Dear Editor,

Since 2018, when Twin Pines Minerals LLC first proposed mining for titanium along Trail Ridge adjacent to the Okefenokee Swamp, advocates from across the nation called on science to inform federal and state decisions about the proposal.

Of course, mining next to one of Georgia's seven natural wonders, a 438,000-acre expanse of wilderness, is inherently a bad idea, especially when the sought after mineral is neither rare nor hard to obtain. It is a common mineral that is readily available elsewhere, but the Okefenokee Swamp is uncommon—the largest blackwater wetland in North America and one that has been named a Wetland of International Importance.

If you are going to dig 50-foot pits in the ridge next to the swamp that regulates water levels in this natural treasure, you should understand how that activity might impact it. You gain that understanding through scientific study and inquiry.

Since 1972, the federal Clean Water Act has allowed us to use science to guide such decisions, but earlier this year, the Trump Administration knee-capped that federal law. It implemented a new rule that greatly reduced the kinds of streams and wetlands that are protected. The rule changed tossed science to the dumpster.

And at the proposed Twin Pines mining site, it did so with potentially devastating effects. Roughly 400 acres that were previously protected under the Clean Water Act were suddenly removed from protection.

Gov. Brian Kemp, state leaders, and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division must demand the science that the federal government has abandoned. While the feds might treat one of our seven natural wonders cavalierly, the state shouldn't.


Rena Ann Peck, Buckhead resident, executive director of GRN.

Ask Governor Kemp to save the swamp and take action at https://garivers.org/protect-the-okefenokee-swamp/
MISSION
As the voice of Georgia’s rivers, we help everyone enjoy, connect with and advocate for economically vital and clean flowing rivers.

GOALS
• Be the hub that connects people to rivers, watershed groups, related resources and other members of the network so they can be effective advocates.
• As a statewide watchdog on water policy, continue advocacy efforts to ensure strong protections for Georgia’s rivers.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Kit Carson
Alicia Evans
Trey Evans
Tammy Griffin
Francheska Hebden
Max Irvine
Lynn McIntyre
Carol McNavish
Tami Morris
Keith Parsons
Terry Pate
Tim Voss
Mark Wilson

STAFF
Rena Ann Peck
Executive Director
Dana Skelton
Director of Advocacy & Operations
Gwyneth Moody
Director of Water Trails & Outreach
Joe Cook
Guidebook Author & Paddle Georgia Coordinator

2020 Clean 13 Water Heroes

For Georgia Water Coalition’s more than 260 member organizations half the battle of protecting Georgia’s water is helping Georgians understand and appreciate the state’s water resources. Within the stories of each of the individuals, organizations and businesses highlighted in this year’s Clean 13 report runs that underlying theme: the need to help people enjoy, appreciate and take action to protect Georgia’s water.

The entities recognized in the report include the following:

Chattahoochee RiverLands—Bold vision for 120-mile multi-modal trail to bring Atlanta area residents to river.

Emory University—WaterHub conserves water/energy through innovative design.

Fall-Line Alliance for A Clean Environment—Citizen activists defeat coal-fired power plant plan near Sandersville.

Georgia Farmers—Agriculture producers join to protect rural communities, water.

Golden Triangle RC&D Council—Southwest Georgia non-profit protects rivers through education and action.

Georgia Senator William Ligon—Retiring legislator leaves legacy of protecting, restoring coastal Georgia.

Live Thrive Atlanta—in town center offers residents drop off location for hard to recycle materials.

Okefenokee Swamp Park—74-year-old non-profit park works to educate and inspire visitors to love Okefenokee Swamp.

Parsley’s Catering—Marietta-based caterer strives for sustainability in food service.

Georgia Senator Freddie Powell Sims—Rural Democratic legislator leads effort to defeat bill inviting industrial-agriculture waste dis

SouthWings—Non-profit offers free flights to environmental groups to protect Georgia’s land, water and air.

YKK AP America, Inc.—Dublin-based manufacturer reduces, recycles, re-purposes to reach sustainability goals.

