

Date: September 8, 2025

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From: Linda L. Weseman

Subject: **Supplemental Evidence – 07/29/2025 Petition for a Springs Protection Zone on the lower Ichetucknee River**

Additional evidence has become available since the submission of a petition for a Springs Protection Zone for the lower Ichetucknee on July 29, 2025. Please consider the following:

Boating activity, including wakes, has had a significant impact on submerged aquatic vegetation near the shoreline above TREPO Hodor park. Figure 1 shows the abundant eelgrass and diverse SAV beneath the private dock at 218 SW Riverside Ave, Fort White, Florida in 2016. In comparison, the SAV beneath this dock on September 6, 2025 currently consists primarily of filamentous algae. The soil erosion around the pilings is quite dramatic as shown in Figure 2.

The shallow regions immediately above and below the railroad bridge have hosted lush eelgrass fields in the past. These areas have become increasingly popular for PWCs running the bridges. The intake for the jet propulsion system has had particularly harsh consequences for this shallow vegetation, uprooting it and cropping the remaining vegetation near the root. Figure 3 shows the eelgrass field above the railroad bridge prior to construction of the covered walkway, a 2024 project. The current situation from September 3, 2025 is depicted in Figure 4. While the vegetation is virtually impossible to observe, short leaves and root systems are present, giving hope for restoration if this petition is approved. A similar scenario can be observed downstream of the railroad bridge, as illustrated in Figures 5 and 6.

The narrow channel of the lower Ichetucknee spring run combined with shallowness create a dangerous situation in which both tubes and motorized vessels share the channel. Interactions between tubers and vessels are unavoidable with the potential for injury or death being high (see Figures 7 & 8). It should be noted that while Florida does not have a statutory requirement to maintain a 100 foot buffer between motorized vessels and other recreational users, this is the case in most states and is the standard for safety. This standard is impossible to meet given the narrow spring run.