

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

Spring Newsletter 2016

RRC Mission

Rainbow River Conservation (RRC) has been in existence since 1962. In 1993 it incorporated as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Contributions to RRC are tax deductible. In the 54 years of its existence RRC has had the same simple mission of protecting and preserving the Rainbow River and its environment. In the early years RRC's activities were simple and local in level.

However, as population and activities grew in the river recharge basin threats to the health of the river grew as well. Major agriculture, business, and housing development brought increasing demands for more water. Land deposition of fertilizers and waste water brought increased nitrate pollution to the aquifer and the Rainbow River. Increased recreation on the river has brought about direct destruction of the natural plant life and aquatic habitat.

Thus, the mission of RRC has evolved from one of promotion of the river's attributes to one of fighting for its survival as one of nature's marvels. Rules and regulations requiring protection of the river have not been in place. Thus, RRC has found itself in the position of having to advocate for more legal protections of our springs and river by joining with other advocacy groups such as the Florida Springs Council. It is to be noted that the more members of RRC the greater its voices in its advocacy to influence protections for the survival of the Rainbow River.

RRC Meetings and Communications

RRC holds its annual members meeting the first Saturday in December. It holds board meetings the third Monday evening of each month January through November. These meetings are open to the public. Minutes of meetings are open to all members by email after they are approved by the board. Notify us at info@RainbowRiverConservation.com if you wish to be on the minutes email list.

Upcoming Events

RRC will have its education booth present at Dunnellon Boomtown Days April 16th. Rainbow River Cleanup Day is scheduled for May 14th. The event starts at Rio Vista Park at 9 AM and ends with a RRC sponsored picnic. For directions to Rio Vista Park see EVENTS on our website www.RainbowRiverConservation.com.

Rainbow River Ranch

The appellate hearing was held March 10th before the 5th District Court. RRC's attorney Ralf Brookes did well in arguing against the findings of the 5th Circuit Court which had denied us an evidentiary hearing and approved the Dunnellon/RRR agreement. The Appellate Court seemed particularly concerned with the exclusion of the public from the agreement process. We now await a written decision from the Appellate Court.



River Cleanup 2015

Blue Run Park

RRC has continued to play a major role in cooperation with the City of Dunnellon, Marion County, and the FDEP Office of Greenways & Trails in the development of the Blue Run Trail. Additional benches, kiosks, and signage have been installed and Dunnellon has made a commitment of \$30,000 in support of engineering and design of a bathroom facility. Hopefully, the County will provide the major funding for this much needed facility. It is to be noted that Dunnellon is working with the County on a pedestrian pathway across the bridge and into the city.

Rainbow River BMAP

Several years ago FDEP declared the Rainbow and Silver Rivers impaired by elevated nitrates, most of which enter the rivers through underground springs. The aquifer which feeds these springs is polluted by fertilizers, animal waste, and septic tanks. FDEP estimated that the nitrate level needed to be reduced by 79% in the Silver River and 82% in the Rainbow River. A Basin Management Action Plan for each river was developed and adopted last year. These BMAPs identified the major sources of the excess nitrates in each river recharge basin and FDEP began to devise methods to reduce the nitrate influx levels. As discussed here previously the implementation of the methods is regulatory weak and not likely to result in the desired stated goals.

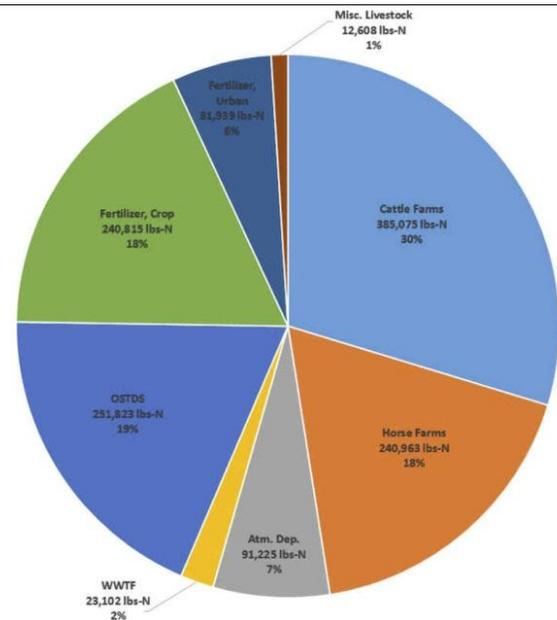
One effort recently proposed by FDEP that has some merit is the formation of an advisory board of stakeholders from the two river basins to address the reduction of nitrates from septic tanks. RRC has been asked to be one of these stakeholders. We will advise you of progress of this task force.

Environmental Legislation

As in all other years we held our breath while the state legislature was in session. As usual, there were good bills and bad bills introduced, several affecting environmental concerns to RRC. One of these was SB 552 which passed the legislature in the first week of the session and was signed into law by the governor. This is largely a water resource bill which benefits Big Ag and Big Business and does little to protect against ongoing abuses.

HB 1075 passed and it appears to be harmful to state parks, preserves, and other lands purchased to protect and conserve water and natural resources. Provisions allow the state to sell state lands if the short-term management goals are not being met. Private landowners can acquire contiguous state land for potentially weak conservation easements on the lands. Florida Forever money can be used to fund water resource development while increased recreation is encouraged on state lands. One potentially good amendment engrossed in this bill, however, is that FWCC can create "protection zones" to protect springs. It is not clear what this means.

SB 318 regulating "high pressure well stimulation" failed. This would have allowed fracking anywhere in the state and would have negated any local government regulations to prevent fracking. However, it is likely that this bill will appear again next year.



Nitrogen Input to Rainbow Springs Aquifer