



October 2, 2016

Councilman Rick Hancock
Dunnellon City Council

At their Regular meeting September 20, 2016 the Board of Directors of the Rainbow Springs Property Owners Association discussed conditions on the Rainbow River. As you may know this community of approximately 6000 residents has small park on the west side of the river just south of the State Park. Some of our residents frequent this park for picnics, swimming, and launching of kayaks and, all too often, encounter non-residents attempting to enter our park to use our private facilities. This is a common complaint we hear from other private property owners along the river.

We also hear complaints from our residents about many pontoon boats and commercial dive operations parking offshore from our park and uprooting the river vegetation during their activities. Evidence of that can be seen in the large mats of grass floating down the river later in the day.

We also hear the complaints of our kayakers about the growing use of the Rainbow River and the disrespectful crowd of tubers as they ply the river, particularly on summer weekends and holidays. The kayakers usually avoid this river during these busy days because of the party atmosphere and interference with navigation on the river.

We also have several residents of our community who have volunteered to man the sheriff's river watch boat. Since they are not allowed to monitor any of the behavior on the river, and are frustrated witnessing many violations of rules and safe practices on the water with no police backup, they are mostly choosing not to be on the river at the busiest times.

Clearly, there are far too many recreationists on the river, particularly with the great masses of tubers during the summer. The RSPOA Board feels that the Rainbow River is being abused and that some authorities need to show more responsibility for setting rules and limiting activities that are harmful to this great natural asset. We encourage your pursuit of a solution before it is too late.

Yours sincerely,

Burt Eno, President
Rainbow Springs Property Owners Association, Inc.

Rick Hancock
Dunnellon City Council

Councilman Hancock,

Families residing in Blue Cove appreciate all efforts by the city and other public agencies to improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods and along the Rainbow River. This starts with better management of the level of recreational activity occurring on our beautiful river.

The members of the Blue Cove Home Owners Association, representing more than one-hundred households strongly support all efforts to gain control over the excessive tuber traffic on the Rainbow River during the spring and summer seasons.

Though everyone should have access to public resources, the Rainbow River is a finite and fragile resource, and therefore careful management of the numbers of users at any one time is critical. Additionally, everyone using the river should have a socially acceptable experience of enjoyment for their particular use. This cannot happen when one form of use (tubing) overwhelms all other uses, to the detriment of all users.

The overwhelming volume of tubing creates public safety issues, and public nuisance issues along the river corridor and in Dunnellon, particularly at Blue Run Park. We do not want our outstanding waterway degraded in this manner, nor our neighborhoods, town, and park.

Please coordinate with all public agencies to unify ordinances, enforce the rules and regulations, and work together to improve the overall river experience for all users by limiting activities to a manageable level.

On behalf of the Blue Cove Homeowners Association, thank you for all efforts to responsibly manage the river uses and protect our premier river resource.

Thank you

Jim Petersen
President,
Blue Cove Home Owners Association



www.rainbowriverconservation.com

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Councilman Rick Hancock
Dunnellon City Council

Thank you for your observation of conditions on the Rainbow River and your expressed desire to open lines of communication with all entities that should be involved in a cooperative effort to protect the river and develop a suitable recreation management plan. As you know, Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. has long been a watchdog over the river and has sought to not only protect the ecology of the river but also to bring about improvements to allow humankind to passively enjoy the beauty and serenity of the river.

In 2006 RRC derived the Rainbow River Corridor Project, a proposal to the Florida Forever Program, to acquire remaining parcels of land along the east shore of the river to preserve them and protect the river. The first such acquisition was the 32 acre parcel now known as the Blue Run Park of Dunnellon. The Florida Communities Trust contributed \$2.9 million, the county provided the 10% match, and RRC wrote the proposal and management plan. RRC subsequently acquired a SWFWMD grant with an in-kind match to improve the parking lot and alleviate direct storm water runoff to the river. RRC assisted the city with other improvements in the park and, along the way, assisted with writing the River Protection Ordinance and the Tree Ordinance.

Unfortunately, what was to be a passive park and river access consistent with the FCT Management Plan has now turned into a carnival of commercial use with little concern for the resource. Many thousands of tubers during the summer are allowed to enter the river at KP Hole and the State Park. Very few of these tubers actually come to enjoy the serenity and beauty of the river and its surroundings. They dominate the river and force diversion of other water craft into shallow areas where they tear up the natural vegetation and scare off the wildlife. Although KP Hole and the State Park have limits on parking there are no limits on the number of tubers or other craft and off-site vendors are popping up all over to get a piece of the dollar pie. The congestion at Blue Run Park is outrageous.

There is no management plan for traffic on the river. There is inconsistency in city and county ordinances applicable to the river and there is effectively no enforcement of these ordinances or navigational rules. No single agency seems to be in charge and sheer havoc is the result. Clearly, there needs to be cooperation between governing agencies and there needs to be an enforceable management plan for recreation on the river. At their meeting of September 19, 2016 the RRC Board of Directors discussed this matter and declared their support of your initiative and stated their readiness to help.

Yours sincerely,

Burt Eno, President
Rainbow River Conservation, Inc.

P.O. Box 729 - Dunnellon, Florida 34430
A Guidestar "Gold" Not-for-Profit Organization

Councilman Rick Hancock
Dunnellon City Council

Thank you for inviting Sateke Village to be a part of the discussion regarding the impact of commercial use on the Rainbow River.

Sateke Village is home to approximately fifty families located along the east side of the Rainbow River. The state parks tubing entrance along SW 180th Ave. Rd. is approximately a half-mile south of the Sateke Village entrance. Road traffic is a great concern to our residents. During peak times of the state park shuttle business, more vehicles than the state park facility can handle congest SW 180th Ave. Rd. Sometimes law enforcement is called out to observe the traffic, but even so, it has become increasingly difficult for Sateke Village residents to enter our own neighborhood. This is a 55 mph zone with too many cars for road safety- an accident waiting to happen.

One way to control the volume of traffic showing up at the tuber entrance is to require reservations made by tubers either by phone or online; a system the state parks use for camping already. Another idea is to move the existing tollbooth further in to get vehicles off of SW 180th Ave. Rd.

Often people travel a long distance to float the river, and when they are turned away due to full capacity, they seek river access in our neighborhood, often parking in front of homes and walking past our Private Property signs to access the river. Many of these people are irritated with the long wait time at the state park and on occasion they are belligerent to our residents when asked to leave. To remedy this problem the state park should provide Sateke Village with appropriate signage so the traffic can be made aware that our neighborhood does NOT provide public river access or parking.

Over the years, our Sateke Village residents have noticed an increase in traffic on the river every spring/summer. With the increase of human traffic on the river, there is an increase in trespassing on all of the private residences along the way. We have also noticed that laws for the river are no longer enforced, and we witness people drinking and eating from disposable containers that they then discard in the river. One of our residents did a turbidity study comparing the water turbidity during peak use and non-peak use, and found the turbidity was negatively impacted by higher human traffic on the river. Between floaters and boaters the water quality is threatened. Again, the combination of too many floaters and boaters is an accident waiting to happen.

We appreciate any efforts to reduce and manage the traffic along the river and the roads. We would be willing to be a partner in figuring out ways to improve the quality of recreational river use for all of us.

Sincerely,
Sateke Village HOA