

# Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

## Winter Newsletter 2009

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 Meeting

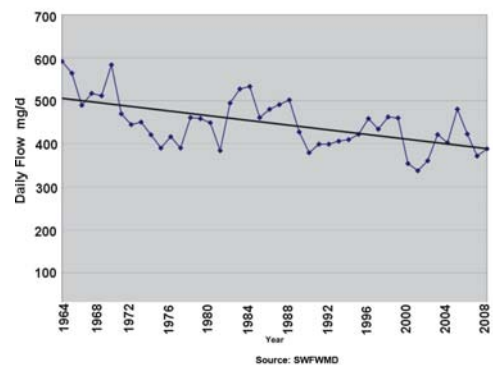
RRC held its annual meeting December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Rainbow Rivers Club. The Board of Directors was re-elected except for Mary Ann Hilton, who chose to step down and was replaced by Nancy Browall who will serve as secretary. We thank Mary Ann for her many years of service.

Our keynote speaker was State Geologist Harley Means who presented an excellent overview of Florida's Karst geology and the threats facing our aquifer, springs and rivers. He noted our most pressing concern to be increased nitrates appearing in Rainbow Springs due to unbridled use of fertilizers. Pete Colverson, coordinator of the Rainbow Springs Basin Working Group, then followed with an explanation of the function of the Group to be the promotion of scientific studies of the springs basin and the provision of pertinent information to the public. Concern on reduced flow rates has been noted in studies of the river.

Burt Eno and Jerry Rogers shared in giving an overview of RRC activities of the past year, particularly the successful FCT grant for the purchase of the Blue Run of Dunnellon Park property and the naming of the Rainbow River as one of the Great Florida Birding Trails, as well as the success of the wood duck boxes program and the annual river cleanup. Bill Vibbert then gave an overview of progress on developing the Blue Run Park into a first class passive park and trailhead. He credited the Trust for Public Lands, the City of Dunnellon, Marion County, SWFWMD and the Aquatic Preserve Manager for their monetary and staff assistance in developing the park.

### Membership Renewal

RRC now has approximately 230 members. It is membership renewal time if you have not yet paid dues for 2009. If you are one of those members you will receive this newsletter by US mail with a renewal application enclosed. We ask that you return this form with your check to remain on our member roster. Much of our success in protecting the Rainbow River is due to the voice of many constituents.



44 year record of Rainbow River flow rate



Male Wood Duck on Duck Box

## **Blue Run of Dunnellon Park Progress**

Progress is continuing on the development of the Blue Run of Dunnellon Park. The interior loop walking trails have been completed and will soon be marked with trail signs. The old chain link fence has been removed and replaced by mortise board fencing along the east and north boundaries with parking lots off of CR 484 and San Jose Blvd. Exotic plants have been removed and the park has been cleaned of trash. Improvement in the CR 484 parking lot and river access are in the planning stage. Continued efforts are being made to secure grant funding for further development of the park.



New Perimeter Fence at Blue Run Park



New Park Entrance from CR484 Parking Lot

## **Florida Forever Projects**

The Florida legislature had voted to suspend Florida Forever funds for the fiscal year 2009-10 but, fortunately, Governor Crist vetoed this budget cut. The situation remains tenuous, however, and we urge that RRC members contact their legislators to tell them how important it is to continue this program. Meanwhile, and depending on the Florida Forever funding, the DEP Division of State Lands remains very interested in our Rainbow River Corridor and Cool Springs Ranch projects. We had reported in our last newsletter our concern for Progress Energy's plans to run a rail line across the Cool Springs Ranch, possibly compromising its value to the Florida Forever Program. We are pleased to report that Progress Energy has abandoned that plan in favor of bringing heavy equipment in on the Barge Canal and north on a heavy equipment road to their proposed nuclear power plant site.

## **Rainbow River Ranch**

The City of Dunnellon recently submitted its comprehensive plan amendments to the Department of Consumer Affairs and is awaiting a response. Part of that submittal was a specification of land use designations throughout the city. The Rainbow River Ranch developer was not happy with the designation for his land and thus sued the city under the Bert Harris Act. The city is presently defending itself against the lawsuits. Meanwhile, the developer applied for twelve dock construction permits based on a conceptual development plan. SWFWMD issued nine of these permits and the city issued a corresponding seven construction permits before halting the construction due to our complaints. We feel that SWFWMD erred in issuing permits without Aquatic Preserve review and for unplatted lots. We also feel that the city erred in not enforcing its River Corridor Protection Ordinance and in issuing permits without an approved plat. RRC has now joined forces with the city in raising these issues with SWFWMD and the Department of Environmental Protection.