

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. Summer Newsletter 2010

RRC continues in its efforts to protect the Rainbow River and its environment through conservation, education, advocacy and stewardship. Following is an update since our last newsletter.

Annual River Cleanup

Our annual Rainbow River Cleanup was held May 15th with about 170 participants in boats, canoes, and kayaks. Among many others the Parrot Heads of Ocala and the Marion County Sheriff's Dive Team helped in the cleanup. The trash collection was not as large as in recent years but there still appear beverage containers and other disposables which are not supposed to be carried onto the river. Vice-President Jerry Rogers did his usual outstanding job of organizing and conducting the cleanup and picnic. We thank all who participated in the Rainbow River Cleanup.



Blue Run Park

The Summer recreational period is upon us and the CR 484 parking lot at Blue Run Park has been very busy. As a consequence the planned improvements for the parking lot and the river access have been delayed until Fall. A fiber optics cable has to be moved in the vicinity in order to proceed with the storm water drainage plan and the renovations to the parking lot but this should be accomplished in time for planned construction. We continue to encounter many visitors who seem to enjoy walking the park trails.

Education Efforts

Our Education Committee participated in reading to grade school children about the environment. They will be looking for more volunteers to join this program in the Fall. Call Terry Blaes at 352-465-6492 to participate.

RRC members have completed a SWFWMD grant to develop educational materials to exhibit the value of aquatic vegetation in the Rainbow River. A DVD showing underwater views of fish, turtles, snails and otters using the vegetation for food and shelter impresses a viewer with the need to preserve this resource. Dos and don'ts for recreational users of the river are suggested to minimize destructive impact on the vegetation. A brochure and a poster were also developed to detail this message. Copies of the DVD, brochure and poster can be obtained from RRC board members or Paul Marraffino at 352-465-4120.



Suwannee Cooter with Illinois Pondweed

Litigation Efforts

In our last newsletter we reported that RRC and 15 individuals had elected to sue the City of Dunnellon because of the City Council's proposed agreement to settle the Bert Harris lawsuit brought by the owner of Rainbow River Ranch and Conservation Land Group. In our view the settlement agreement, derived without public input, offered concessions to the developer which were enormously generous, leading to excessive burdens on the property, the environment, the wildlife, local services, and the local economy. The settlement agreement violates the City's Comprehensive Plan and Florida Statute 163. Because of this the Florida Department of Community Affairs has joined us in motions to intervene in the judicial process of the settlement agreement. The proposed settlement agreement and related court filings can be found on our website at www.RainbowRiverConservation.com.

Springs Protection Legislation

Senate Bill 550, which was to be a springs protection bill, was passed by the Florida Legislature. Unfortunately, the bill turned into more of a statewide water supply bill mandating that each water management district develop a long term water supply and distribution plan. SWFWMD has embarked on such a plan for its northern region and is considering additional ground and surface water sources proposed by the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority. Two of these sources are siphoning water off Lake Rousseau and extracting water out of a new well field in northwest Marion County. Either option would have an adverse effect upon the Rainbow River and would exacerbate the problem of excess nutrients and growth of exotics in the river as well as impacting the rookeries on Lake Rousseau and the natural systems of the lower Withlacoochee River.

Future Events

The 2010 Springsfest will occur in September with individual events scheduled throughout the month. A day of environmental music and talks will be held September 18th at Rainbow Springs State Park. See www.springsfest.org for more information. There will be a photography contest with the Springsfest so start reviewing your photo collection of views of the springs and rivers in Marion County.

Enjoy the beauty of the Rainbow River but please be cautious and take good care of it.



Osprey nest on Lake Rousseau



Least bittern fishing in reeds