



**PRESS RELEASE
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Florida Water Law Is Subject of *Water Voices* on July 25, 2016, in High Springs

A Basin Management Action Plan that independent experts say will do nothing to reduce high nitrate levels in springs along the Suwannee River... a high-intensity chicken farm in an important recharge area of the Floridan aquifer... a proposed phosphate mine on a tributary of the Santa Fe River... Outstanding Florida Waters in which water quality has continued to degrade even though Florida law is supposed to protect them... the continued issuing of water use permits that affect flows of the Ichetucknee and Santa Fe, rivers that have been designated by the State as needing to be “in recovery”... an increasing population... the list of water problems and potential problems in North Florida’s springs heartland is long and growing.

Two attorneys, Heather Culp and Traci Deen, will discuss situations like these—situations that have raised serious public questions about the State of Florida’s commitment to protecting our springs, rivers, lakes and aquifer—at “Why Aren’t Florida’s Water Laws Protecting Florida’s Water?,” a free public program 7-9 p.m. Monday, July 25, 2016, at the High Springs New Century Woman’s Club, 23674 West US Highway 27, High Springs FL 32643. The program is the fifth in the *Water Voices* series organized by the Ichetucknee Alliance.

“The Florida water laws enacted in the 1970s were considered model laws for the rest of the country,” said Ichetucknee Alliance Secretary Lucinda Merritt. “But look at what has happened to the Ichetucknee and Santa Fe rivers. Both were designated as Outstanding Florida Waters by the State in 1984—a designation that was supposed to protect their water quality—yet long-term trends show that pollution in both rivers is increasing. You have to wonder why. Is the problem with the laws themselves or with their enforcement, or both? Do we need to change our laws?”

The discussion will focus not only on problems but also on potential solutions. Both speakers have connections to Barry University Law School’s Center for Earth Jurisprudence. “Jurisprudence” is the philosophy of law and the Center seeks to develop a philosophy and practice of law that respects

the natural world in its own right. From the Center's website: "Our work is based upon the concept that humanity has a basic responsibility to care for and protect the long-term health and well-being of Earth, meaning all beings and ecosystems that constitute the natural world, recognizing that humanity is an integral and interdependent part of nature."

Heather Culp, Esq., is Associate Director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute. She also serves on the Florida Springs Council's Executive Committee, as Treasurer of the Silver Springs Alliance Board of Directors, and on the (Volusia) Blue Spring Alliance's Steering Committee.

Traci Deen, Esq., is the Director of the Center for Earth Jurisprudence (CEJ) at Barry University School of Law. There, she focuses on law and policy change, legislative analysis, education, and community outreach to lawyers, students, policymakers and the Central Florida community.

Water Voices is a series of conversations designed to broaden and deepen the ongoing public discussions about water issues in North Central Florida. There will be time at the end of the program for questions and answers and an opportunity for audience members to have one-on-one conversations with the speakers and with members of the sponsoring organizations.

This session of *Water Voices* is co-sponsored by the Ichetucknee Alliance, the High Springs New Century Woman's Club, and Our Santa Fe River. The program is offered in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution's *Water/Ways* exhibition that will be on view at the High Springs Historical Museum July 16-August 27, 2016.

For more information, email wordwitch@windstream.net or call Lucinda Merritt at 386-454-0415.

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