

Restore the Ocklawaha!

RALLY FOR THE RIVER
February 19-20, 2005

Remove Rodman Dam!

Putnam County Environmental Council, Inc.

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The ***Rally for the Ocklawaha River***, sponsored by the Putnam County Environmental Council, Inc. is a weekend full of great field trips and a big party with live music by Dale Crider and other Florida folk musicians and Al Burt as featured guest. But more than that, it's an opportunity for you and your group to have fun and make a difference in the ongoing struggle to restore the Ocklawaha River.

Here in Putnam County, almost daily we deal with the controversy in our backyard - the dammed Ocklawaha River and the resulting Rodman Reservoir. While we understand the apprehension of local officials and the business community that fear a negative economic impact if the river is restored, PCEC has planned a fun-filled weekend event to demonstrate the positive impacts of nature-based tourism that will result from a restored river.

To make this successful, we need you! We are asking supporters from across the state to come to Putnam County February 19-20, 2005 (President's Day weekend). Come and enjoy one of the 50+ field trips and tours we've arranged in beautiful, rural Putnam County, stay at least one night and eat at local restaurants.

On Saturday night, join us at Ravine Gardens State Park in Palatka for a free, music- and fun-filled pep Rally for the River!

We need a big crowd to make this work and are counting on the support of like-minded folks that are equally frustrated over the decades we've spent working on this issue.

Your participation will support restoration efforts by:

- demonstrating the economic impact of nature-based tourism on the local economy - *we'll provide you with calling cards to leave everywhere you go and ask that you give us your receipts so we can prepare a report for local officials;*
- showing everyone that this is not a local issue - *the Ocklawaha River is an important resource for all Floridians;*
- reinvigorating and thanking those who have fought this battle for decades - *meet and greet representatives for many of Florida's premier conservation organizations;*
- giving legislators the evidence of public support needed to continue fighting this battle in Tallahassee and Washington - *we'll have petitions for you to sign and sample letters for you to write to your elected representatives;*
- educating and motivating activists state-wide - *the resource lies in rural north central Florida, but the population areas and majority of representation on state and federal levels lies elsewhere;* and
- strengthen local supporters who have no representation in Tallahassee on this issue - *your support will motivate and inspire many who feel they have no voice.*

Here's how it works:

This is not a conference with concurrent scientific lectures, presentations, awards banquets, or conference fees. This event has two main features:

- 50+ concurrent, interesting and mostly FREE field trips and tours in three time blocks: Saturday, February 19, 2005, morning and afternoon and Sunday morning, February 20, 2005; and
- a FREE pep-Rally for the Ocklawaha River at Ravine Gardens State Park in Palatka on Saturday evening, February 19, 2005, with live music and interesting guests.

We've created field trip opportunities to satisfy a wide variety of interests and have enlisted the help of some of the best trip leaders in north central Florida. Great birders, botanists, naturalists, outfitters, and artists will be on hand to show you what makes this area so special. Most are free and you can sign up for more than one. If you need more information about a location, many have websites. When you decide where you want to go, please call the contact person listed to make reservations for you or your group and have maps and other information sent directly to you. Many trips require a minimum number of participants so please don't delay in expressing your interest.

When you look at the accommodations list you will notice there are few hotels and motels. We encourage you to consider the fish camps. It may sound odd but most of these are located in the SE corner of Putnam County along the banks of the St. Johns River or Lake Crescent, in incredibly beautiful settings. Many are quaint and pretty basic but have restaurants, facilities for tent and RV camping, boat rentals, and interesting folks with stories to tell. We've tried to list all the available websites so you can go online and check them out before you decide. It would be good for the owners of these establishments to know that there is a market in nature-based tourism other than bass fishermen.

We've also reserved the dorms and apartment at Welaka State Forest for the weekend. If you're traveling with friends this might be a great alternative to a motel or a tent and the price is right, only \$8 per night. You'll need to bring your own towels and bed linens. Sleeping bags are suggested.

Saturday evening at 7:30 you are invited to attend the FREE pep-Rally for the Ocklawaha River at Ravine Gardens State Park in Palatka. In exchange, we ask that you *give us your receipts so we can tally them up for our report back to local officials*. **THIS IS A CRITICAL PART OF OUR STRATEGY!** Concern over the local economy is the main reason proponents of Rodman cite for keeping the Ocklawaha River dammed. We need your help to demonstrate that there is more to nature-based tourism than bass fishing.

Hope to hear from you soon!

For more information contact Karen Ahlers, Putnam County Environmental Council, (352) 546-3560 or PCECRiverRally@hotmail.com