Yonah Mountain Vineyards—White County vineyard invests in solar energy, sustainability.
Dirty Dozen Released

Georgia Water Coalition publishes the annual Dirty Dozen list as a call to action, highlighting the worst offenses to Georgia's water—the offenses that are the consequences of an under-funded state environmental agency and a lack of political will to aggressively enforce laws that protect our water, land, air, and people.

Rather than identifying the “most polluted places” in Georgia, Georgia Water Coalition’s Dirty Dozen report highlights the politics, policies, and issues that threaten the health of Georgia’s water and the well-being of 10 million Georgians. This year the report is notable for what is not included.

In November, Georgia voters righted a prior Dirty Dozen wrong when they approved a constitutional amendment that addresses the unethical diversion of taxpayer money from environmental trust funds that are supposed to be used to clean up hazardous waste sites and illegal tire dumps and fund other clean community programs.

Unfortunately, seven issues highlighted in the report are making return appearances on the inauspicious list. Five other issues make their debuts.

This year’s list includes the following:

**Altamaha River:**
Will state permit finally fix pollution from Rayonier pulp mill in Jesup

**Cumberland Island:**
Spaceport boondoggle gets worse with age, risks homes and barrier islands.

**Etowah River:**
Liquid waste causes landfills to collapse, pollute local streams and river.

**Georgia’s Groundwater:**
Coal ash pollutes well water in Juliette.

**Georgia’s Rivers and Streams:**
Landfill leachate poses risks.

**Georgia’s Rural Communities:**
Push to open Georgia to factory animal farm operations continues.

**Little Lotts Creek:**
Taxpayer funded stormwater project in Statesboro to support commercial development within floodplain compromises health of creek.

**Ogeechee River:**
Pollution limits weakened at industry responsible for massive 2011 fish kill in Screven County.

**Okefenokee Swamp:**
Federal rule change opens door to mine threatening one of Georgia's natural wonders.

**Satilla River:**
Proposed landfill risks contamination of well water, wetlands and river.

**Chattahoochee River:**
Combined sewer overflows foul Columbus’s whitewater tourist destination.

**St. Simons Sound:**
Golden Ray salvage plan could further foul coastal Georgia; damage assessment needed.

GRN Communications Coordinator Opening

Georgia River Network (GRN) seeks a Communications & Social Media Coordinator as part of our team working to protect and restore rivers and streams across Georgia. We are looking for a dedicated team member who believes in our mission and enjoys our work.

The Communications coordinator collaborates with staff and partners to promote the conservation action, public education, and other goals of the organization through the development, coordination, and implementation of messages. For more information visit https://garivers.org/river-jobs/
Upcoming GA River Network Events

14 RIVER BASINS – 14 WATER TRAILS
Register at https://garivers.org/paddle-georgia

Okefenokee Swamp and St.Mary's River (Jan 23-24)
Registration open
Explore the beautiful and threatened Okefenokee Swamp and the blackwater St. Marys River that flows from the swamp on this two-day, two-night getaway with on-river camping, catered meals and full amenities.

Ogeechee River (March 13-14)
Registration open
We're heading to the Georgia Coast for this two-day adventure on one of Georgia's last remaining free-flowing rivers. We'll explore the Ogeechee's final miles as it joins the Canoochee River and nears coastal marshes, and we'll camp at the historic Savannah-Ogeechee Canal, a transportation route developed in the 1800s. Catered meals and full amenities included!

Spring on the Satilla (April 10-11)
Registration open
A long-time Paddle Georgia favorite, Spring on the Satilla returns with two days of tidally-influenced paddling in far Southeast Georgia. We'll explore beautiful blackwater tributaries of the Satilla as we venture upstream and downstream of our campsite at rustic Satilla Lodge overlooking the river. Catered meals and full amenities included!

Tallapoosa River Pedal-Paddle (April 24)
Our first bike-paddle adventure of the year visits the Dub Denman Canoe Trail on this West Georgia river near the town that shares the river's name. Ten miles of cycling Haralson County backroads followed by ten miles of paddling on the intimate Tallapoosa.

Chickamauga Pedal-Paddle (May 15)
In far Northwest Georgia's Tennessee River basin we'll explore this intimate creek that flows to Chattanooga and empties into the Tennessee River. The adventure will feature an 11-mile bike ride and 11-mile paddle.

