

The Doorstep of the Iconic Okefenokee Swamp Is No Place for a Mine

The question facing the state of Georgia is whether to allow Twin Pines Minerals, LLC, an Alabama-based company, to mine for heavy minerals next to one of Georgia's most treasured natural resources.

Without adequate assurances of protection against disastrous impacts, the answer is a resounding no.

The Okefenokee Swamp is unlike any other place on Earth. One of the planet's largest freshwater ecosystems, it safeguards thousands of species, feeds the Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers, and is valuable to both wildlife and people.

With each phase of development, operations would creep closer, eventually coming within 400 feet of the swamp and consuming roughly 8,000 acres.

In the 1990s, DuPont proposed a similar mine. But the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Georgia Board of Natural Resources, Governor Zell Miller and the people of Georgia prevailed and the company abandoned the project.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, mining could draw down water levels and irreversibly damage the entire ecosystem. Surveys have found that **50% of visitors would be less likely to recreate at the Okefenokee if its water quantity were impacted.**

With as many as 700,000 annual visits, the refuge supports over 750 local jobs and generates \$64 million for local communities per year. Risking the continued growth of Georgia's recreational tourism economy to mine titanium dioxide—a product commonly used to whiten household paint—defies common sense.

There is a time and place for industry, but it's not on the edge of the Okefenokee. The state should engage national and local leaders in a stakeholder effort and provide the direction and leadership to permanently end the threat of mining near the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

If a wild and pristine Okefenokee is lost, future generations will not forgive us.



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SIGNEES

Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior (*President Clinton*)

Henry M. Paulson, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury (*President George W. Bush*)

Lynn Scarlett, Deputy Secretary of the Interior (*President George W. Bush*)

Lynn Greenwalt, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director (*Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter*)

Steve Williams, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director (*President George W. Bush*)

Jamie Rappaport Clark, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director (*President Clinton*)

Lonice Barrett, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources Commissioner (*Governors Miller, Barnes, Perdue*)

Mike Worley, President and CEO, Georgia Wildlife Federation

Wendy Paulson, Chairman, Bobolink Foundation

Noel Holcomb, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources Commissioner (*Governor Perdue*)