

You need nature and this week, nature needs you. Two action items. Time to put your interest in conservation into action.

On January 19, 2023, Georgia Environmental Protection Division opened a 60-day public comment period seeking YOUR input on whether or not the state should issue a permit for a proposed heavy mineral sand mine on Trail Ridge - 3 miles from the Okefenokee Swamp and 5 miles from the St. Mary's River (map below). Sadly, the federal government, which could have denied the permit, decided not to make a decision and sent it back to the state.

More information about the issue: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2023/01/20/times-runs-short-for-public-to-weigh-in-on-state-mining-permit-for-edge-of-the-okefenokee-swamp/>

Here's the message I'll be sending, feel free to copy and submit yourself:

*As a frequent visitor to Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, I urge you to deny the Twin Pines permit seeking a heavy mineral sand mine on Trail Ridge adjacent to the Refuge. The multiple-hundred-acre mining project would have a permanent and disastrous impact on the area's unique ecology and wildlife, watershed and water quality, scenic beauty and attractiveness as a tourist destination.*

*Twin Pines' horrific history of environmental degradation and non-compliance with state, local and federal regulations across its mining portfolio assures this project would prove ruinous to public health in the area and result in costly cleanup efforts for which the state and its taxpayers would be responsible.*

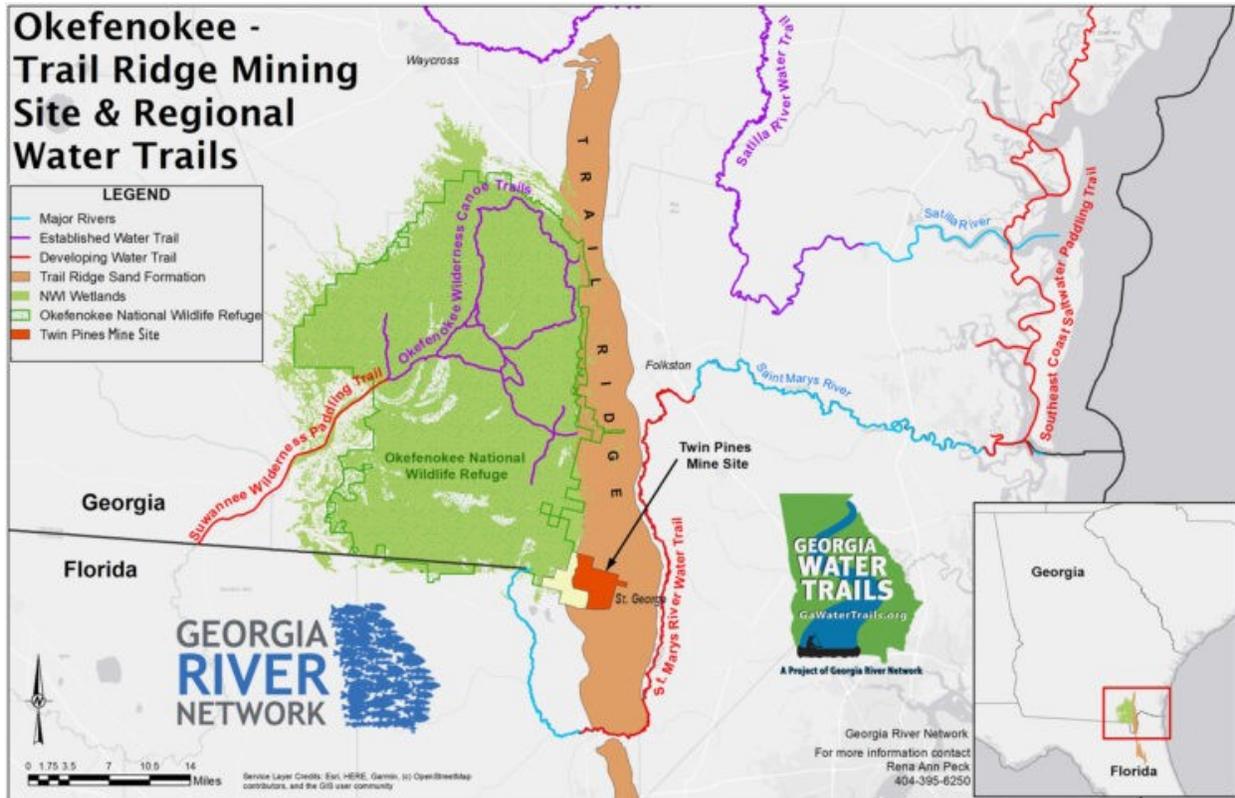
*The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is a global ecological jewel in our backyard, keep it that way and deny this permit.*

Email your comments to Georgia EPD: [twinpines.comment@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:twinpines.comment@dnr.ga.gov)

Maybe it makes a difference, maybe it doesn't, but it's what you can do today.

The St. Marys Riverkeeper will be hosting a Paddle the Swamp event on January 28<sup>th</sup> to raise awareness and activism around its efforts to stop the mine. Details:

<https://www.stmarysriverkeeper.org/event/paddle-the-swamp-2023/>



Down to Jacksonville where the Special Committee on Parks & Quality of Life Issues will meet on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Chamber, located at 117 West Duval Street, 1st floor, City Hall - St. James Building. This meeting is CRUCIAL to the vision of the future North Bank Riverfront Park.

Already, development interests are pushing out what the public has said it wants – parks, access, open, green space – and parking lots, buildings, concrete and private business are beginning to muscle into what was once a promising design. Public attendance at meetings like this is essential to pushing back against the heavy forces of business, industry, commerce and development.

Anyone willing to attend the meeting and speak out on behalf of green space, trees, resiliency, open space, native plants, living shorelines, walkability, serenity and recreation is greatly encouraged to speak out and will be sincerely appreciated.