

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Responses to Questions from Senator Perdue Regarding the Proposed Twin Pines Mining Project

Project Description Overview:

The letter states "As currently proposed, the mine site is approximately 12,000 acres with the northwest boundary within ½ mile from the Okefenokee NWR boundary and 400 ft. from the edge of Okefenokee Swamp and north and west of the St. Mary's River. The initial project location will be 1.7 miles southeast of the Okefenokee NWR boundary. Operationally, dredging of targeted material (titanium and Zirconium) will extend on average to a depth of 50 foot could reach a depth of to 100 feet. The first mining phase has a proposed project area of 2,414 acres. The rate of mining will be approximately 25-40 acres per month, and backfilled and graded with approximately 30 days following excavation."

- **Question 1:** It was our office's understanding that Twin Pines currently owns/leases about 9,500 acres and that the 12,000 acres was the area utilized as a study area for the mining project. Could you confirm this?

Response: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Joint Public Notice SAS-2018-00554 (available at: [https://www.sas.usace.army.mil/Portals/61/docs/SAS-2018-00554-Charlton-0712-SP%20\(HAR\).pdf?ver=2019-07-12-160626-380](https://www.sas.usace.army.mil/Portals/61/docs/SAS-2018-00554-Charlton-0712-SP%20(HAR).pdf?ver=2019-07-12-160626-380)) states that Twin Pines is proposing to operate a mining facility for the extraction of heavy minerals "on approximately 12,000 acres comprised of six different tracts." The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) cannot confirm the location of mining operations and any agreements with private landowners, and we defer to USACE and/or Twin Pines on this matter.

- **Question 2:** It was our office's understanding that while the proposed permit area is around 2,400 acres, Twin Pines intends to mine about 1,200 acres. Can you confirm this?

Response: According to the Joint Public Notice, the area will be mined in phases. The first mining phase is the currently proposed project area of 2,414 acres, of which approximately 1,200 acres is proposed to be mined. Future mining phases within the 12,000-acre area may occur in adjacent or nearby portions of this sand ridge that impounds the Okefenokee Swamp known as Trail Ridge.

- **Question 3:** It was our office's understanding that while the proposed permit area is around 1.7 miles away from the Okefenokee NWR boundary, the actual mining area is 2.7 miles from the Okefenokee NWR. Can you confirm this?

Response: Yes. The initial project location is the farthest that mining activity would be from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) boundary and the Okefenokee Swamp. Any additional mining that occurs within the 12,000-acre permit area would be closer to the refuge. The northwest boundary of the permit area is within a half mile from the refuge boundary and 400 feet from the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp.