Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. Winter Newsletter 2021

The year 2020 was a difficult year. The Coronavirus kept RRC from holding its annual meeting, its 4th graders education program, and its river cleanup event. The only board meeting since February was held outdoors on November 7th at Rio Vista Park. There it was decided to forego the annual meeting and leave the members of the present board in place for an additional year. In spite of the lack of meetings RRC stayed abreast of evolving issues by way of electronic communications and managed to accomplish some significant victories as discussed below.

Jack Dennis

Unfortunately, RRC lost one of its most revered members. Jack Dennis, who had been a RRC member for over 30 years, serving as president and vice-president and a mentor to many of us, passed away October 11th. Jack is survived by his sons Mike and Rook who are also members of RRC. We certainly will miss Jack.

Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP)

We have discussed before that RRC joined with several other springs advocacy groups to object to the inadequacy of BMAPs devised by FDEP to ameliorate nitrate pollution of our waterways. Unfortunately, our November 2019 court



Jack Dennis giving FDEP officials a tour of the Rainbow River (2008)

hearing on this matter has still not been acted upon by the judge. However, in the meantime, Senate Bill 712 was passed which provided substantial funds to replace poorly functioning septic tanks and wastewater package plants with central sewer treatment. A little RRC advocacy might have helped to garner over \$9 million to replace the Rainbow Springs sewer plant, package plants at Sateke Village, the RS campground, and the high school and elementary school, as well as to provide central sewer to Chatmire and Burkitt Road residences. We shall hope for a continuation of such funding to replace septic tanks in Rio Vista and along the Rainbow River. This does not solve the problem of excessive nitrates emanating from agricultural sources, however. Much more needs to be done in that respect.

Wood Duck Boxes

A crew consisting of Jerry Rogers, Jeff Sowards, Walt Manchester and Curt Reed spent the better part of two days in November refurbishing wood duck boxes on the Rainbow River. This is an annual ritual of cleaning out the boxes, refurbishing them with cedar chips, and repairing or replacing damaged boxes such as those shown in the attached photograph. Jerry reported that there was evidence of 100% productivity in the 50 boxes, certainly a wildlife success story.



Replaced Wood Duck boxes ready for repair or recycling

River Safety Brochure

In addition to its Mission Brochure and its Recreational Guidelines Brochure, RRC now has a Safety Brochure which will be available at points of public entry to the Rainbow River. The Safety Brochure contains tips and cautions for river recreationists as well as a map and emergency contact numbers. A copy may be seen on our website at www.RainbowRiverConservation.com.

Marion County 5-year Strategic Plan

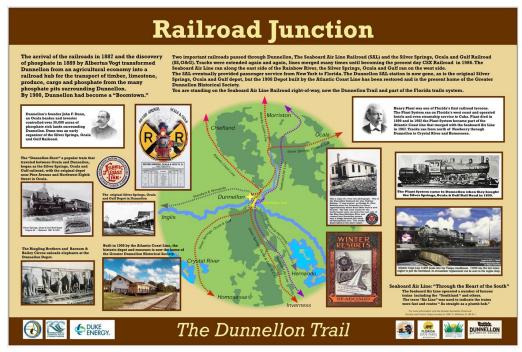
Burt Eno and Paul Marraffino were invited to attend a meeting of the Marion County Growth & Future Planning Strategic Committee December 3rd. We had the opportunity to advocate for the completion of the Blue Run Park bathroom facility, the East Pennsylvania Ave road and trail plan, completion of the Cross Florida Multi-Use Trail, additional septic to sewer projects, and a recreation capacity study on the Rainbow River. We also argued for environmental protection measures including no commercial enterprises to be situated along the river. Paul added the fact that we need better internet service throughout the county.

Westgate Entertainment Resort Fallout

In our Fall 2020 newsletter we discussed the Herculean effort between RRC and the Florida Springs Council (FSC) to carry out a campaign to defeat the Westgate Resort proposal being considered by the Dunnellon City Council because of its potential harm to the Rainbow River. The response to the campaign was enormous and the developer decided to cancel his application. A surprising side effect seemed to be disenchantment of the Dunnellon electorate with the City Council and three replacements occurred in the November election. This resulted in the retirement of the city administrator and the resignation of the planning director. We believe that this change will result in renewed partnerships between the City and RRC.

Duke Energy Foundation Grant

In our Fall newsletter we featured the fact that RRC received a grant of \$2400 from Duke Energy to display the phosphate and railroad history of Dunnellon on two kiosks to be erected along the Dunnellon Trail. An image of the phosphate Boomtown kiosk was shown in that newsletter. Below is an image of the railroad kiosk that will be installed along the Dunnellon Trail. This is a joint project with the Greater Dunnellon Historical Society.



Compressed Image of new Railroad Junction 24 x 36 inch kiosk artwork