



Rainbow River Conservation Activities & Meetings Resume

With the worst of the pandemic behind us RRC has cautiously resumed board meetings and activities. After a year of no meetings, we held board meetings March through May outdoors at the home of Brooks and Gretchen Martin and in June in the Orange Grove Room at the Rainbow Springs Community Center. Future board meetings are intended to be held at the Community Center on the third Monday of the month at 7:00 pm. In April RRC participated in the Boomtown event with its education booth until an afternoon storm began to blow our display materials away. In May we held our Rainbow River Cleanup event with about 130 participants including the Sheriff's Underwater Recovery Team and the Boy Scouts Troop 422 from Clearwater.

Nine Island Cove

Following the election of Jan Cabbage and Louise Kenny to the Dunnellon City Council and Bill White to the Mayor's seat the Council showed renewed interest in RRC's proposal to acquire and preserve the Nine Island Cove property. The Council majority voted to approve a prospectus which could lead to city acquisition of the property for establishment of a passive public park. The first step taken in this process was to gain approval of the FDEP Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) to add the property to RRC's Rainbow River Corridor Project for Florida Forever status. RRC President Burt Eno and Mayor Bill White made a day trip to Tallahassee to present the proposal to the ARC and were pleased to receive a unanimous vote for approval. The next step is for RRC, later in the year, to compete for funding from the Florida Communities Trust to purchase the property.



Paddling Nine Island Cove

Fourth Graders Education Program

For several years before the pandemic RRC and Friends of Rainbow Springs (FORS) sponsored a one-day Fourth Graders Education Program at the Rainbow Springs State Park for local schools willing to participate. The children performed simple hands-on experiments and toured the park to learn about the nature of springs and the wildlife dependent on the springs environment. Jon Brainard, who has directed this very successful endeavor, is interested in reviving the program in the Fall but he needs volunteers to help. If you would like to help please email jonbrainard@gmail.com.



Fourth grade springs education program

Fellowship of the Springs

On June 25th Mike Gissy sponsored a public screening of the film “Fellowship of the Springs” which was held in the Rainbow Room of the Rainbow Springs Club. This is a documentary film written, directed and produced by Emmy award-winning director Oscar Corral to tell the story of the struggle to preserve Florida’s more than 1000 artesian springs. The film describes the fight between local spring activists and the state agencies which are supposed to regulate and protect the springs. As Corral puts it “I set out to make a film about the beauty and wonder that define the springs, but along the way, I discovered that the springs are in a fight for survival”. The film will be played on PBS in July and August. To find a station and date for showing of the film go to FloridasMagicWaters.com.



Oscar Corral introducing movie

Springs Funding

We have repeatedly emphasized that Florida’s springs, including the Rainbow, are threatened by excessive water withdrawals from, and nitrate pollution to, the Floridan Aquifer that feeds these springs. FDEP has analyzed the sources of nitrate pollution and has produced pie charts showing the relative contributions of nitrate sources to major springs basins. Statewide, agricultural practices contribute about 70% of the nitrate pollution while wastewater (septic tanks and sewer plants) contribute about 17%. For the Rainbow these figures are 61% and 25%, respectively. An analysis performed by the Florida Springs Council of 2021-2022 statewide water quality funding of \$134 million shows that 48% of that amount is going to Rainbow basin wastewater treatment projects. Unfortunately, it is estimated that this will only result in removal of 1.2% of the nitrate pollution necessary to meet water quality goals. Needless to say, much more needs to be accomplished.

Blue Run Park

Back in 2008 the 32-acre parcel now named Blue Run of Dunnellon Park was acquired by RRC and its partners through a \$2.9 million grant from the Florida Communities Trust (FCT). With it came a management plan and a long list of improvement projects to which the City of Dunnellon had agreed. One of those projects, to be completed by 2013, was a pathway for safe passage across the Rainbow River for park users to walk or cycle between the park and downtown Dunnellon. In 2013 the city hired an engineering firm to redesign Pennsylvania Ave west of the river to create a bike lane from the river to downtown Mary Street. The engineering firm proposed a design to eliminate parking on the north side of Pennsylvania Ave and establish the bike lane on the south side to be compatible to pedestrian travel across the river. The project along with a multi-use trail bridge was submitted to the Marion County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and adopted on their priority list. In May of 2021 Dunnellon’s TPO liaison told the TPO that the pedestrian pathway across the river had nothing to do with the Pennsylvania Ave project, that it was an afterthought, and that they could drop the pedestrian pathway across the river from the project. As a consequence of this erroneous interpretation the TPO split the pedestrian pathway across the river from the Pennsylvania Ave project and the pedestrian pathway has dropped to the end of the TPO priority list. This unsafe situation needs to be rectified.



Walking back from park



Car avoiding people crosses yellow line