

**PASS HB 71**



Bear Image © Bill Lea

# Protect Our Okefenokee

## *the Wild Heart of Georgia*

The future of our Okefenokee is at risk. A titanium dioxide mine has been proposed adjacent to the swamp. Mining near the swamp threatens the health, safety, and economy of Southeast Georgia and the wildlife of the Okefenokee. We need to send a clear message that mining near the Okefenokee is not welcome.

## The Okefenokee Needs Our Safeguards

The Okefenokee Swamp is a 438,000-acre state treasure, the largest blackwater swamp in America, a National Wildlife Refuge and a designated Wetland of International Importance. In the 1990s, [Georgia leaders spoke out against DuPont's proposal to mine next to the Okefenokee](#), and the Georgia Board of Natural Resources agreed, declaring that mining could cause irreparable, long-term damage to Georgia's beloved swamp.

The heavy mineral sands containing [titanium can be found far beyond the sensitive ridge](#) that forms Okefenokee - in coastal plains and islands from Florida to Virginia. [Trail Ridge titanium is not necessary for national defense](#), but will likely be processed into a substance used to make pigments for paint, sunscreen, and food additives.

## We Need Your Leadership

*[68% of polled Georgians support passing a law to protect the Okefenokee.](#)*

A complex legal and jurisdictional battle is ongoing. Georgians shouldn't have to rely on the federal government to protect our valuable and irreplaceable Okefenokee. Just as the Georgia legislature passed into law the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act due to mining threats, the Okefenokee Protection Act will prevent mining along the Okefenokee's Trail Ridge next to the swamp and become a historic piece of legislation, as well.

**Pass [HB 71](#) that permanently protects the swamp from mining proposals.**



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# Support Local Economies

Mining adjacent to the Okefenokee swamp threatens the economies of surrounding communities who rely on the swamp for tourism.

Mining in proximity to the swamp will likely degrade the wilderness and dark sky experience, which are major draws for the [600,000+ annual visits](#) to the National Wildlife Refuge.

This degeneration would diminish the economic benefits of the swamp for Southeast Georgia communities.

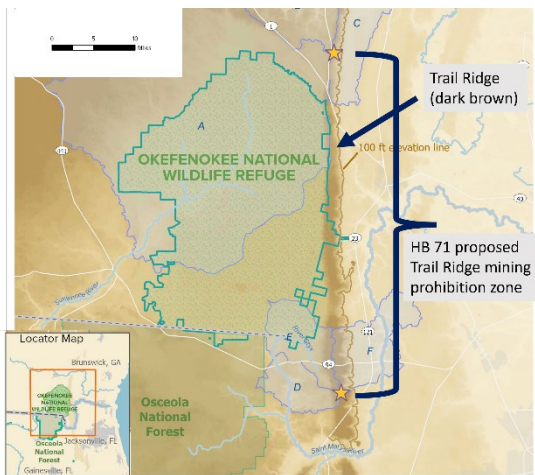
The Ware County and the cities of Homeland, Kingsland, St. Mary's, and Valdosta have passed resolutions asking state officials to protect their communities' livelihoods.



# Prevent Wildfires and Health Hazards

[The US Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and multiple independent experts have warned that Twin Pines' proposal could destroy the structural integrity of Trail Ridge, which forms the eastern boundary of the swamp. Combined with the [proposed use of up to 1.44 million gallons of water](#) needed daily to operate the mining equipment, [this would likely lower water levels](#) in the swamp and surrounding areas.

"The proposed mine can be expected to increase the severity and extend the length of dry periods in the swamp and the St Marys River." - Rhett Jackson, Professor of Water Resources, UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources



## Impacts of Lowered Water Levels:

- [Increased fire risk](#) to the swamp and nearby private property, including timber and blueberry farms
- Release of stored toxic heavy metals, including mercury, which will be carried downstream, impacting public health
- Degraded fishing and recreational opportunities in the St. Marys and Suwannee Rivers, which originate in the Okefenokee Swamp

# Protect the Wild Heart of Georgia

The Okefenokee is world-renowned for its biological diversity. Mining along trail ridge could compromise the habitat the swamp offers endangered species like the red-cockaded woodpeckers, wood storks, and eastern indigo snakes.

4

Species of Mammals

3

Species of Fish

6

Species of Reptiles

233 Species of Birds

600 Species of Plants