

# Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

## Fall Newsletter 2014

RRC continues in its effort to protect and preserve the Rainbow River and its environment.

### RRC Projects

RRC's Education Committee, chaired by Nathan Whitt, held a "Springs Awareness for Educators" forum August 14<sup>th</sup> at the Rainbow Springs State Park. Education resources and demonstrations were provided by RRC, SWFWMD, the Florida Springs Institute (FSI), and the Aquatic Preserve Manager. Speakers from SWFWMD and the FSI gave talks about the hydrogeology and ecology of the springs. About 50 Marion County teachers and administrators attended. Volunteers from Friends of Rainbow Springs helped make this event a great success. RRC's Education Committee is working on offering a similar event next year and on supporting visits of student groups to sample and test the spring water.

### Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal

RRC will hold its annual meeting the morning of December 6<sup>th</sup> starting at 8:45 AM at the Rainbow Rivers Club (see map at [www.RainbowRiverConservation.com](http://www.RainbowRiverConservation.com)). President Burt Eno will provide a brief overview of RRC activities and accomplishments of the past year. There will be three guest speakers. Sky Notestein will discuss SWFWMD projects pertaining to the Rainbow River. Terry Hansen will discuss FDEP's Basin Management Action Plan aimed at reducing nitrates in the springs and river. Senator Charlie Dean will discuss his proposed Springs Bill for the next legislative session. **All RRC members and the public are encouraged to attend.**

This is **membership renewal time**. Enclosed are a 2015 membership renewal form and a return envelope. Please send your membership fee and mail the completed form as soon as possible. Decals will be sent by return mail. T-shirts with our new logo will be available at the annual meeting.



Nathan Whitt welcoming Marion County Teachers to the RRC's Springs Awareness for Educators Program



Water District Resource Table at Springs Event



Florida Springs Institute Presentation to over 50 teachers at Springs Awareness for Educators Event.

## River Recreation

As discussed previously excessive recreation on the Rainbow River has been a problem. Too many tubers and some misbehavior have detracted from a peaceful experience on the river. This past summer the Fish & Wildlife Commission, the Sheriff's Office, and the Dunnellon Police Department teamed up to put more officers on the river and this had a calming effect. We are thankful for that effort and we hope that this practice will continue. We also hope that our Recreational Guidelines brochure helped.



## River Pollution

We have also discussed in previous newsletters the extraordinary nitrate levels in the river leading to excessive algae growth and displacement of natural vegetation. FDEP's Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP), which will be discussed at our annual meeting, identifies the sources of the nitrates in the 700 square mile aquifer recharge basin that feeds flow to the Rainbow River. The nitrate sources are primarily urban and agricultural fertilizers, septic tanks, and animal waste. FDEP's study suggests that the Rainbow Springs nitrate level of 2.2 mg/l must be reduced by 82%.

The BMAP goal stated above will require an enormous effort in all sectors and a great deal of money. Senator Dean sponsored a bill last year aimed at attacking this problem with various projects but the House of Representatives failed to provide a companion bill. He will discuss at our annual meeting his renewed effort to get a springs protection bill through the legislature next year. As always, money is a stumbling block. However, Amendment 1 on the ballot in November could alleviate that concern. Amendment 1 would dedicate 1/3 of the existing document stamp tax to renewing the funding for Florida Forever and springs protection projects. We must support Amendment 1 in November.

## Barbara Weston

RRC lost a good friend and colleague when Barbara Weston passed away last month. Barbara was a long time member of RRC and served on the Board of Directors and as recording secretary for many years. She had a great love for the Rainbow River and she was always willing to serve in any capacity for RRC. She will be greatly missed.

## Rainbow River Ranch Litigation

In our last newsletter we reported that the court had granted leave to the developer, the City of Dunnellon, and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to amend their petition for approval of the city/developer lawsuit settlement agreement. As expected, the petitioners amended their petition to include DEO comments as to why the settlement agreement is in the public interest. RRC intervenors disagree with DEO's conclusions and feel that we are still entitled to an evidentiary hearing. Therefore, the intervenors recently filed a response and a request for an evidentiary hearing.

**Obviously, this legal effort to protect the Rainbow River and its environment is an expensive ordeal. Thus, we again ask for tax deductible matching contributions to be made to the RRC Legal Fund. Please send your contributions to the address at the foot of this newsletter.**