

# Dr. Robert Knight at Water Voices: “Clear Choices for Clean Water.”

September 24, 2018



Most of the following was written and distributed by Lu Merritt of [Ichetucknee Alliance](#), with new wording from your historian in places to bring it up-to-date with the program tonight, Sept. 24, 2018.

The event, held at the High Springs New Century Woman’s Club, drew an enthusiastic crowd. Dr. Knight is well-known in High Springs, as his Florida Springs Institute is located here. The interested crowd provided a lively question and answer period

following the presentation.

Our thanks go to Bob Knight, Lu Merritt and the Ichetucknee Alliance for an excellent program, upholding the fine tradition that Water Voices has established.



The Water Voices program, “Clear Choices for Clean Water.” featured Dr. Robert Knight of the [Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute](#) (FSI) talking about FSI’s 2016 Ichetucknee Report Card, the new Blue Water Audit/Aquifer Footprint project, and his idea for an Aquifer Protection Fee. Also included were the premieres of three new short videos by the Alliance, edited by Eric Flagg–Ichetucknee: Yesterday -Today – Tomorrow.



Eric Flagg, who edited the videos, provided information on the history of green lawns in America.

The second session will be held in Columbia County, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 2, 2018, at the Columbia County Public Library – Main, 308 NW Columbia Ave., Lake City, FL 32055.

The Water Voices speaker series was created by the Ichetucknee Alliance in 2015 and is designed to broaden and deepen conversations about water issues in North Florida, with a special focus on the Ichetucknee and Santa Fe rivers. The format includes significant time for an audience question-and-answer session with the presenters and for one-on-one conversations at the end of the program.

The Florida Springs Institute's 2016 Report Card graded the Ichetucknee's condition as "C-minus," with "D" grades for nitrate pollution and flow. "This system is not healthy," Knight explained when the report card was released. "If you have a

sixth grader who is getting C-minus grades, you aren't proud of that."

The videos place the Ichetucknee in context as a vibrant ecological, social and economic anchor of the surrounding communities and as an effective brand for Columbia County and Florida's Springs Heartland. The videos also offer what the Alliance calls a "Water 101" civics lesson about who makes which decisions that affect the Ichetucknee. Ideas for solutions to the problems plaguing the river are included. The central message is that those of us who live in North Florida create the Ichetucknee of tomorrow through the choices we make today, and everyone needs to be part of creative efforts to find solutions.

Dr. Robert Knight is an environmental scientist/systems ecologist/springs expert with over 38 years of experience as an aquatic and wetland ecologist in Florida. His doctoral work included an ecological assessment of Silver Springs and Silver River under the direction of Howard T. Odum, one of the founders of systems ecology. As Executive Director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, Knight led the team that developed a restoration plan for the Ichetucknee River System. He is a founding member of the Ichetucknee Alliance and serves on the Alliance's advisory board.

Eric Flagg left his career as a wetland scientist and environmental consultant to pursue a career in an area in which he believes he can make a difference in the world—documentary film. The films produced by his company, Jellyfish Smack Productions—including "Gimme Green" about American lawns—have won numerous awards. Flagg currently coordinates the Digital Media and Graphic Design Technology teaching program at Santa Fe College in Gainesville.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

