

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

Spring Newsletter 2018

Upcoming Events

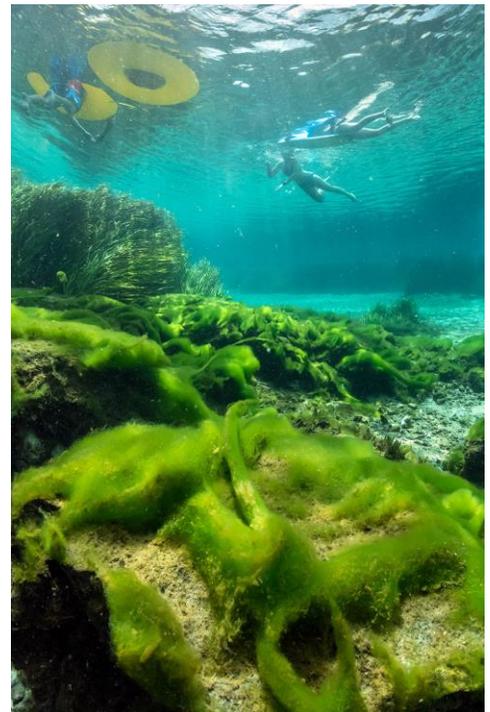
RRC will have its education booth set up at Dunnellon Boomtown April 14th. The Rainbow River Cleanup event will be held May 19th. This event starts at Rio Vista Park at 9 AM and ends with a RRC sponsored picnic at noon. For further information see the attached announcement.

River Conditions

Due to Hurricane Irma flow in the Rainbow River reached a high of 750 cfs (cubic feet per second) last October. This temporary flow rate was near to average rates of 50 years ago. Now the flow rate has dropped to 570 cfs which seems to be the new normal. Meanwhile the nitrate level in the river continues to increase to a level of about 2.6 mg/l, seven times the incipient level for prolific algae growth.

Mermaid Melissa and John Moran

The Rainbow River Assessment Project in conjunction with the Florida Springs Institute continues under the able leadership of Bill Vibbert. While gathering data on the river the volunteers have noticed increased presence of hydrilla and spirogyra as well as the abundance of lyngbya, all invasive forms of algae. In response, RRC has requested the assistance of underwater photographers to document this increased growth and has also notified scientists at SWFWMD of our concern. Meanwhile, the assessment volunteers have assisted Mermaid Melissa, Tracy Colson and noted nature photographer John Moran to document some of the underwater conditions. Readers are invited to go to YouTube, enter “Mermaid Melissa”, and click on “Peaceful Relaxing Background Footage” for some underwater video.



Spirogyra coating bottom of Rainbow River
Photo by John Moran

CRISPS Report

A recent study entitled “Collaborative Research Initiative on Sustainability and Protection of Springs” funded by the St. Johns River Water Management District and carried out by a team of researchers at the University of Florida on the Silver Springs and River reached some conclusions that are entirely pertinent to the Rainbow Springs and River. Among the conclusions was the fact that conduits and fractures, rather than in porous media, in our karst soil dominates the delivery of water and solutes including nitrates to our springs. This is a significant conclusion because hydrologic models used for predicting flows in our springsheds assume flow through a uniform porous medium. This conclusion lends support to the Florida Springs Institute claim that Water Management District models substantially under-predict loss of spring run flows due to springshed water pumping.

Another conclusion from the CRISPS report is that velocity of flow substantially controls the formation and growth of nuisance algae on submerged aquatic vegetation. The higher the flow, the greater the turbulence and shear stress to remove and prevent growth of epiphytic algal cover on native plants. The CRISPS report is contained in the Education section of www.RainbowRiverConservation.com.

Rainbow River Minimum Flow

In our Winter newsletter we discussed the fact that we were waiting for SWFWMD to propose a permanent minimum flow rule for the Rainbow River, hopefully not as flawed as the emergency rule they adopted last June. However, they have not done so. Instead, their flawed emergency rule remains in effect, allowing the growth machine to withdraw any amount of water they wish to the detriment of our river. In hopes of jarring them into revisiting their flawed rule our attorney made a public information request as to what work is being done. Apparently, the SWFWMD attorneys have commandeered the matter with the intention to defend the flawed rule. The response to our attorney was “the records that have not been provided to you were prepared by an agency attorney or at an attorney’s express direction, and reflect a mental impression, conclusion, litigation strategy, or legal theory of the attorney or the agency, and were prepared exclusively in anticipation of imminent civil litigation and/or adversarial administrative proceedings -----”. How do you like that for expenditure of our tax money?

Blue Run Park

Blue Run of Dunnellon Park continues to get active use by paddlers, walkers and bike riders. Members of RRC spent a morning staining benches along the trail that had been donated several years ago. We have received informal news that the FRDAP grant application for a rest room at the park was again not funded this year by the Florida Legislature. RRC will seek alternative sources of funds to match the capital funds that Marion County has committed for this project. Planning continues for Citrus County to connect the Dunnellon Trail from Blue Run of Dunnellon Park to the Withlacoochee State Trail in 2019.



RRC volunteers stain benches along Dunnellon Trail

Save Our River

Anybody who visits the Rainbow River is taken by its natural beauty. It is hard to imagine losing it and its environment to neglect or abuse but we have pointed out in this newsletter some very real and disturbing trends. Please help us protect and preserve this beautiful river for the next generation by joining RRC and convincing our politicians that this water resource is of great importance.

