

Therefore, our position is to:

1) Support an independent full Environmental Impact Study (EIS) with the following considerations:

a) An emphasis on potential adverse effects on the hydrology of the lands near the Okefenokee with particular attention to:

b) Whether the proposed mine might threaten the drainage systems of the swamp under unusual conditions, and

c) The potential for toxic contamination of the swamp, especially on its southeastern border, and

d) The variable impacts that mining may have on the swamp under the range of current abiotic conditions, in addition to those projected under future conditions in the instance of droughts or more dynamic environmental climates (decreased or elevated temperatures, more rain, less rain).

e) Following, we request the EIS incorporate a “sensitivity analysis” or other type of assessment with consideration of where impacts may be accelerated beyond that anticipated for current conditions and under which variable conditions, or environmental parameters, that acceleration is most consequential.

2) Support public hearings after such independent research has been conducted, to allow a more-educated decision to move forward, and

3) Oppose the immediate approval of the proposed permit to allow Twin Pines Mineral, LLC to mine heavy mineral deposits as submitted until an independent full EIS brings forth its findings and public hearings occur.

In addition, we request public hearings be held soon with the opportunity for interested parties to question directly the contracted consultants referenced in the application. Because this decision may impact the entire swamp and not just the southeastern corner, there should be at least one public hearing in each of the Okefenokee Gateway Communities: Waycross, Folkston and Fargo.

The Okefenokee Swamp has existed and thrived for thousands of years. We need to take a little more time to evaluate any proposal that might result in a challenge to its current century-long recovery from extensive over-forestry of cypress trees and over-hunting of alligators.