



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

Membership Renewal

Your membership in RRC is important as it serves to give us a greater voice when working to fulfill our mission described above. We are hovering around 200 paid members at the present time. We would like to be at 300 or perhaps 400 members. If you have not yet paid your 2012 dues please do so at this time so that we can send you our new decal and keep you on our roster and mailing list. Your monetary contribution is tax deductible.

Annual Meeting

RRC had its annual members meeting November 5th at the Rainbow Rivers Club. A video of aquatic life on the Rainbow River played while John Semmes and Herb and Sue Ann Reichelt strummed and sang and refreshments were served. A brief treasurer's report was given, followed by a review of RRC's activities for the year 2011. Elections were held with the results that incumbents Jack Dennis, Gretchen Martin, and Bill Vibbert were re-elected to the board while Ron Senykoff was elected to his first term and Nathan Whitt was elected to the corporate seat on the board. The board re-elected Burt Eno as president, Jerry Rogers as vice-president, Gretchen Martin as treasurer, and Jeff Selvaggio as secretary.

Guest speakers included Becky Ayech and Pete Colverson. Ayech, who is a member of the Florida Water Coalition and president of the Southwest Florida Environmental Confederation, presented a slide show entitled "Keep Toxic Slime out of Florida Waters". This showed graphic evidence of what happens to our water bodies when we continue to extract too much water from them and pollute them with fertilizer and sewage.

Colverson, who is an environmental communications specialist with Normandeau Associates, presented a talk entitled "Rainbow River Restoration Plan – A Call to Action". He described the contents of a draft report derived from the work of the Rainbow Springs Basin Working Group where the effects of recharge basin water withdrawals, influx of fertilizer and sewage pollution, excessive river recreation, and other adverse effects were identified. The report was to serve as a progress report to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for the continued funding of the restoration plan. Unfortunately, in an austerity move, the DEP discontinued funding. RRC is pursuing ways in which to breathe life back into this effort.



Rainbow River view looking north past KP Hole Park

Ongoing Projects



RRC members performed their annual task of servicing the wood duck boxes along the river by cleaning them, re-supplying them with nesting material, and repairing and replacing damaged boxes. Evidence showed 87% usage of the 47 wood duck boxes.

The RRC initiated projects of Blue Run Park storm water abatement and recreation impact study are continuing. Marion County is in the process of installing a new water access ramp adjacent to the CR 484 bridge to alleviate direct storm water runoff into the river. Completion of this project is anticipated in the next six weeks so that the park will again have river access for kayakers and an exit for people floating down the river on tubes.

The University of Florida continues to monitor recreational uses of the river which we hope will assist in the development of a river management plan. We are concerned that such useful projects may not be funded in the future due to severe cutbacks at DEP and SWFWMD.



Progress on river access ramp at Blue Run of Dunnellon Park

Water District Budget Reduced

The Southwest Florida Water Management District had its budget reduced by 44% in FY 2012 and is facing another serious reduction for next year. The Rainbow River has benefited from many SWFWMD sponsored studies and restoration projects. The district is presently involved in a study to define the minimum flows and levels applicable to the Rainbow River and proper completion of this study may be at risk.

Litigation Update

Since the court rejected the Rainbow River Ranch's motion for summary judgment last September no further litigation activity has taken place. RRC still stands ready to defend our position on behalf of the Rainbow River and the citizens of the community.

Legislation

The Florida Legislature is back in session and there are a number of bills proposed that are harmful to the environment. HB 639 removes reclaimed water from "waters of the state" which is a move toward privatization of water resources. HB 999 repeals the septic tank inspection requirement contained in SB 550 two years ago. SB 604 exempts certified landscapers from local fertilizer ordinances. SB 1362 redefines "ordinary high water mark" such that some present sovereign submerged lands would be turned over to private ownership. SB 958 raises the permissible noise level of airboats and prevents local governments from establishing more stringent noise level ordinances.



Spider Lily blooming along Rainbow River

Additional information can be found on the RRC web site at www.rainbowriverconservation.com.