

Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

Summer Newsletter 2009

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

Blue Run Park

As we feared the State Legislature failed to fund Florida Forever or our FRDAP grant proposal. Thus, improvements planned for the Blue Run Park under these programs will need to wait another year. Progress is being made, however, under the CFI grant received from SWFWMD. Designs for the CR 484 parking lot and river access are progressing through the permitting process and we hope to see construction work begin this fall. Marion County storm water engineers are administering the project in exchange for an accommodation of some remediated CR 484 storm water treatment. This will require a third retention pond on Blue Run Park property upland of the parking lot. It is expected that this pond will not compromise the aesthetics of the park nor interfere with the already established Pond Trail.



Gopher Tortoise in Sandhill Area

Recent and Upcoming Events

Approximately 150 enthusiasts participated in the annual Rainbow River Cleanup held on May 16th. They collected a trailer full of trash and then enjoyed a picnic and prize awards. The next event of significance is the Marion County Springs Festival to be held September 26th at Rainbow Springs State Park where RRC will have its display booth. Following that RRC is teaming up with the North Central Florida Smart Growth Coalition to hold a forum on recent development legislation, the Marion County springs protection and fertilizer ordinances, and concerns for the Rainbow and Withlacoochee River basins. This forum will be held from 6 to 9 PM October 12th at the Rainbow Rivers Club (see www.rainbowriverconservation.com for a site map). RRC members have also continued active participation with the Withlacoochee River Alliance and the Rainbow Springs Basin Working Group.

Threats to the River

We have repeatedly expressed concern over increasing nitrates in the Rainbow Springs basin and have advocated for passage of springs protection legislation. Unfortunately, the State Legislature once again failed to pass such a law. However, Marion County



Limpkins eat Apple Snails which only live in pristine water

finally did pass a Springs Protection Ordinance and a Fertilizer Ordinance which, if properly instituted, should help protect Rainbow Springs and the Rainbow River. Also, the federal EPA has just agreed to set enforceable limits on nutrients allowed to enter water bodies.

An alarming event took place this summer. The Department of Health found excessive levels of enterococci bacteria in the Rainbow River and closed several swim areas multiple times. The exact sources of this level of fecal bacteria are not documented but possible contributors include runoff from septic tanks and sewer spray fields and excessive human activity on the river. RRC is attempting to find a governing agency that will investigate this serious matter.

In June RRC members addressed a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission hearing concerning poaching of soft shell turtles in the Rainbow River. The hearing resulted in the FFWCC passing a rule generally prohibiting the commercial taking of fresh water turtles in the State. More information is contained on RRC's website.

This summer the Rainbow River was inundated with increased numbers of recreational users. Divers, tubers and boaters have been responsible for uprooting massive clumps of natural vegetation from the river bottom, thus destroying the spawning and feeding areas of the river's aquatic wildlife. We fear that this problem will be worsened by the re-opening of the State campground and the expansion of parking facilities for KP Hole Park. RRC believes that water recreation is a good thing but not if it destroys the very resource on which it depends.



Floating Mats from Uprooted Vegetation

Education Efforts

The Education Committee continues in its effort to generate materials that will assist in educating the public to the fragility of the Rainbow River and the care that must be taken to preserve it. The committee is developing a DVD, pamphlets, and posters to emphasize the Do's and Don'ts of behavior on the river. They are also contacting the local schools to determine programs in which RRC can participate to educate students about the river and its environment. This committee could use more volunteers to help with preparation and distribution of materials, communicating with our constituents, and giving talks. If you are interested in helping please contact us through our website www.rainbowriverconservation.com.



Vegetation Covers River After Weekend

Preserve Our Natural Resources

Enjoy our natural resources but please preserve them for future generations.



River Otters watch kayakers paddle by on the Rainbow River