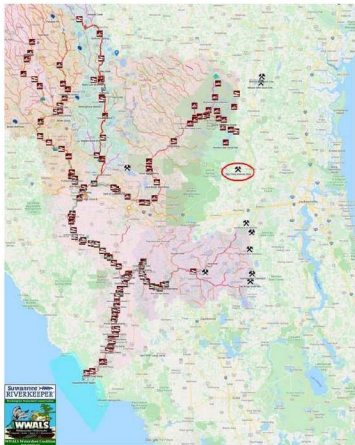


November 30, 2020

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WWALS is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit
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*WWALS Watershed Coalition advocates
for conservation and stewardship of the
Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha,
Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River
watersheds in south Georgia and north
Florida through education, awareness,
environmental monitoring, and citizen
activities.*

*Suwannee RIVERKEEPER® is a
program and a paid staff position of
WWALS.*



Re: Mining permit applications too close to the Okefenokee Swamp

Dear Governor Kemp and staff,

Thank you again for being the first governor to visit Hahira since Jimmy Carter; it was good to speak with you there. Last year you sent a staff delegate to the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) meeting. For the second year running, the Okefenokee Swamp is on GWC's Dirty Dozen worst threats to Georgia waters, because of a threatened mine. <https://wwals.net/?p=54109>

Georgia is all that stands between a titanium strip mine within a few miles of the Okefenokee Swamp, proposed by coal miners from Alabama. Please direct the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to thoroughly examine the five state permit applications from Twin Pines Minerals, LLC (TPM). <https://wwals.net/?p=54009> The evidence indicates DNR should reject those applications. At the least, an environmental review equivalent to an Environmental Impact Statement should be conducted.

The 60,000 people who wrote to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers against that mine are still opposed, despite the Corps abdicating its oversight. <https://wwals.net/?p=53867>

As the largest blackwater swamp east of the Mississippi, the Okefenokee is a state, national, and international treasure, supporting 750 jobs and bringing more than \$60 million of income through entrances at the Okefenokee NWR near Folkston, Okefenokee Swamp Park near Waycross, and Stephen C. Foster State Park near Fargo, plus hunting on private land nearby. Any change in water level or quality would affect the whole Swamp, the Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers, which flow from it, and the underlying Floridan Aquifer, from which all of south Georgia and north Florida drinks. <http://wwals.net/?p=50052>

Twin Pines Minerals is still under a Florida Consent Order for multiple violations just across the state line. <https://wwals.net/?p=49898> During Hurricane Irma, those north Florida Chemours mine sites caused the only non-military pollution spills in the Suwannee River Basin in Florida. <https://wwals.net/?p=37541/#basin> Twin Pines should not be permitted to move up Trail Ridge next to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, which provides more economic benefit to Georgia (and also to Florida) than any other NWR.

Despite promises from Twin Pines, their hydrology reports have not been peer reviewed. <https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20190814/company-explains-its-okefenokee-mining-plans>

University of Georgia professor Todd Rasmussen twice wrote to the Corps pointing out flaws that have not been fixed, following up on his earlier research that indicates the Swamp exchanges water with the Florida Aquifer. <https://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/44003> According to that research, water withdrawals as far away as Brunswick affect aquifer levels under the Swamp, so how could withdrawals three miles away not?

The Twin Pines hydrology report does not account for slimes, which are tiny particles of clay and titanium dioxide that, according to USGS, could cause "smothering of organisms living in