

Letters to the Editor

Twin Pines should not be given the keys to the Okefenokee

Dear Editor,
 Since announcing plans to strip mine along the Trail Ridge adjacent to Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Twin Pines Minerals has held multiple hearings and meetings with political figures and the people of Charlton County to make their case and ostensibly calm fears about the miners environmental impact. Unfortunately, the company continues to display a lack of transparency and misrepresent both the nature and scale of the proposed mine, as well as the costs of mining next to the swamp. To truly understand what is at stake, here are the facts.

First, Twin Pines has repeatedly claimed that operations will only occur in a small and isolated area. The company promised at the recent Folkston hearing that mining will be far removed from the swamp and will not take place across the larger property. According to multiple government agencies, however, Twin Pines has privately conceded that it plans to mine all 12,000-acres in roughly 1,000-acre phases over a 30-year period. This would place mining on the edge of the refuge and within a stone's throw of the Okefenokee swamp itself.

At the same hearing, the company also dismissed the potential for impacts to imperiled species and inexplicably promised locals 300-400 jobs, which is twice the number specified in its permit application. Twin Pines further declared that it would somehow restore mined wetlands to an even healthier condition than their original state, even though the company, at just six years old, apparently has no real-world experience restoring wetlands of any kind on mined sands.

These promises were recently met with over 20,000 comments, most of which voiced concern

with or opposition to the project. Following the closure of the public comment period, Twin Pines president Steve Ingle published a bizarre, full-page advertisement, in which he called mining opponents selfish hypocrites. He also suggested that, if mining were to harm the swamp, it would be the public's responsibility to prove.

Fortunately, that is simply not the way our country operates. Despite

Pines' actual, real-life operations confirm, damage of this nature is simply the cost of doing business with the mining industry.

Though I have spent many hours within the Okefenokee, I am not a local, and I dare not intend to tell the people of Charlton County how to feel. What I can say is that my organization, Defenders of Wildlife, is well-versed in the defense of our most

cherished wild spaces. We have learned that certain corporations will say and do almost whatever it takes to gain the votes of local stakeholders, whether

it be through fingerprinting, outright misrepresentations, or inflated financial promises. In such cases, history shows that communities should proceed at their own risk. Once the keys to the resources are handed over, promises tend to go unfulfilled, as do assurances of environmental stewardship. Based on its track record, Twin Pines unfortunately appears to fit this profile.

In the coming months, I hope the people of Charlton County take account of the facts, critically examine the representations made by Twin Pines, and ultimately come to reach the same conclusion. The long-term vibrancy of our country's greatest wetland, the Okefenokee Swamp, depends on it.

Christian Hunt is the Southeast Program Associate for Defenders of Wildlife, a national conservation organization focused solely on wildlife and habitat conservation and the safeguarding of biodiversity.

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SCENE FROM MINING SITE.



its protests, the burden of proof rests upon the shoulders of Twin Pines. The company must refute the findings of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and several independent experts, all of whom expect mining to potentially result in permanent, unacceptable, or irreversible damage to the swamp. That these predictions give Twin Pines no cause for concern is disappointing but ultimately of little surprise. Given their history, the Alabama-based company has shown it has little regard for either authority or environmental protections. After ignoring warnings from the state of Florida, for instance, Twin Pines was recently cited for failing to maintain silt fences and illegally dumping tailings into a wetland.

On an annual basis, 600,000 visitors travel to the refuge and generate upwards of \$64 million in local economic output, which in turn supports over 700 local jobs. The wealth created by the swamp, however, is directly tied to its well-being. In recent surveys, 50% of visitors indicated they'd be less likely to return for future visits were the Okefenokee's water quality to diminish. As photos of Twin

Mining runied family field

Dear Editor,

Let me start out by saying that I have not been a part of any protests that have been going on. I don't think anyone can foresee if the proposed strip mining will actually harm the swamp. We probably won't know until many years have passed. Only time will truly tell.

