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Majority of Georgians Say Governor Should “Immediately” Protect the Okefenokee from Risky Mining

Clergy, scientists, local governments, and elected officials have spoken out for protecting the Okefenokee swamp from risky mining proposals. And now a poll of Georgia voters shows that they are in good company.

A clear majority (69 percent) of Georgians said that Georgia’s Governor should take “immediate action” to protect the Okefenokee swamp from risky mining proposals.

“Across the state, from congregations in downtown Atlanta to the mountains to the coast, Georgians understand what’s at risk with proposals to mine near the Okefenokee,” said Codi Norred, Executive Director of GIPL. Last year GIPL released [a letter signed by over 100 clergy](#) asking local and federal leaders to protect the Okefenokee. “We have a spiritual imperative to protect this special place.”

“God created the Okefenokee,” said Rev. Antwon Nixon, Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Folkston and founder of Sowing Seeds Outside the Walls. “We can never get this special place back. I live just 10 miles away. And we need the help of everyone to protect it. It’s not a one person army. We have a duty to do our part and spread this heightened spiritual awareness to others.”

And nearly as many people (68 percent) think Georgia’s state Representatives and Senators should finish the job and pass legislation to permanently protect the Okefenokee from risky mining operations in the future. Earlier this year, bipartisan legislation to protect the Okefenokee was introduced in Georgia’s General Assembly. The bill failed to receive a vote.

“Valdosta’s Mayor, Council, and Citizens are united in supporting any and all level of protection for the awesome beauty and resource that is the Okefenokee,” said Scott James Matheson, Mayor of Valdosta, which passed a resolution in 2021 urging protection of the Okefenokee.

A majority of Georgians (53 percent) have been to the Okefenokee or plan to visit the National Wildlife Refuge in the future.

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“I personally don't think a mine belongs near the pristine Okefenokee Swamp,” said WWALS Watershed Coalition member John Melton of Fargo. “My relatives have always been there. They were keepers of the swamp to manage the swamp for the benefits of the inhabitants, the ecosystems, and the animals that thrive there. We've had forest rangers in the family, we've been there with the fires, and when it's been flooded. A mine is a danger to ruin the ecosystem that we have so long held in trust, we, the stewards of that land.”

The Georgia Water Coalition has an easy way for Georgians to make their voice heard to protect the Okefenokee. Visit www.protectgeorgia.org/okefenokee to send a message to candidates for Governor and Lt Governor.

In early September, Mason-Dixon Polling of Jacksonville, FL conducted a poll of 625 registered Georgia voters on behalf of the Georgia Water Coalition. Full polling results are available on Georgia Water Coalition's website: www.gawater.org/okefenokee-swamp

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About the Georgia Water Coalition:

The Georgia Water Coalition (GWC) is a partnership of over 280 organizations, representing thousands of Georgians and encompassing conservation organizations, farmers, homeowners and lake associations, business owners, sportsmen's clubs, professional associations, and religious groups. The GWC's mission is to protect and care for Georgia's surface water and groundwater resources, which are essential for sustaining economic prosperity, providing clean and abundant drinking water, preserving diverse aquatic habitats for wildlife and recreation, strengthening property values, and protecting the quality of life for current and future generations. Learn more here: <https://www.gawater.org/>