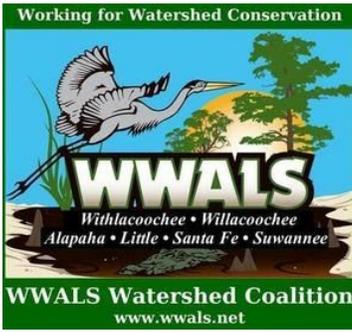


December 16, 2020



To: Jim Zachary
<jim.zachary@gafnews.com>
Cc: Gloria Jackson
<gloria.jackson@gafnews.com>

Re: What will runoff candidates do to stop the proposed strip mine next to the Okefenokee Swamp?

Dear editor,



Please find below an op-ed submission for the Valdosta Daily Times. If it could run Friday morning before Senate runoff candidates arrive, that would be great. Later would also work.



The attached picture is me on the Suwannee River in the Okefenokee Swamp in November 2020. It was taken by WWALS Executive Director Gretchen Quarterman. Any of the other pictures you have on file would also work.

John S. Quarterman, Suwannee Riverkeeper, contact@suwanneeriverkeeper.org, 229-242-0102

Suggested headline:

What will runoff candidates do to stop the proposed strip mine next to the Okefenokee Swamp?

Text of op-ed:

A company from Alabama, Twin Pines Minerals LLC, proposes to strip-mine for titanium dioxide for paint within a few miles of the Okefenokee Swamp. Twin Pines is under a Florida Consent Order for titanium mines in north Florida. Its president was a proponent of the Franklin County, Georgia, biomass plant that caused a massive fish kill. The state had to pass a law to stop it from burning railroad ties. <https://wwals.net/?p=53931>

The miners have promised jobs, from 150 to 300, with no specifics. And at what cost?

A sign at I-75 Exit 16 for Valdosta says: "Okefenokee Swamp... 62 Miles." The Swamp is an internationally-known treasure that contributes 700 jobs and some \$60 million through boating, fishing, and birding in the National Wildlife Refuge, and hunting on nearby private land. The Swamp is the headwaters of the St. Marys and Suwannee Rivers. It exchanges water with the Floridan Aquifer, from which we all drink.

In November 2019 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service replied to Senator Purdue, saying the mine progressing northwards would end up within 400 feet of the Swamp, and "It is the responsibility of the permit applicant to demonstrate what the extent of impacts of the project will be to surrounding natural resources." <https://wwals.net/?p=52533>

The miners have not shouldered that responsibility, as each of you saw in my letter to Governor Brian Kemp, asking the state to stop the mine. <https://wwals.net/?p=54187>

According to the Washington Post and the Brunswick News, Sen. Perdue accepted campaign contributions from the miners' lobbyists, and his staffers met with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers shortly before the Corps abdicated oversight. <https://tinyurl.com/y6yybft>
<https://tinyurl.com/ydb2vee3>

Dear runoff candidates:

What will you do to stop this proposed strip mine far too near the Okefenokee Swamp?

John S. Quarterman is the Suwannee Riverkeeper with WWALS Watershed Coalition.



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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.