However, I can say that the strip mining by Dupont in Bradford County did do a lot of harm to my Grandfather's strawberry farm! My Grandfather owned a farm that joined Dupont's property east of Lawtey, Florida. He was very dependent on

a fresh water, spring fed creek that ran through his farm. This water was used to irrigate the strawberries. Dupont told the same lies that Twin Pines Minerals is telling us now! They claimed the mining would have NO impact on their neighbors and that the land would be "100% plantable".

Well, here is the proof of the lies: Go to Google Earth and look at the satellite photos just east of Lawtey, next to my grandfather's farm which butted up to Dupont's property. They mined right through the stream and springs that went through his property. The stream dried up, my

Grandfather could no longer irrigate and he lost the strawberry business that he had depended on for so many years.

Google Earth photos will show the scar in the land where this strip mining happened over four decades ago.

I will be more than happy to take Mr. Ingle the short ride down to Lawtey and show him the "proof". I have not been protesting, but his letter in this paper was like rubbing salt in the wounds Dupont's lies caused my family so many years ago.

**Sincerely,
 Charles F. Arwood,
 Folkston**

Narconon can help

Narconon New Life Retreat would like to remind families to stay educated on the signs and dangers of drug abuse. Methamphetamines and opioids are on the rise in both rural and city areas. Learn the signs and protect your loved ones from drug abuse and addiction.

The amount of deaths caused by Methamphetamines has almost tripled since

CCRWC announces raffle winner

The Charlton County Republican Womens Club is pleased to announce the winner of the \$500.00 gift card. William Caldwell of Folkston was the happy winner on Saturday, October 12. Thank you to everyone who helped our first year a success. Hope to see you next year.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

To learn more, visit: <https://www.narcononnewliferetreat.org/blog/the-other-drug-epidemic.html>

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Charlton County School System

CHILD FIND

The Charlton County School System seeks to locate and identify all children with disabilities in Charlton County. A disabled person under the age of 22, who resides in the county, attends a public, private, or home school in Charlton County, is highly mobile, or homeless may be eligible for special education services. To refer children between the ages of 3-21 for consideration to receive special education services through the public school system, please contact Mr. Matthew Wainright, Special Education Coordinator for the Charlton County School System (912-496-2596). For children 0-3 years of age, please contact Babies Can't Wait (800-429-6307).

Charlton Escuela del condado Sistema

HALLAZGO DEL NIÑO

El sistema escolar del condado de Charlton intenta localizar e identificar a todos los niños con inhabilidades en el condado de Charlton. Una persona lisiada bajo edad de 22, que reside en el condado, atiende a una escuela pública, privada, o casera en el condado de Charlton, es altamente móvil, o nómada puede ser elegible para los servicios de la educación especial. Para referir a niños entre las edades de 3-21 para la consideración para recibir servicios de la educación especial a través del sistema escolar público, entre en contacto con por favor a Mr. Matthew Wainright, Coordinador de educación especial para el sistema escolar del condado de Charlton (912-496-2596). Para los niños 0-3 años de la edad, entran en contacto con por favor a bebés no pueden esperar (800-429-6307).

**Email editor@charltonherald.com
 to submit a letter to the editor!**

Charlton County, Georgia
 Davis Field Airport
 Airport Consulting Services

The Charlton county Board of Commissioners requests "Statements of Qualifications" from qualified firms to engage in services of a consulting firm for planning, design, and construction administration services in connection with the Airport Capital Improvement Plan at the Davis Field Airport. Notices of Requests for Statements of Qualifications will only be provided to qualified consulting firms that are currently GDOT approved in Area Classes 1.08 Airport Master Planning and 2.09 Aviation. The required format and details for submitting the Statements of Qualifications may be obtained by a phone request to Hampton Raulerson, County Administrator at 912-496-2549 or email request at hraulerson@charltoncountygga.gov. This is NOT a request for a priced proposal. Statements must be sealed, delivered via mail or in person, and marked "Airport Consulting Engineering Services" on the outside of the envelope. Statements of Qualifications must be received at the Board of Commissioners Office; 68 Kingsland Drive, Suite B, Folkston, Georgia 31537 by no later than 3:00 P.M. on November 15th, 2019 at which time the Statement of Qualifications will be opened.