

A Resolution that Waterkeepers Florida

Opposes the Application by Twin Pines Minerals

for a Titanium Mine near the Okefenokee Swamp,

and asks the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for an Environmental Impact Statement broad enough to cover Florida issues,

for Public Hearings in Florida,

and to Answer how the Corps has determined or will determine that this mine would not affect Florida

WHEREAS, the Okefenokee Swamp, partly in Florida; is a national and international treasure, for its wetland ecology, and for boating, fishing, and birding, and for hunting nearby; and

WHEREAS, the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) provides more economic benefit to Florida than any other NWR (see U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Banking On Nature 2017: The Economic Contributions of National Wildlife Refuge Recreational Visitation to Local Communities

<https://www.fws.gov/economics/divisionpublications/bankingOnNature/BoN2017/bon2017.asp>); and

WHEREAS, the Okefenokee Swamp is the headwaters of the Suwannee River and of the St. Marys River, both of which are partly in Florida; and

WHEREAS, any change in the water level of the Swamp would affect the entire Okefenokee Swamp and the Suwannee River and the St. Marys River; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant's proposed mine in Charlton County, Georgia, would sit above the Floridan Aquifer, from which most of Florida drinks; and

WHEREAS, the miners have applied to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA-EPD) to withdraw 4.32 million gallons per day of water, more than four times as much as Folkston, the county seat of Charlton County (see <http://wwals.net/?p=50227>); and

WHEREAS, the Floridan Aquifer is already under stress with declining water levels from withdrawals in south Georgia and north Florida, including from existing mines; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant company, Twin Pines Minerals, is already under a Consent Order for multiple violations at four Chemours mine sites in north Florida (see <http://wwals.net/pictures/2019-02-07-lfco-chemours>); and

WHEREAS, infractions similar to those of the Florida Consent Order at the mine site in Georgia could adversely affect the Okefenokee Swamp, the St. Marys River, and the Suwannee River; and

WHEREAS, the only two Waterkeepers that straddle the GA-FL state line, Suwannee Riverkeeper and St. Marys Riverkeeper, have filed comments with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asking for a full Environmental Impact Statement and Public Hearings (see <http://wwals.net/?p=50140> and <http://wwals.net/pictures/2019-09-12-st-marys-rk-usace-tpm/>); and

WHEREAS, most of the Riverkeepers of Georgia filed their own comments, or comments supporting the comments filed with the Corps by Suwannee Riverkeeper; and

WHEREAS, all the above-mentioned Waterkeepers or Riverkeepers are Members of the Waterkeeper Alliance, and Waterkeeper Alliance supports the comments filed with the Corps by Suwannee Riverkeeper; and

WHEREAS, the comments filed with the Corps by Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) include important legal and other points relevant to Florida (see <http://wwals.net/pictures/2019-09-12-selc-usace-tpm/>); and

WHEREAS, all the above-mentioned comments, as well as ones filed with the Corps by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, cite information lacking from the Application, especially about hydrology and hydrogeology (see <http://wwals.net/?p=50199>); and

WHEREAS, the Corps received at least 20,338 comments before its nominal comment deadline, far more than for most applications (see <http://wwals.net/?p=50158>)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Waterkeepers Florida is opposed to the mining Application SAS-2018-00554 as filed, and Waterkeepers Florida is filing a request with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

1. to require the Applicant to supply all the missing information identified by Suwannee Riverkeeper, St. Marys Riverkeeper, and SELC; and
2. to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) broad enough to cover all the concerns and answer all the questions raised by the above-named three organizations, especially those concerns and questions relevant to Florida; and
3. to hold Public Hearings, including in Florida; and
4. to answer how the Corps has or will determine that the Applicant's proposed mine would not adversely affect the Okefenokee Swamp, the St. Marys River, the Suwannee River, the Floridan Aquifer, or the State of Florida.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY WATERKEEPERS FLORIDA, this 23rd day of October 2019.

