

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. Summer Newsletter 2015

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

RRC Education Program

The RRC elementary school education program has been a great success. A class of fourth graders from Dunnellon Christian Academy converged on Rainbow Springs State Park April 29th to take part in field studies geared to their young inquiring minds. May 26th through May 28th six classes of fourth graders from Dunnellon Elementary School also came to the park to engage in these studies. One education module utilized a chemical test kit to measure the level of nitrates in a sample of water from the river. Another module consisted of having the students construct their own aquifer models to see how excessive fertilizer use could pollute our aquifer. Seven such modules have been developed to be consistent with school science standards but are designed to emphasize the importance of protecting our aquifer and springs. The students are given pre-tests and post-tests by their teachers concerning their knowledge of factors influencing the quality of these natural resources. The children and the teachers accompanying them were excited and enthusiastic. The RRC and Park lay instructors and assistants were given high marks by both the students and their teachers and the students themselves showed substantial strides in knowledge as a result of this program. Three schools have already signed up for the program to be offered next November. If you would like to assist in this learning experience for young inquiring minds please contact jonbrainard@gmail.com.



Students use test strips to evaluate nitrogen in spring water

Other Events

RRC again set up its education booth April 18th at Boomtown Days. Lots of interaction with the public occurred and a number of RRC T-shirts were sold. May 16th RRC held its Annual River Cleanup. About 175 individuals participated in collecting trash and about 125 of them stayed at Rio Vista Park for the RRC sponsored lunch. Food and door prizes were provided by several of the Dunnellon merchants. The RRC members annual meeting is scheduled for December 5th.



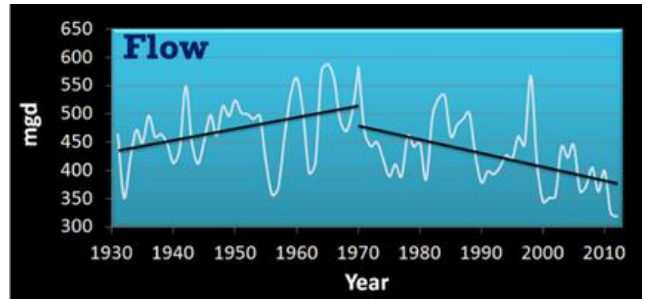
Collecting trash during 2015 Rainbow River cleanup

Blue Run Park

Improvements continue to be made at the Blue Run of Dunnellon Park. New kiosks have been acquired and will be erected at the Blue Run and San Jose trailheads. The kiosks will contain park rules, maps and other useful information. The Blue Run Park and the connected Withlacoochee Trail are seeing a lot of hikers and bikers. RRC is proud to have had the pivotal role in acquiring the Blue Run Park property, improving it, and seeing it so much appreciated.

Rainbow River SWIM Plan

A 2015 Rainbow River Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan is in its second draft. Two RRC board members served on the SWFWMD Task Force to develop this plan. The plan is intended to identify detrimental issues pertaining to the river and establish management plans and programs to rectify the issues. This year the plan is broken out into quantity, quality, and natural systems issues. Management strategies are developed and projects to support these strategies are proposed by a number of state and local entities. Four projects proposed by the RRC Task Force members, such as the need for a river capacity study, have made the first cut and are included in the second draft. This draft can be found on the RRC website at www.RainbowRiverConservation.com.



SWFWMD Northern Region Water Plan

The water management district is in the process of developing an updated Water Supply Plan for the Northern Region of SWFWMD. It appears to be a very thorough review although it has some alarming content. Projections to 20 years show that there will be a shortage of water to meet the demands of population growth in the Northern Region. The plan incorporates a proposal by the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority to use Lake Rousseau as a reservoir from which to pump water to Hernando County and The Villages. This planned water extraction would be very detrimental to the lower Withlacoochee River and, consequently, to the Rainbow River. Not enough emphasis is being placed on water conservation. The plan can be found at www.watermatters.org under 2015 Regional Water Supply Plan/Northern Region.

River Use

It is summer time and the Rainbow River is seeing an enormous amount of recreational use. There appears to be twice as many tubers on the river as there were just a few years ago. RRC is concerned that this inundation is harming the river, particularly the wildlife so much appreciated in the past. RRC feels that a capacity study is overdue in order to measure the impact of so much activity and perhaps suggest some control of the influx of recreationists.

Rainbow River Ranch Litigation

On June 2nd Judge Lisa Herndon held a telephonic case management conference with the attorneys involved in the Rainbow River Ranch lawsuit. You may recall that, when the City of Dunnellon made a settlement agreement with the owner of the property, RRC and a number of individuals intervened in the settlement agreement because we felt that great harm to the river would come from the owner's development plan and that the city was wrong in granting extraordinary vestments to the property owner. Unfortunately, Judge Herndon did not appreciate our point of view and ruled against an evidentiary hearing and approved the settlement agreement. In other words, we simply were not allowed to present our evidence in court and the owner was granted approval of a plat and conditions that are in opposition to land use law and will be very costly to the city. This matter was reviewed at the June 15th RRC Board meeting and the directors unanimously voted in favor of appealing Judge Herndon's ruling to the 5th District Court of Appeals and that process has been started. We can only hope that the State will be able to buy this property and restore it rather than let it be harmfully developed. For now RRC would appreciate tax deductible donations to carry out the appeal. President Eno has offered once again to match such donations as he feels strongly that justice has not yet been served in this matter.

Amendment 1 Funds

As you know 75% of the voters approved Constitutional Amendment 1 last November to dedicate 33% of document stamp tax to the purchase of conservation lands to protect water resources. However, during the recently completed legislative session our politicians chose to divert most of this money to numerous other state programs having nothing to do with conservation and the environment. As a consequence Earth Justice has filed a lawsuit against the legislature on behalf of conservation and environmental organizations. You might look up Earth Justice and make a tax deductible donation to help fight this legislative travesty.



Discovering turtles while paddling the Rainbow River