



SIERRA CLUB
FLORIDA CHAPTER



SIERRA CLUB
GEORGIA CHAPTER

June 27, 2024

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp
206 Washington Street Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp:

We are writing on behalf of the Florida and Georgia Chapters of the Sierra Club to call for your assistance in stopping the proposed strip mine near the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The Okefenokee NWR spans 438,000 acres and stands as one of the most pristine and ecologically intact areas in America. Its diverse ecosystem, comprising cypress forests, pine islands, and blackwater channels, provides a sanctuary for over a thousand plant and animal species. Moreover, it serves as a cherished recreational destination for countless individuals engaging in fishing, hunting, paddling, birdwatching, and camping.

The proposed mineral mining by Alabama-based Twin Pines Minerals LLC poses an existential threat to the hydrology of South Georgia and much of Florida. The Okefenokee NWR serves as headwaters to the Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers, so the swamp is critical to the health of these rivers. The swamp also sits atop and contributes to the Floridan Aquifer spanning from middle Georgia to South Florida. The mining could compromise the Trail Ridge geographic formation and eastern wall of the swamp basin. It could also allow the eastern outflow of water from the swamp, changing the hydrology of both the Okefenokee and the surrounding region and causing potentially irreversible damage.

The proposed strip mine not only poses immediate dangers to the swamp, but also opens the door to long-term mining activities that could irreversibly harm the delicate balance of the Okefenokee Swamp. As the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aptly describes, the Okefenokee is a unique and irreplaceable treasure that must be safeguarded for future generations.

As the state agency entrusted with the protection and preservation of Georgia's environment, the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) holds a crucial responsibility to reject the proposed strip mine. The consequences of allowing such a project to proceed are far-reaching and could jeopardize the very essence of this exceptional natural habitat.

We urge you to take immediate action to prevent the irreversible damage the proposed strip mine could inflict upon the Okefenokee Swamp. Your intervention is vital in ensuring the long-term sustainability and conservation of this unparalleled ecological gem.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Susannah Randolph
Chapter Director
Sierra Club Florida Chapter

G Webber
Chapter Director
Sierra Club Georgia Chapter