



RRC continues in its effort to protect and preserve the Rainbow River and its environment.

Annual Members Meeting

RRC held its annual meeting December 2nd at the Rainbow Rivers Club. Gordon Hart, Mary Ann Hilton, Gretchen Martin, and Bill Vibbert were elected to 3-year terms on the Board of Directors. Re-elected to 2018 BOD offices were President Burt Eno, V-P Jerry Rogers, Treasurer Gretchen Martin, and Secretary Louise Kenny.

President Eno opened the speakers' presentations with a power point Overview of RRC Activities. He discussed the Annual River Cleanup, the refurbishment of the 50 Wood Duck Boxes on the river, the 4th graders education program, and the River Assessment Program in conjunction with the Florida Springs Institute. He discussed the RRC origin of the Rainbow River Corridor Project and its objective to acquire privately held lands along the river to prevent harmful development. He also discussed present day conditions of the river addressing increased levels of invasive algae and reduced flows. His power point presentation can be found on the RRC website www.RainbowRiverConservation.com under Education.

The second speaker at our annual meeting was Gordon Hart. He presented a delightful slide show of the Flora and Fauna on the Rainbow River, the Lower Withlacoochee River and Lake Rousseau. There were photographs of birds, fish, turtles, snakes, otters, alligators, and sandhill cranes along with various species of vegetation shown.

The featured speaker at the meeting was Jim Couillard, Director of Marion County Parks and Recreation, who gave us an overview of the County Parks and Recreation Master Plan. He described how the Rainbow River fit into the Master Plan with its connectivity to area trails and tourism. He also described plans for protection of the Rainbow River because it is recognized and appreciated as a unique natural treasure. His talk was very well received and appreciated.



Alternative routes that could close the Canon Gap of the Cross Florida Bike Trail

Education Program

The 4th graders education program continued for the 4th year. About 100 children came to the State Park from Dunnellon Elementary School November 16th and 17th and enjoyed performing a model aquifer experiment, touring the park to view its wildlife and foliage, and getting acquainted with a variety of turtles. Marion County schools have a new science coordinator who seems enthusiastic about this program and may help it expand to other schools in the future.

Blue Run Park

Progress is being made in connecting the Blue Run Park (BRP) to the Cross Florida Greenway and the Withlacoochee State Trail. The Greenway has expanded westward to the SR 200 right-of-way. Citrus County has committed funds to connect the State Trail to the south end of the Dunnellon Trail. These connections will make the BRP a hub for tourism.

Rainbow River Minimum Flow

We have previously discussed the physical condition of the Rainbow River, expressing concern over the elevated nitrate levels and consequent growth of algae and over the SWFWMD intention to allow more reduction of flow in the river. These quality and quantity parameters are inter-related, the lower the flow the greater the algae growth. SWFWMD had developed a very liberal, non-restrictive minimum flow adopted June 29th as an emergency rule. Presumably, this temporary rule has passed the time when it should have been replaced by a permanent minimum flow rule. However, it appears that SWFWMD has been ignoring this obligation and RRC is now inclined to take legal action to seek a better rule which will truly protect the flow in the Rainbow River.

Rainbow River Ranch

We reported previously that SWFWMD bought 112 acres along the river and on the east end of the RRR property to protect and restore, that Jim Gissy bought 57 acres on the west end of the RRR property with about ½ mile of river frontage, and Jerry Dodd kept about 11 acres on the river and about 80 acres upland with a 60' connection between the two acreages. Recently, Dodd proposed to the City of Dunnellon that he split the 11 acres into 2 parcels and develop the 80 acres into 240 home sites or, alternatively, larger home sites with septic tanks. We find both of these proposals unacceptable for the protection of the Rainbow River and we will be watching to see what the city chooses to do. We are also concerned with what kind of development Gissy will propose for his portion of the Rainbow River Ranch.

