nitrates in great quantities are poisoning these springs and rivers and turning them into basins of invasive algae. The Rainbow, for one, has 7 times the level of nitrates considered acceptable and the BMAP projects proposed to correct this are totally inadequate. The petition was to be heard by an administrative judge in September but the judge put it off until November because of the threat of Hurricane Dorian. The hearing is now scheduled for nine days between November 12th and 22nd in Tallahassee.

Rainbow Minimum Flow Rule

We have repeatedly discussed RRC's challenge to the Water Management District's very flawed proposed minimum flow rule for the Rainbow River as it has made its way through the 3-day administrative hearing in June. Delays have occurred primarily due to an extremely poor transcription of the trial testimony. The judge ordered a new transcription based on lengthy errata sheets derived from both sides. Based on the recently received new transcription both sides submitted Proposed Final Orders to the judge September 18th. The judge now has until October 18th to rule on the dispute.

M-CORES Program

The Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance Program recently approved by the legislature and governor is highly controversial. These are planned limited access highways (toll roads) that will run through rural areas while crossing rivers and spring sheds and cutting through hundreds of miles of woods and wildlife refuges. It is being promoted as a boon to the Florida economy as well as "protecting or enhancing wildlife corridors and sensitive areas and primary springs protection zones". **Putting high speed highways in wetlands and water bodies does not enhance wildlife corridors.** The Sierra Club, Florida Conservation Voters, Progress Florida, Center for Biological Diversity, Save the Manatee Club, Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and the Florida Springs Council have all banded together to join the "No Roads to Ruin" Coalition in an effort to stop this travesty.



Purple Gallinule and chick in wetland vegetation

RRC Funding

As you may surmise some of the RRC activities described above are a heavy lift. But, they are necessary too if we hope to preserve the Rainbow River and its attractive ecology. We are hoping that some of our members or friends of our members have deep pockets and are willing to financially support these activities. If so, we would appreciate checks made out to RRC Legal Fund and sent to the address below along with your annual membership renewal. Your contribution is tax deductible. Thank you.