FACT SHEET

SAVE OKEFENOKEE SWAMP!

MINING PROJECT THREATENS THE REFUGE THAT PROTECTS IT

At over 400,000-acres, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on the Georgia-Florida line is the largest refuge east of the Mississippi. Unlike the Everglades and Great Dismal Swamp, Okefenokee Swamp—a designated Wetland of International Importance and a prospective UNESCO World Heritage Site—has not been compromised by development or agricultural use. At least not yet.

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A place of biodiversity and natural value

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge shelters thousands of species in the swamp's mosaic of cypress forests, pine islands, lily ponds and blackwater channels.

World-renowned for its biological diversity, the refuge supports:

- 49 species of mammals
- 233 species of birds
- 64 species of reptiles, including the American alligator in a population estimated at 15,000
- 39 species of fish
- 37 species of amphibians
- Roughly 1,000 moth species
- 600 plant species

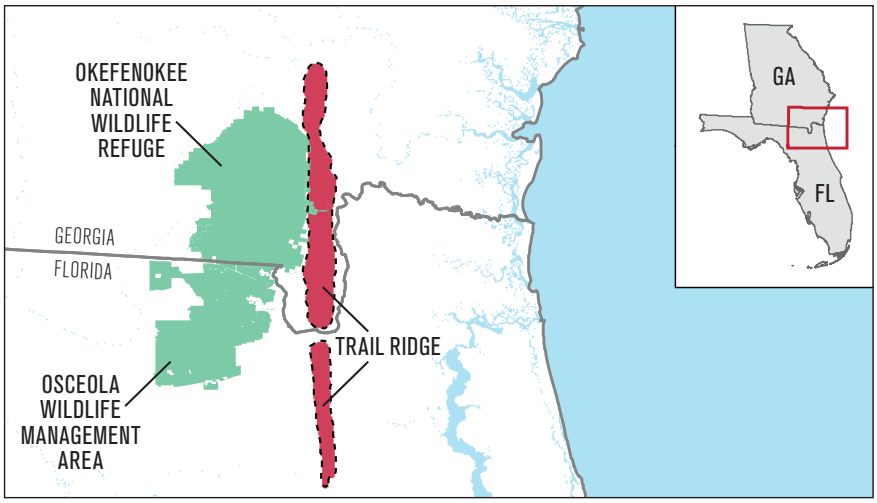
The refuge is also a haven for imperiled species like red-cockaded woodpeckers, wood storks and eastern indigo snakes. It encompasses the headwaters of the St. Marys and the Suwannee rivers, two largely unspoiled waterways vital to Atlantic and shortnose sturgeons and other species in regional decline.

More than 600,000 visitors from as many as 46 countries travel to the Okefenokee refuge each year to enjoy its unmatched wilderness and wildlife viewing, stargazing and other recreational opportunities. This tourism supports over 750 local jobs and contributes over $64 million to local economies.

The threat of titanium mining

Despite its protections and economic value to local communities, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is far from secure. In the 1990s, the DuPont corporation attempted to establish a titanium mine on the edge of the refuge, igniting a struggle that spanned the better part of a decade. DuPont abandoned its plans, but now Twin Pines Minerals, LLC, an Alabama-based company, has its sights on another deposit of titanium found just outside the refuge.

The map shows Trail Ridge, the area along the refuge's eastern boundary targeted for titanium mining.



USGS, USFWS, FWC AND TIGER/CENSUS

In several phases over multiple decades, Twin Pines plans to mine roughly 8,000 acres near the refuge's eastern boundary, with operations planned along Trail Ridge, a natural barrier that influences water retention within the refuge. By mining to depths of up to 50 feet, Twin Pines would destroy the structural integrity of this geological feature, potentially compromising Okefenokee's ability to sustain itself.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as multiple independent experts, have warned that operations could compromise the entire 438,000-acre swamp. Notwithstanding these dangers, Twin Pines took advantage of a recent regulatory rollback of the Clean Water Act and altogether avoided the need for federal review. Now, the fate of the mine hinges on decisions made by Georgia leaders and the state's Environmental Protection Division as they consider five environmental permits the company must secure to begin operations.

Like DuPont before it, Twin Pines has failed to produce any peer-reviewed evidence that titanium mining would not damage the swamp or the wildlife that depends on its unspoiled habitats. Under even the best circumstances, the first phase would destroy hundreds of acres of wetlands along Trail Ridge—a vast swath of wildlife habitat—and require industrial lighting that would obscure the famed night skies of Okefenokee. At worst, the very function and stability of the swamp could be compromised.

USFWS/STEVE BROOKS

WHAT **YOU** CAN DO

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division will ultimately determine whether this ill-conceived project moves forward. To ensure Okefenokee remains a source of biological and economic health **contact Georgia Governor Brian Kemp's office** and encourage him to protect the swamp. Go to **ProtectOkefenokee.org** for more information.

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OKEFENOKEE PROTECTION ALLIANCE

The Okefenokee Protection Alliance is a coalition of more than 40 conservation organizations representing millions of members that have joined to fight the proposed Twin Pines Minerals, LLC, titanium mine and other threats that jeopardize the integrity of the Okefenokee Swamp.

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