



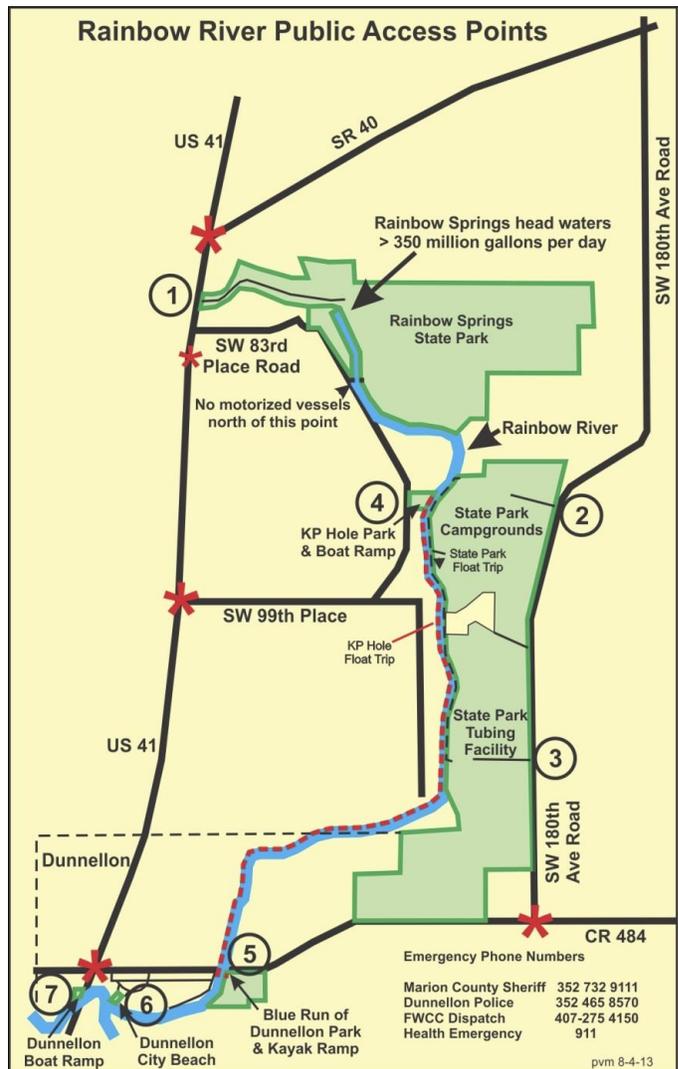
Property Owners Enjoying the Rainbow

Keeping the Rainbow River Healthy and Beautiful



The Rainbow River is a first-magnitude, spring-fed river, designated by the State of Florida as an Outstanding Florida Waterway and Aquatic Preserve. Recreational users should access the river only from one of the 7 public access points shown in the map below. Because of the river's popularity, it is important that visitors follow proper etiquette so that all can have an enjoyable visitor experience and the resource will be preserved for generations to come.

- The Rainbow Springs recharge area extends northerly to include over 700 square miles of land. This extends beyond Marion County to Levy and Alachua Counties. The rain that falls in this area and reaches the aquifer (and is not pumped out by public and private wells) will flow to the vents of Rainbow Springs.
- More than 1,000 tons (917 metric tons) of nitrates drain annually into the river from homes and farms, enough to fill a 400 foot long train of eight 50- foot box cars, or entirely fill a 3,500 square foot house.
- Nitrates from fertilizers and waste water change the character of the river's chemistry, appearance, and ability to sustain life. Excessive nitrates spur invasive plant and algae growth, choke out native vegetation, eliminate natural food sources for river wildlife, reduce the ability of game fish to spawn, and create "dead-zones" where nothing lives. Excessive nitrates can eventually make water unsuitable for recreation.
- Use environmentally-friendly lawn care products to help reduce these threats to the delicate balance of life in the river. Ask your lawn care specialist or landscaper for information on available products.
- Rainwater and grass clippings contain nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) so fertilizing with N and P during summer rainy months is excessive and unnecessary. Phosphorus as a standard lawn nutrient is unnecessary. Home centers and lawn care services now carry fertilizers that are 50% to 80% No-P (without phosphates).
- Runoff and leaching of N and P increase dramatically during the rainy season (June through September). Don't fertilize before a heavy rain. Delay fertilizing when the forecast is for rain within the next 24 hours.



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- Avoid using fertilizers on turf within 150 feet of the river to prevent runoff into the river. Fertilize only when plants are actively growing to avoid over-fertilizing. Use slow-release fertilizers. They provide fertilization for 60 or more days. Lawns require ¼ inch of water after each fertilizer application.
- Avoid herbicides and insecticides which kill butterflies, wasps, bees, dragonflies, etc., that are a primary source of protein for birds nesting, migrating and seeking food in or on the river.
- Regularly maintain your irrigation system. Florida law requires every home to have a working “rain sensor” installed to shut off your irrigation system during rainfall. Set your automatic irrigation system to apply no more than ½ to ¾ inches of water each time you irrigate. Consider installing water-saving irrigation systems for new houses or when replacing old systems. These can save as much as 50 percent in water (and water bills) while producing the same results as less conservative irrigation systems.
- Become familiar with and observe local watering restrictions to avoid unnecessary depletion of groundwater supplies. On average, only about 12 inches of the 52 inches of annual regional rainfall gets into the aquifer.
- Septic systems are among the primary sources of organic nitrate. Inspect your septic and drain field every 2 to 3 years and pump as recommended. Upgrade failing septic systems to eliminate overflow and pollution of the river and underground water sources. Consider a nitrogen-reducing septic system for buildings on parcels less than 5 acres. Systems shall reduce nitrogen to at least 10 mg/l.
- Obtain the proper permits before removing any invasive species of aquatic plants, including hydrilla and lyngbya from the water adjacent to your property. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s Aquatic Plant Management permits are required prior to removing any aquatic vegetation from the Rainbow River. Permits allow access and removal of invasive species of aquatic plants, such as hydrilla, lyngbya and water lettuce. All aquatic vegetation removed pursuant to a permit is required to be deposited on a self-contained upland site which shall be located to prevent the escape of the removed vegetation back into the waters where it can rapidly spread to other areas.
- After receiving the proper permits and removing hydrilla from the water, shake it thoroughly in a tub of water to remove as many creatures as possible for re-release into the river. Creatures such as snails, shrimp, crawfish, insect larvae and occasional catfish hatchlings live in the vegetation and should be returned if possible.
- Seawalls are used to protect shorelines from erosion, but act as barriers, separating wildlife from habitat. Consider using native aquatic plants for erosion control rather than replacing or installing seawalls.
- Permits may be required for most activities in the Rainbow River. It is the responsibility of the property owner to comply with all applicable federal, state, county and municipal laws, ordinances, or rules. Property owners should contact the Rainbow River Aquatic Preserve Manager at (352) 465-8565 for guidance prior to undertaking any building or removal activities on the Rainbow River.

Contact Wildlife Alert in a wildlife emergency:
1-888-404-3922 or Text

Tip@MyFWC.com**Resources:**
<http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/invasive-plants/http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/manage/>
<http://www.floridayards.org/>
[Florida landscapes http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/)
<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=10669&stateId=9&stateName=Florida>

River Ordinances for City of Dunnellon:

<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=10669&stateId=9&stateName=Florida>

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

<http://rainbowriverconservation.com/>