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PO Box 33522, Decatur GA 30033
Phone: 770-934-5644 Web: georgiarocks.us/events

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geology Talk and Walk May 30 Traces the Eastern Continental Divide

Dr. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of the popular guide, *Roadside Geology of Georgia*, will present a slide talk, “Along the Divide – What Shapes Our Mountains?” at Terra Incognita Vineyard near Clarkesville, Saturday May 30, at 1:00 PM. Following the talk, Kristine Johnson, retired National Park Service forester, will join Bill in leading a nature walk.

Trivia question: What geographic feature runs through both Gainesville, Florida, and Gainesville, Georgia, as well as Georgia’s Capitol building, Terra Incognita Vineyard, and North Carolina’s Grandfather Mountain? Answer: the Eastern Continental Divide (ECD). Rain that falls on one side of the ECD makes its way to the Atlantic Ocean. On the other side, the flow is to the Gulf of Mexico.

“Along the Divide” traces the ECD from the sandhills of Florida to mile-high peaks in North Carolina. It reveals how Atlanta’s location astride the divide is no coincidence. It explores how erosional competition between watersheds continually shifts the ECD, in some cases resulting in spectacular mountain scenery. It finishes with a current controversy among geoscientists that bears on the frequent claim that Southern Appalachian summits are among “the world’s oldest mountains.”

The nature walk will look at the effect that soil formed from quartzite bedrock has on plant life. Crossing the divide from the vineyard property into adjacent Chattahoochee National Forest, the effects of steeper slopes and different compass orientation will also come into play.

Roadside Geology of Georgia, a full-color 320-page guide, has sold over ten thousand copies. “Our goal is to take the reader to Georgia’s natural wonders and explain the science that lies behind the scenery,” says Witherspoon, who taught geology to K-12 students and their teachers for 17 years at DeKalb County Schools’ Fernbank Science Center, and co-authored the 2013 book with Dr. Pamela Gore of Georgia State University.

The program is free and open to the public. Terra Incognita Vineyard is about 2 hours’ drive northeast of Atlanta, and 12 miles north of Clarkesville, Habersham County, Georgia.

Contact for information: Dr. Bill Witherspoon, bill@georgiarocks.us.