

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. Summer Newsletter 2016

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

RRC Events

RRC had its education booth at Boomtown Day April 16th and experienced considerable interest from the public. On May 14th RRC sponsored its Annual Rainbow River Cleanup. Approximately 175 participants scoured the river from boats and paddle craft and by scuba diving to collect trash. The result was less trash than in the past which is an indication that river users are being more careful in not littering the river. The usual hot dog picnic and door prizes donated by local merchants were provided.

River Conditions

RRC remains very concerned with the health of the Rainbow River and its environment. The long term reduction in flow, the continued rise in nitrate levels, and the unbridled recreation on the river are leading to ever increasing algae growth and loss of healthy wildlife habitat. RRC President Burt Eno wrote an article in the February issue of the Rainbow Springs Villager discussing the quantity and quality of flow in the Rainbow River. The article can be found at www.RainbowRiverConservation.com/Articles.

River Recreation

Summer is here again and human activity on the Rainbow River is enormous, particularly on weekends and holidays. Each year sees more motorboats, paddle craft, and tubes. Tubers come by the thousands, many brought to the KP Hole input point by off-site, unregulated transporters. The interest certainly can't be enjoyment of serenity on the river communing with nature. It must be the party atmosphere. So much crowded activity is harmful to the river, destroying the native vegetation and chasing away the wildlife. No one state or local agency is in charge and there is no effort to regulate a limit of overall activity on the river.

Baseline Monitoring

Last August and February the Florida Springs Institute, with the help of local RRC members, made numerous mechanical, chemical and biological measurements in the Rainbow River. The purpose was to establish a baseline for monitoring the quantity and quality of the flow in the river in the future as attempts are made to improve the condition of the river. The Institute expects to publish a report on these measurements in the next few months.



Cleaning up Rainbow River on paddle boards



Ron Clarke setting up YSI 556 oxygen monitor

Rainbow River Ranch

The Fifth District Court of Appeals rendered its decision in April concerning RRC's intervention in the settlement agreement between the Property Owners and the City of Dunnellon. The decision would have to be considered a complete victory for RRC. The Appellate Court rejected the settlement agreement because it did not serve the public interest and it was not the appropriate relief for alleged burdening of the property. The appellate judges seemed to be particularly disturbed by the fact that the settlement agreement had not gone through the appropriate public review process. The Appellate Court remanded the case back to the Circuit Court with admonitions.



Giant Cypress trees line east side of Rainbow River

The Property Owners have not filed for any further proceedings at the Circuit Court level and have chosen instead to sell the property. RRC had hoped that the Water Management District would buy it for preservation and protection of the river but the appraised value was low. Thus, an investor named Jim Gissy stepped in and bought the 47 acres west of Hendrix Drive and 10 acres on the northeast corner of Hendrix Drive and CR 484. Mr. Gissy had bought the property named Indian Springs north of Sateke Village several years ago and put a lot of effort into restoring it. His expressed intention is to protect and preserve his new property fronting the river.

Blue Run Park

Blue Run Park of Dunnellon acts not only as an exit for tubers entering the Rainbow River at KP Hole Park but it serves also as a trailhead for bikers and hikers who want to traverse the Dunnellon Trail over the Withlacoochee River. Automatic counters at the Withlacoochee Bridge indicate that there will probably be close to 30,000 bikers and hikers crossing the bridge this year, many of whom enter the trail from the Blue Run Park. One would have to conclude that the acquisition and development of the Blue Run Park has been a monumental success. One very serious drawback, however, is the lack of a suitable bathroom facility to accommodate the annual influx of approximately 100,000 tubers, kayakers, hikers, and bikers. The City of Dunnellon has contributed \$30,000 to the engineering and design of the bathroom facility and Marion County has so far committed to cover 50% of the building cost. RRC will support a grant application process in an effort to find the remaining funds required to complete this project. Recent parking improvements at the San Jose Trailhead have added 23 parking spaces which should help relieve parking congestion at the Blue Run Park.



Recent parking improvements at San Jose Trailhead of Blue Run Park should help alleviate summer congestion