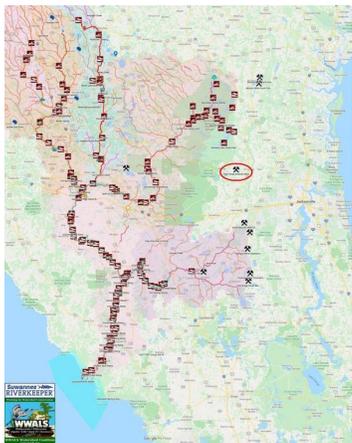


November 30, 2020

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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.*



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.

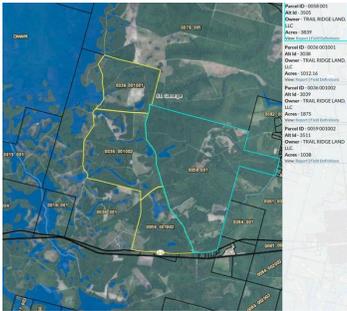
Despite promises from Twin Pines, their hydrology reports have not been peer reviewed. <https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20190814/company-explains-its-okefenokee-mining-plans>

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?

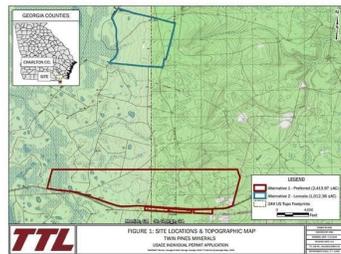
The Twin Pines hydrology report does not account for slimes, which are tiny particles of clay and titanium dioxide that, according to USGS, could cause "smothering of organisms living in



TPM mine site with equipment on it, and Okefenokee NWR in the distance in upper left, 2020-11-06 <https://wwals.net/?p=54099>



TPM mine lands ever-closer to the Okefenokee on the northwest, with the TIAA tract between it and the Swamp; Charlton County Tax Assessors. <https://wwals.net/?p=52533>



TPM map overlapping TIAA site, and showing north TPM tract right next to the Swamp. <https://wwals.net/?p=52533>



WWALS paddlers at Minnies Lake platform, Okefenokee NWR, 2020-11-07 <https://wwals.net/?p=54142>

bottom sediment.” <https://doi.org/10.3133/pp1802> Mining would also stir up mercury deposited by air from coal power plants. <https://wwals.net/?p=50140#mercury> Yet Twin Pines has no plan to prevent wastewater spills during hurricanes. A presidential order the day after that USGS report required “a plan to improve the topographic, geologic, and geophysical mapping of the United States and make the resulting data and metadata electronically accessible...”

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-executive-order-federal-strategy-ensure-secure-reliable-supplies-critical-minerals/> Where is TPM’s map of percentages of these slimes in all intended mining areas, with comparisons to percentages on other sites?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, responding to an inquiry by Senator Perdue, noted that after the initial demonstration site, mining would move closer to the Swamp, ending up within 400 feet of the Swamp and half a mile from the Refuge. <https://wwals.net/?p=52533>

Private property rights are also at risk. TPM on its Corps and Georgia mining applications claimed as part of its project land owned by TIAA, the Fortune 100 financial services company. TPM only retracted that claim after TIAA complained. TPM then said it was negotiating with TIAA, which TIAA denies. Apparently penalties for false application could be up to a \$10,000 fine or five years in prison.

<https://www.savannahnow.com/news/20200926/regulators-seek-no-remedy-for-false-claims-on-okefenokee-mining-permit-request>

Steve Ingle, president of Twin Pines Minerals, was also behind the biomass plant in Franklin County with air pollution so bad you signed a law prohibiting burning of railroad ties. It also caused light and noise pollution and a massive fish kill. <https://wwals.net/?p=53931> According to the Washington Post, November 25, 2020, “The smell will sometimes get in our house, it gives me a headache and I cough more, it hurts my wife’s chest and burns her eyes,” wrote Ted Fowler, a resident of Colbert, Ga. “If GRP continues burning railroad ties our lives will be shortened if not already shortened.”

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/trump-rule-eases-effort-to-strip-mine-near-okefenokee-swamp/2020/11/25/84ed10ba-229a-11eb-a688-5298ad5d580a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/trump-rule-eases-effort-to-strip-mine-near-okefenokee-swamp/2020/11/25/84ed10ba-229a-11eb-a688-5298ad5d580a_story.html)

Ingle and TPM have experimented more than enough already with our air and waters. They should not be permitted to do so again, especially not next to the Okefenokee Swamp.

The Okefenokee Swamp is of special concern to Suwannee Riverkeeper, since almost all of the Okefenokee Wilderness Area Canoe Trails that people paddle to fish and to see birds, alligators, bears, and cypress trees, are in the Suwannee River Basin. We just camped at Floyd’s Island a few weeks ago. <https://wwals.net/?p=54142> Those animals and plants and the Swamp and the Suwannee and the Aquifer cannot speak for themselves, so we write to you for them, as well as in support of the economy of Georgia (and Florida).

I urge you and the state of Georgia to thoroughly examine the permit applications from Twin Pines Minerals, LLC. I believe the state will find the evidence supports rejecting those permits.

For the rivers and the aquifer,

John S. Quarterman  
Suwannee RIVERKEEPER®  
/s

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