

March 17, 2023

Governor Brian Kemp
206 Washington Street
Suite 203 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Delivered via email to: brian.kemp@georgia.gov



Re: Please stop a strip mine near the Okefenokee Swamp that threatens both Florida and Georgia

Dear Governor Kemp and staff,

In support of our fellow Waterkeepers' missions to protect the St. Marys River and the Suwannee River, we, Members of Waterkeepers Florida, are again expressing serious concerns regarding the activities the proposed Twin Pines Minerals, LLC (TPM) application number SAS-2018-00554-SP-HAR will have on the Okefenokee Swamp, its river systems, and the Floridan Aquifer. Waterkeepers Florida is a regional entity composed of all 15 Waterkeeper organizations working in the State of Florida to protect and restore our water resources across over 50,000 square miles of watershed, which is home to over 15 million Floridians.

Part of the Okefenokee Swamp is in Florida, and the Swamp is the headwaters of both the St. Marys River, which forms part of the border between Georgia and Florida, and of the Suwannee River, which flows through Florida to the Gulf of Mexico, and is the subject of the Florida state song. This means that any risks posed by the proposed mine to the Okefenokee could have downstream impacts on the quality and quantity of the waters of the state of Florida, including the Floridan Aquifer - the main source of drinking water for all of south Georgia and most of Florida.

Florida is already affected by water withdrawals from as far away as Savannah, a hundred miles farther than the mine site, as evidenced by the North Florida Southeast Georgia Groundwater Model (NFSEG), compiled with collaboration of personnel of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division for the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan (NFRWSP) by Florida's Suwannee and St Johns River Water Management Districts.¹ If current withdrawals from Savannah are affecting Florida's groundwater, then this proposed mine site will likely exacerbate those impacts.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge provides more economic benefit to Florida than any other National Wildlife Refuge.² TPM currently owns more than 7,000 acres along Trail Ridge (including the proposed mine site) with some of that land located within 400 feet of the Swamp and within half a mile of the Refuge, as USFWS emphasized in 2019.³ The size and location of TPM's holdings in relation to the Swamp highlights both the scope and proximity for potential harm if this project were to move forward.

Chemours already has four established mines in Florida and a fifth one permitted. According to Chemours⁴ and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP),⁵ these mines produce ilmenite, which is used to produce titanium dioxide (TiO₂). Titanium dioxide is used in the manufacture of clothing, paper, paint, sun block, and other products.⁶ This TiO₂ does not become titanium metal, and is not necessary for national defense, as evidenced by the U.S. Department of Interior opposing the TPM mine. White paint and sun block are not worth risking the Okefenokee Swamp, the rivers, or the aquifer.