



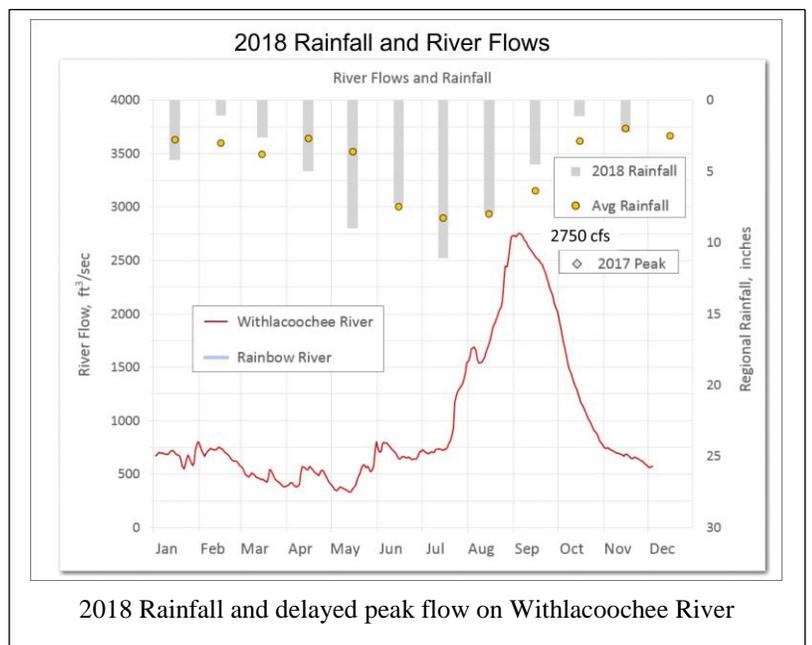
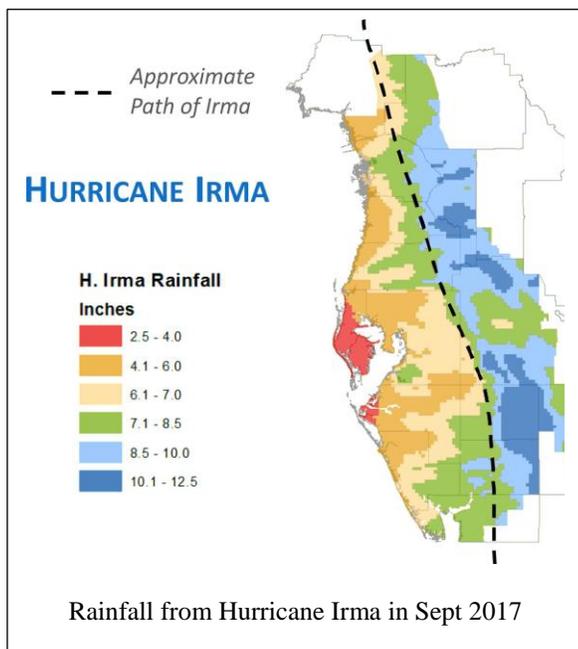
Annual Members Meeting

RRC held its annual meeting December 8th at the Rainbow Rivers Club. Louise Kenny, Jerry Rogers and Dan Rutkowski were re-elected to 3-year terms on the Board of Directors. Re-elected to 2019 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. This included updates on river conditions, the Rainbow BMAP, the Rainbow MFL Rule, river recreation, the 4th graders' education program, the annual river cleanup, maintenance of wood duck boxes, and anticipated improvements to the Blue Run Park.

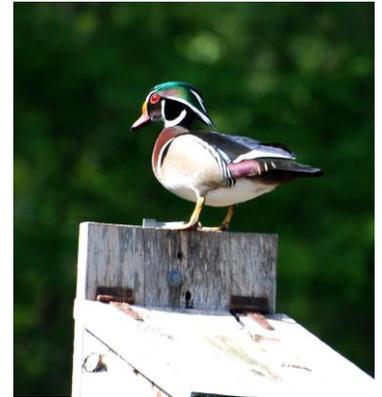
The second speaker was Bill Vibbert who described the Rainbow River monthly water sampling program in conjunction with the Florida Springs Institute and the habitat impacts of recreational use of the river. He also gave a brief synopsis of the 2nd Annual Springs Summit Conference.

The featured speaker at the meeting was Dr. Mark Fulkerson, a SWFWMD water scientist, who described the status of water quality and flow in the Withlacoochee River Basin and the contribution that the Rainbow River makes to water levels at Lake Rousseau. He detailed the impact of Hurricane Irma on the Withlacoochee Basin and the hydraulics of delayed flow rates in the river.



Wood Duck Boxes

The 50 RRC sponsored Wood Duck boxes were again maintained this fall and proved to be 100 percent productive in having broods of baby Wood ducks. Jerry Rogers, Jeff Sowards, Dan Rutkowski, Walter Manchester and Curt Reed on two separate days cleaned the boxes and added new cedar wood chip bedding to them. They also did small repairs on a few boxes. There was one adventure where one box had become home to a honey bee hive after the breeding season. The whole box was wrapped in a bag and removed from the pole located in the water. It was replaced with a new Wood duck box and the bees were moved to a safe location off the river.



River Conditions

The Rainbow River still suffers from excessive nitrate levels resulting in invasive algae squeezing out native vegetation which provides the habitat and food sources for the fish life. This past fall the upper part of the river was coated with an extraordinary blanket of Spirogyra. Fortunately, the Spirogyra began to diminish with the abundant rain through the spring and summer. For the year 2018 rainfall exceeded the historical average by 22%. This has maintained a higher than normal river flow rate with the latest reading at 890 cfs. This provides an algae washing effect which is good for the river but we can't count on such favorable flows in future years. We must stop the excessive influx of nitrates to the river.

Basin Management Action Plan

RRC joined five other environmental groups in filing petitions for administrative hearings to challenge five BMAPs promulgated by the FDEP. The Florida Springs Council took the lead to generate these petitions with input from the groups represented. The thrust of these petitions was to demonstrate that the FDEP did not follow the 2016 Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act and that the proposed BMAPs could not possibly achieve the nitrate reductions claimed. The fear is that, if these BMAPs were to be passed into law, the politicians would become complacent and think that they were on a path to restoring our spring-fed rivers. The petitions were submitted January 4th and we must simply wait for direction from an administrative judge.

Minimum Flow Rule

We have stated our arguments before that the Rainbow River Minimum Flow Rule established by SWFWMD last year is seriously flawed and there is no true minimum flow protection from over-pumping from the river recharge basin. As stated above we have been fortunate to have plenty of rain in the last couple of years to maintain sufficient river flow but we certainly cannot count on such rains to continue. The Minimum Flow Rule must be re-visited and corrected. Hopefully, SWFWMD will endeavor to do that in 2019.

Gold Star Rating

In our last newsletter we pointed out that RRC achieved a Gold Star rating last year on our GuideStar Nonprofit Profile. We would also like to point out that you can also find us on Facebook and Great Nonprofits at Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. as well as www.RainbowRiverConservation.com

