

of vessels being based on the Ichetucknee and Santa Fe rivers. Many of these PWCs are engaged in organized group rides which can include anywhere from 20 to several hundred vessels. An organized ride in April, 2025 brought over 100 PWCs up the lower Ichetucknee on a single day, including a single group of over 20 vessels. Many of these riders seek the adrenaline rush of “running the bridge”, accelerating rapidly to traverse the railroad and US 27 bridges (See video - 04212025 Shoreline and Wake: <https://youtu.be/HXkvQfBwiAE>). The thrill is enhanced by running it blind with an obstructed view of oncoming traffic.

PWCs have the unique ability to navigate most areas of the Ichetucknee spring run, including the shoreline, often at higher speeds, and are observed to do so on a regular basis (See video - 06242025 Jetski Donut.mp4: <https://youtu.be/W32g9ehHVPo>). This observed behavior by PWCs contradicts the Boat U.S. Foundation’s advice that users operating PWCs should keep clear of shallow water. Because PWCs can be operated in shallow water at high speeds and in areas not usually frequented by boats, disturbance to wildlife may be more of a concern than with other types of motorized watercraft. The turbulence produced by the jet propulsion system is known to disturb plant growth and sediments, especially during acceleration and turns when the thrust is downward (Asplund). It is common for PWCs to traverse the entire length of the lower Ichetucknee to “run the bridge”, accessing the lower section of Ichetucknee Springs State Park and often traveling as far up as the Last Takeout for the tube run (See Figure 1). As the vessels “run the bridge”, significant acceleration is required to overcome the swift current, destroying the submerged aquatic vegetation, SAV, in the very shallow region immediately below the bridge, including an established field of eelgrass, and in the sections above the bridge. When this occurs, rafts of SAV, primarily eelgrass, can be observed floating downstream (See Figure 2 and see video - Jetski with Eelgrass: https://youtu.be/Qa8_2ibETek). In addition to damaging the river, these activities pose a grave danger for paddlers, tubers, and swimmers floating downstream under the bridge. Of note, the concessionaire in the state park has recently added a shuttle for guests choosing to paddle the full length of the Ichetucknee, continuing down the Santa Fe River to the pickup location at the US 129 bridge. These unsuspecting guests have limited ability to avoid a collision should a PWC choose to blindly accelerate under the bridge headed upstream as they float down.

The jet propulsion design of PWCs creates excessive turbidity under virtually all conditions, more so in shallow streams such as the lower Ichetucknee than in deep water. While most, not all, PWCs maintain low speeds until approaching the bridge, the design of these devices creates significant wakes (See Figure 3) in addition to disrupting the stream bed by the intake and jet output of the vessel (See video - 04172025 High Wake Approaching Kayak: <https://youtu.be/wlrhhkrTsQQ> and the associated shoreline turbidity - 04172025 Disturbed Shoreline: <https://youtu.be/gIIASogs-MA>). Observations indicate that PWCs create far greater turbidity on the lower Ichetucknee on a case by case basis than motorboats. Organized group outings multiply these effects many times over (See Figure 4). The wakes result in shoreline erosion, turbidity along the river bed and shoreline (See video - 07022024 Turbidity: https://youtu.be/UC3JOxQP_Y), and disrupt turtle basking (See Figure