



January 26, 2021

To: Jonathan Putnam  
Office of International Affairs  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

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(202) 354-1809

Re: Nominating Okefenokee NWR for UNESCO World Heritage List, Docket Number  
NPS-WASO-OIA-31249 PIN00IO14.XI0000



Dear Mr. Putnam,

As you know, the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) is on the UNESCO Tentative List for the United States, and thus is eligible for the U.S. to submit an ONWR nomination file. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5252/>



As Suwannee Riverkeeper and for our umbrella organization WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc., I would like to encourage you to nominate ONWR this year. The vast majority of the Okefenokee Swamp is in the Suwannee River Basin, and some 85% of the outflow of the Swamp goes down the Suwannee River, which continues through Georgia and across Florida, where it is the subject of the state song, to the Gulf of Mexico.

WWALS member Bobby McKenzie sums it up from his perspective:

“As a world traveler for the past 20 plus years I must say that the Okefenokee Swamp holds its own when it comes to enchantment. I never would have thought I would have used the term enchantment to describe a swamp, but it happens to be the best one. My adventures have taken me to many places, each with their own charm and enchantment and history. I recall my first experience outside the United States, it was to the Chagos Archipelago part of the British Indian Ocean Territory. The crystal-clear waters of the islands and the sanctity of the massive coconut crabs and the hawksbill sea turtles. Soon I found myself living in South Korea and experiencing the Buddhist temples embedded in the cliffs of the East Sea (more well known as the Sea of Japan) and the fishing islands of Sunyu-do in the yellow sea. At Jeju Island with its botanical gardens, lava tubes, and extinct volcano, I ascended the stairs of Mt Sanbanggalsa Temple where a spring drips from the ceiling pools into the temple cave and had a ceremonial sip. Years living in Europe showed me the awe of the Dolomites, the Carpathian Mountains, the Iron Gates, the Danube Delta and the switchback road of Transfagarasan. I have met the wonders of the Black Forest, I’ve skied Mount Blanc, Matterhorn, and the Zugspitze and swam in the ocean at Vilamoura in Algarve with its ocean caves. I dove the cliffs of Ischia and enjoyed the hot thermal springs of the Mediterranean. I’ve hiked miles through the Ardennes Forests and the ancient vineyards along the Mosel River. I have witnessed the famed White Cliffs of Dover, the puzzling Stonehenge, the North Sea, English Channel, and the beaches of Normandy. My time in Hawaii introduced me to the many natural phenomena such as the Makapu Tide Pools, the Queen’s Bath at Moku Nui, and the Mermaid Caves in Nanakuli. The pill boxes at Lanikai, Coco Head along with the Hidden Lagoon offered breath-taking views of the island of Oahu.

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WWALS is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit  
charity est. June 2012  
*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.



“There are many places I that I can recall that I have not mentioned. But all these places share one thing in common, they are amazing places that most people have never heard of or will see in their lifetime. They are all wonderful and inspiring places in their own right. This is true with the Okefenokee Swamp. I first learned of the Okefenokee as I was planning my move to South Georgia from Hawaii. I was searching for outdoor activities and the first thing I came