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**ICHETUCKNEE ALLIANCE JOINS PETITION FOR ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING ON MFLS**

On a conference call held April 21, 2014, members of the Board of Directors of the Ichetucknee Alliance voted unanimously to join the Florida Wildlife Federation's petition for an administrative hearing on the Lower Santa Fe River/Ichetucknee River minimum flows and levels (MFLs). The Earthjustice legal team will represent both groups in this challenge to the proposed MFL rule.

The Ichetucknee Alliance, a nonprofit organization whose members and directors share a vision for a healthy Ichetucknee River System that is preserved and protected for future generations, has called for restoration of the river's flow to its historical average of 350 cubic feet per second (cfs). According to data from the U.S. Geological Survey, the river's flow has fallen beneath 284.9 cfs 50 percent of the time in the last 11 years.

"The proposed MFL rule does not help us reach our goal of restoring flow to the river," said Ichetucknee Alliance President John Jopling. "By joining this petition, we are drawing a line in the sand on behalf of the Ichetucknee. We remain committed to working in good faith with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). We also remain aware, however, that the original intention for MFLs was to protect our water resources—not to protect consumptive use permit holders. The current MFL rule fails to protect the river and fails to strike a proper balance between human consumptive needs and resource needs."

"The current rule is based on the false premise that everyone who now holds a consumptive use permit is not part of the problem," Jopling added.

The Alliance believes that if the Ichetucknee River System is to be restored, Floridians must adopt a new water ethic requiring sacrifice and changes that *must* be compelled by the SRWMD from *all* water users. Anything less would elevate consumptive use over resource and ecological protection, contrary to the intent of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, and in conflict with the requirement to expeditiously implement a recovery or prevention strategy to achieve recovery to the established minimum flow as soon as practicable.

The Alliance also notes with dismay the situation at Manatee Springs and Fanning Springs, which have had MFLs in place since 2006 but have continued to suffer flow declines. A similar situation cannot be permitted on the Ichetucknee.

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