Tugaloo River Water Trail Celebration Paddle (May 29)
Along the Georgia-South Carolina line, the Tugaloo River Water Trail take you over gentle shoals to the backwaters of Lake Hartwell with a side trip to a beautiful waterfall on Longnose Creek. We'll explore this historic 10-mile stretch of river followed by a celebration dinner and ribbon cutting designating the Tugaloo River as an established water trail. This event follow social distance guidelines on shuttle buses and spaced, outdoor seating for dinner.

Paddle Georgia on the Flint River (June 20-26)
2021's version of Paddle Georgia will feature seven days of paddling and on-river camping covering nearly 100 miles of the Flint River in Southwest Georgia between Cordele and Bainbridge. Limestone bluffs, playful shoals and beautiful blue hole springs highlight this adventure. Catered meals and full amenities included. Event is limited to less than 24 paddlers who commit to raising $1000 or more in the Paddle Georgia 2021 Canoe-a-thon!
Upcoming GRN Events Continued

Chattahoochee River Pedal-Paddle (July 24)
Way down yonder on the Chattahoochee, it gets hotter...but we'll cool off in the river and its tributaries as we make a 10-mile run on an historic section of the river featuring Bushhead and Daniel shoals and Hilly Mill and Redbone Creek Falls. The 10-mile bike ride explores backroads of Carroll and Heard counties. More details coming soon!

Oostanaual River Pedal-Paddle (August 21)
We’re going on a mussel hunt in the Coosa River basin of Northwest Georgia! This 12-mile bike ride and 12-mile paddle explores this river that's known for its robust population of freshwater mussels. More details coming soon!

Athens and the Oconee River is our destination on this adventure. This 10-mile paddle and 14-mile bike ride takes us to historic Barnett Shoals and Scull Shoals to explore historic ruins of old mill villages. More details coming soon!

Oconee River Pedal-Paddle (September 11)

Ochlockonee River & Spring Creek (September 18-19)
Join us on the Ochlockonee River Water Trail and Spring Creek for two days of paddling in Southwest Georgia with camping, catered meals and full amenities at nearby Birdsong Nature Center.

More details coming soon!

Fall Float on the Flint (October 9-10)
Another long-time Paddle Georgia favorite, Fall Float on the Flint includes 36 miles of paddling featuring some of Georgia’s most beautiful blue hole springs with two nights of on-river camping at Rocky Bend Flint River Retreat. Catered meals and full amenities included!

Sapelo Island Adventure (November 5-7)
We’re going coastal on this adventure! A three-day paddle camping adventure near the mouth of the Altamaha River. The weekend features a ferry ride to Sapelo Island and three full days of paddling, bicycling, hiking and educational programs on and around the storied barrier island. Catered meals and full amenities included!

Suwannee River-Okefenokee (November 13-14)
This two-day adventure begins in the Okefenokee Swamp. We’ll venture through the southwestern corner of the swamp and then ride out the Suwannee River as it leaves its swamp birthplace. On river camping, catered meals and full amenities included!
Advocating to protect the Okefenokee Swamp from mining and keep our rivers clean.

Leading the Georgia’s Water Trail Network for our State.

Opening access to our rivers for communities.

Bridging the outdoor adventure gap for people of color teaming with Outdoor Afro.

Connecting a thousand people on our paddling trips to enjoy, protect and steward our waterways.

Please make a year-end donation to support our work for healthy rivers!

Holiday Sale

Support Georgia River Network this holiday season by purchasing a wood burned ornament or Guidebooks at https://georgia-river-network.square.site
A Look Back On Our 2020 Events

Live Stream for Healthy Rivers
In making sure to obey social distancing guidelines, Georgia River Network (GRN) held a livestream event for healthy rivers on August 6th sponsored by Rob Jordan Music. During the event, they had music by the talented Rob Jordan, a kayak raffle, a live auction, river trivia and Joe Cook’s paddle Georgia-style sturgeon jokes.

Tugaloo River Paddle-Bike Hidden Gem
In Northern Georgia, GRN hosted a double event that included a 10-mile paddle on the Tugaloo River Water Trail and a 10-mile bike ride on Stephens County backroads for 30 special guests.

