



RRC continues to work diligently to protect the Rainbow River and its environment through conservation, education, advocacy, and stewardship.

**Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal**

RRC will hold its annual meeting the morning of December 1<sup>st</sup> starting at 9 AM at the Rainbow Rivers Club (Directions can be found on our website [www.RainbowRiverConservation.com](http://www.RainbowRiverConservation.com)). Our guest speakers will be Mary Szafraniec whose topic will be “Tracking Ecological Change in the Rainbow River” and Dr. Steve Holland and Amanda Croteau whose topic will be “Impact of Recreation Activity on the Rainbow River”. Ms. Szafraniec is an aquatic ecologist from SWFWMD while Dr. Holland is a Professor of Tourism, Recreation & Sport Management and Ms. Croteau is a PhD student from the University of Florida. President Burt Eno will also provide an overview of RRC activities and accomplishments of the past year. *All RRC members and the public are encouraged to attend.*

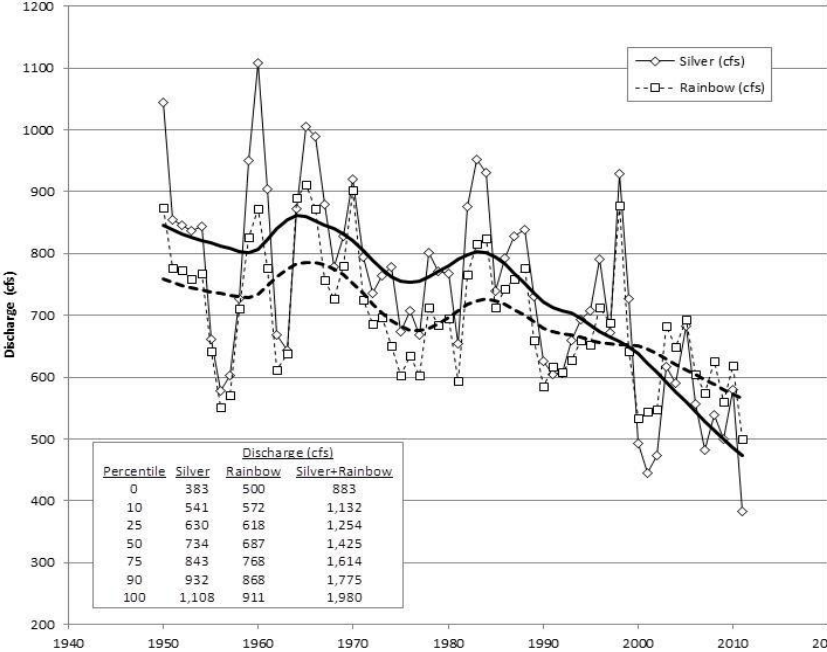
This is **membership renewal time**. Enclosed are a 2013 membership form and a return envelope. Please send your membership fee and mail the completed form as soon as possible.

**River Conditions**

We have been fortunate to have had good rainfall since June. This has brought the flow of the Rainbow River back from an all-time low of 235 mgd to a present 400 mgd. This has increased visibility at the head springs to 230 feet and it has flushed some oxygen enriched lymnobia from the river bottom leaving large patches of white sand exposed. Nitrate levels remain high at 2.24 mg/liter, however, which encourages algae growth.

Concerns remain because studies show that there is a general decline in long term average flows of about 18% in the last 30 years. The water management district argues that this is largely due to changing weather patterns but it also seems apparent that it is a function of increased aquifer withdrawals over this period of time. Also, the nitrate level indicated above is several times above the incipient level for excessive algae growth.

Reduced River Flow 1950 - 2011



Data from Dr. Bob Knight and the U.S. Geological Survey

## River Restoration

The Department of Environmental Protection has just completed a draft report on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of nitrates in the Rainbow River. A copy has been posted on our website. A Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) will follow which defines means to lower the river nitrate levels and contribute to restoration of good health to the river and its natural state. This will most likely address the deposit of fertilizers and waste water in the springs recharge basin. This effort will be paralleled by the RRC supported work of Dr. Bob Knight to derive a Rainbow River Restoration Plan. This overall plan will not only address the effect of reduced flows and high nitrates but will also include consideration of impacts of various forms of recreation on the river. Data gathered by the UF study of recreation and vegetation impacts as well as the recently completed SWFWMD vegetation mapping study will assist in the derivation of the restoration plan.



Green Heron at river edge

## Rainbow River Ranch

The last that we reported on the settlement agreement between the Rainbow River Ranch developer and the City of Dunnellon was that the judge in the Bert Harris lawsuit turned down the developer's summary judgment motion in favor of the agreement in September 2011. Since that time Governor Scott abolished the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) which had stood with us as intervenors in the settlement agreement. The state's responsibility for Florida Statute 163 Growth Management Act has now been assigned to the new Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO). The DEO had apparently communicated with the developer and arrived at a slightly modified settlement agreement which they were willing to approve.

The DEO then invited RRC to meet with them to purportedly consider our input. The meeting was held July 31<sup>st</sup> with DEO, the City of Dunnellon and the developer present. After more than two hours trying to explain the importance of maintaining a vegetated buffer for wildlife habitat along the river the RRC recommendation was rebuffed by the developer. It seemed that only the court could make a difference. The agreement was subsequently signed by the DEO, the developer, and the City. There are many egregious conditions contained in this settlement agreement. We invite you to read the agreement and the intervenors' objections on our website at Litigation Docket, items 29 and 30, respectively. Any tax exempt contribution you can provide for our continued litigation would be greatly appreciated.

## Water and Land Legacy

As you know from our past discussions the Florida Forever program, which was funded for more than a decade at \$300 million per year from state document stamps, to buy and preserve sensitive lands was defunded under the present administration. The newly formed Florida Conservation Coalition, headed by former Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham, has derived a new preservation program called the Florida Water and Land Legacy. A state-wide move is afoot to gather 500,000 signatures on a petition to amend the State Constitution in 2014 to dedicate 1/3 of the revenue from state document stamps to fund a new conservation program. RRC has signed on as a sponsor of this program.

## Pat Ermatinger Memorial Bench

Pat Ermatinger, a former RRC Board Member, passed away earlier this year. Rainbow River Conservation established a Memorial Bench in her honor in the Blue Run of Dunnellon Park. The inscription reads "In loving memory of Pat Ermatinger who so loved nature and our rivers."



Pat Ermatinger Memorial Bench view in Blue Run Park