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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • September 6, 2018

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New Water Voices Program

The Ichetucknee Needs Your Help! Find Out Why and How at “Clear Choices for Clean Water”

Long-term trends show that the Ichetucknee springs and river are impaired. According to the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute’s (FSI’s) 2016 Ichetucknee Report Card, the river’s nitrate level is twice as high as the state standard and the Ichetucknee has lost about one-quarter of its historic average flow. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has acknowledged both of these problems.

Scientists at FSI agree, however, that the Ichetucknee springshed has some special characteristics that would make it relatively easy to begin restoring the springs and river to health. The Ichetucknee Alliance’s 2018 Water Voices program, “Clear Choices for Clean Water,” focuses on creating solutions for the problems that plague the Ichetucknee.

“Clear Choices for Clean Water” will be offered twice. The first session will be offered in Alachua County from 7-9 p.m. Monday, Sept. 24, 2018, at the High Springs New Century Woman’s Club, 23674 U.S. Highway 27, High Springs, Florida 32643. The second session of the same program will be offered in Columbia County from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 2, 2018, at the Columbia County Public Library – Main, 308 NW Columbia Ave., Lake City, Florida 32055. Admission to both events is free and everyone is invited to attend.

After reviewing the Ichetucknee’s 2016 Report Card and identifying the problems that are harming the river, Florida Springs Institute Executive Director Dr. Robert L. Knight will talk about two new efforts focused on solutions, FSI’s Blue Water Audit project and his idea for an Aquifer Protection Fee.

Following Knight’s talk, award-winning documentary filmmaker Eric Flagg will present the premiere of three new short videos, “Ichetucknee Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow.” The videos are designed to spark discussions about different ways that citizens could show leadership for restoring the Ichetucknee River System, one element in the largest concentration of freshwater

springs in the world and a vital part of North Florida's ecology, economy and environmental heritage.

"Audiences will learn who makes which water-related decisions in Florida and why scientists think the Ichetucknee might be the easiest spring system in the state to restore," explained Ichetucknee Alliance President John Jopling. "People will find out how to determine their aquifer footprints. We'll explore the idea that leadership for the Ichetucknee begins at home and why it's important to inspire others to take action. We'll talk about how working together is essential to stop pollution and to create a water conservation ethic."

"We're happy that one of the Alliance's ideas that is presented in the videos—the idea of 'right crop, right place' with state-funded financial incentives for farmers to plant water-friendly crops—is now being tried in a pilot program by the Suwannee River Water Management District," Jopling added. "Like that idea, which the Alliance floated to the District several years ago, we hope our other ideas will spark conversations and gain traction. If we make the right choices about how we're living with water now, we will make sure that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the Ichetucknee tomorrow."

A flyer for both events is included here. For more information, see ichetuckneealliance.org/events or contact Lucinda Merritt (information on p. 1).

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