

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Ichetucknee Springshed Water Quality Improvement Project Completed



***Ichetucknee Springshed Water Quality Improvement Project completion ceremony and ribbon cutting hosted on October 28, 2016. Pictured left to right: Mary Catherine Gallagher, Special Assistant, Office of U.S. Senator Rubio; Tonya Shays, Legislative Assistant, Office of Florida Senator Bradley; Bill Nelson, U.S. Senator; Ted Yoho, U.S. Representative; Elizabeth Porter, Florida Representative; Noah Valenstein, Executive Director, Suwannee River Water Management District; Grayson Cason, Lake City Assistant City Manager; Eugene Jefferson, Lake City Councilmember; Scarlet Frisina, Columbia County Commissioner; Bucky Nash, Columbia County Commissioner; Bob Soderholm, Park Manager, Ichetucknee State Park.***

LIVE OAK, FLA., Oct. 28, 2016 — The largest constructed treated wetlands of its kind in the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) is complete and will provide 1.58 million gallons of recharge water into the Upper Floridian aquifer each day, while creating 120 acres of wetlands. The Ichetucknee Springshed Water Quality Improvement Project completion was celebrated by an on-site ribbon cutting with partners and local, state and federal officials.

“Our springs are one of Florida’s greatest resources and are absolutely vital to our local and regional economies,” said Representative Elizabeth Porter. “North Florida is home to the highest concentration of first magnitude springs in the nation and I have and will continue to support laws and funding to protect these treasured resources. This project demonstrates my personal commitment as well as the legislature’s commitment to ensure that our springs are restored and protected for continual enjoyment by future generations.”

The project was completed in partnership with the District, the City of Lake City, Columbia County and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. It will increase the river flow by 500,000 gallons per day, bringing the Ichetucknee River 25 percent closer to achieving its minimum flow level.

“This project is one of the area’s cornerstone spring projects which will provide significant water resource benefits and help sustain and enhance the recreational experiences of the Ichetucknee River and springs,” said Noah Valenstein, executive director of the Suwannee River Water Management District.

Water quality will be significantly improved by reducing total nitrogen to the Ichetucknee River by an estimated 20 percent as a result of the project completion. Additionally, the constructed wetlands will reduce total nitrogen loads from the wastewater treatment plant to the Ichetucknee Springshed by 85 percent or 77,000 pounds annually.

“The springs and rivers of North Florida are critical and essential resources within the state’s delicate ecosystem,” said Senator Rob Bradley. “This project reflects the commitment that the State of Florida, working in partnership with local governments, has made to protecting and improving the water quality of our springs and the aquifer.”

In addition to water quality, the Ichetucknee River and springs also provide valuable economic support to area communities.

“Ichetucknee Springs is host to 507,000 visitors a year with a direct economic impact of over \$44 million dollars supporting 713 local jobs; it is vital for our economy that the spring’s system remains pristine,” said Bob Soderholm, park manager of Ichetucknee State Park. “This project is a great example of hard work and innovation that is needed to protect our precious water resources.”

In the last three years, approximately \$20 million has been invested from the state, District and its partners in various projects to remove nutrients and reduce water use in the Ichetucknee Springshed. Additionally, in 2016 Governor Scott and the legislature approved a \$50 million annual grant program to restore and protect Florida springs.

The Suwannee River Water Management District manages water and related natural resources in north-central Florida by providing water quality and quantity monitoring, research, regulation, land acquisition and management and flood protection.

Additional springs restoration projects are planned throughout the state. For a list of the projects and to learn more about the District, visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com) or follow us on Facebook and Twitter, search @SRWMD.

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