



RRC continues its mission to protect and preserve the Rainbow River through Education, Conservation, Stewardship, and Advocacy.

Membership

RRC membership stands at 260 family memberships. About 60 of those are unpaid for 2015. If there is a membership renewal form attached to this mailing of the newsletter please use it to renew your membership.

Annual River Cleanup

May 16th is the next Rainbow River Cleanup starting at 9 AM at Rio Vista Park (see map at www.RainbowRiverConservation.com). Please come and join your fellow river keepers scrub the river of debris and enjoy the picnic and prizes that follow. Call V-P Jerry Rogers at 352-489-4648 to indicate your attendance and any special needs for your participation.



Cleaning up the Rainbow River

RRC Education Program

The SWFWMD Board of Governors gave formal recognition March 31st to RRC for its exceptional efforts in springs and river education. Nathan Whitt, RRC Education Committee Chair, accepted a plaque on behalf of RRC. Other RRC members attending were Jerry Rogers, Kathryn Taubert, Mickey Pierce, Paul Marraffino, and Bill Vibbert. The Education Committee has recently developed six education modules for field studies at Rainbow Springs. The committee is anticipating program attendance in late Spring by six classes of 4th graders.

Blue Run Park Improvements

Marion County and the City of Dunnellon cooperated to complete paving the kayak ramp entrance and positioning the kiosk at the Blue Run parking lot. RRC defined the project, and with the help of the county and the city, installed 24 interpretive signs along the trails within Blue Run of Dunnellon Park. Fifteen Dunnellon High School AFROTC cadets dug the holes and erected the signs. All had a good time and a good lunch afterwards.



Dunnellon ROTC students install 24 signs

Rainbow Springs Technical Working Group

The Rainbow Springs Technical Working Group, appointed by the SWFWMD Springs Coast Steering Committee, and consisting of about 20 agency and stakeholder representatives, including RRC members Burt Eno and Bill Vibbert, met in January and February to discuss matters of quantity, quality and natural systems to develop a new Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Plan for the Rainbow River. These discussions included the need to purchase sensitive adjacent lands, protect the wildlife, and control recreation uses.

River and Park Use Popular in 2014

Study of river use on and around Rainbow Springs and the Rainbow River shows what appeared to be a significant increase in 2014. Over 530,000 people came to the area to enjoy the parks and the river with its seven public access points. Rainbow Springs State Park with its three facilities had the largest use. KP Hole Park and Blue Run of Dunnellon Park also provided river access for recreation. The table below shows that over 100,000 tubers floated down the river during the six warm months. The second most popular river activity was paddling kayaks, canoes and paddle boards. Rainbow River Conservation continues to distribute a Rainbow River Recreation Guide which shows the access points and encourages river users to exercise proper etiquette on the river to protect this valuable resource.

Summary of Rainbow River and River Park Use in 2014

	Rainbow Springs Headwaters	Rainbow Springs Camp Ground	Rainbow Springs Float Facility	KP Hole Park	Blue Run Park	Dunnellon Beach	Dunnellon Boat Ramp	Private Outfitters	Residential Parks (4)	Private Home Use (180)	Totals	Percent
Floaters			61,402	39,188							100,590	19.0%
Paddlecraft	13,500			12,685	3,900			2,080	2,340	2,160	36,665	6.9%
Regular / Swimmers				7,149		1,300			1,820	1,080	11,349	2.1%
Divers				6,236							6,236	1.2%
Motor Vessels				1,733			1,040	780	520	2,160	6,233	1.2%
Snorkeler				3,010							3,010	0.6%
Upland Visitors	304,886	54,845			6,500						366,231	69.1%
Totals	318,386	54,845	61,402	70,001	10,400	1,300	1,040	2,860	4,680	5,400	530,314	
	Note 1	Note 1	Note 1	Note 1	Note 2	Note 2	Note 2	Note 2	Note 2	Note 2		

1. Numbers based on entrance gate counts
2. Number based on surveys and survey estimates

Legislation

As they say, nothing is safe when the Florida legislature is in session. In spite of a mandate by 75% of the electorate in November in favor of Amendment 1, legislative appropriations committees seem to think that they are not obligated to provide suitable funding for land and water protection. HB 7003 is more of a water supply bill than it is a water protection bill. SB 918 is a good, far reaching bill containing regulations aimed toward protecting the quantity and quality of springs and rivers but it needs suitable funding.



Otter puzzled by government policy