Ocmulgee River Paddle-Bike Hidden Gem
On September 12, 30 lucky participants were able to explore the longest continuous developed water trail in Georgia during a 14-mile paddle on the Ocmulgee River. On the route, there were beautiful bluffs and oxbows and numerous historic shoals blasted and reconfigured by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the 1800s. After the paddle, they took off onto a 13-mile bike ride on rural roads surrounding Bleckley and Pulaski Counties.

September on the Satilla
From September 4 to 6, GRN and Georgia Kayak Fishing, Inc. hosted a weekend trip to the ultimate South Georgia river. Everyone was able to camp atop Long Bluff at rustic Satilla Lodge and paddled nearly 21 miles through the southern blackwater gem throughout the weekend. Along the river, there was beautiful moss-draped cypress and oxbow lakes. At night, participants enjoyed some locally brewed beer from St Marys’ Brackish Beer Company along with a delicious catered meal. Overall, it was a weekend filled with camaraderie and a nice break away from everyday life.

Paddle Georgia 2020
One of the most popular events of the year, Paddle Georgia, looked a little different due to Covid-19. Rather than the normal 7-day paddling trip, this year, GRN decided to try and collectively log 4,000 miles and raise $40,000 for river protection throughout the summer. Participants were able to document their trips and encourage others to participate on social media using #PaddleGeorgiaPandemic.

Tocca River Paddle Bike Hidden Gem
On August 1, GRN hosted the Tocca River Paddle-Bike Hidden Gem where everyone was able to take a break from the heat and cool off in the waters of Blue Ridge Lake after a 7-mile paddle on the Tocca River and a 7-mile bicycle ride on Fanin County backroads.

Etowah River Paddle-Bike Hidden Gem
This paddling and biking adventure was hosted by GRN on July 25 on the Etowah River. Starting at 10 am participants paddled for 6 miles along the beautiful Etowah River.

Altamaha Delta Hidden Gem
Over the weekend of June 27 - 28, GRN hosted the Altamaha Delta Hidden Gems Event where participants were able to explore the labyrinth of marshes, river islands, serpentine creeks, and historic man-made canals that make up the Altamaha. River Delta.

Fall Float on the Flint I & II
As one of their most popular events of the year, Georgia River Network hosted two Fall Float on the Flint paddle events in October to-accommodate smaller group sizes. Participants were able to take on the challenge of kayaking a 36-mile route in just 2 days! The route began at Rocky Bend Flint River Retreat and ended at Flint River Heights Road. Throughout both sunny weekends, kayakers enjoyed fishing, swimming, and exploring blue holes in the Flint River.

Okefenokee Wilderness Canoe Trails Hidden Gem
This weekend trip was a memorable two day event exploring the threatened Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge November 6-8. Participants camped, paddled through the Swamp, enjoyed live entertainment, educational programs, and delicious catered meals. The Okefenokee is a true gem deserving of protection.
Calendar of Events

Okefenokee & St. Mary’s - Jan 23-24
Ogeechee River - Mar 13-14
Spring on the Satilla - Apr 10-11
Talloposa River Pedal-Paddle - April 24
Ocmulgee River Pedal-Paddle - May 8
Chickamauga Creek Pedal-Paddle - May 15
Tugaloo River Water Celebration - May 29

Join Georgia River Network

Type of Membership:

☐ $1,000 River Hero ☐ $500 River Guardian
☐ $250 River Supporter ☐ $100 River Friend
☐ $50 River Watcher (Family Membership) ☐ $35 Individual River Enthusiast

Additional Tax Deductible Contribution: $_______

Total Amount Enclosed: $_______ Check #: _______ Date: _______
Mr. Mrs. Ms. Dr.
First & Last Name: _______________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________
City: _________________________ State: ______ Zip: ___________
Phone #: ______________________ Fax #: ______________________
E-mail: _______________________________________________________

☐ Check here if you do not want us to share your information with other organizations.

Mail To: Georgia River Network, 126 S. Milledge Ave, Ste. E3, Athens, GA, 30605
GRN is classified by the IRS as a 501(c)3 organization.
Contributions are tax deductible.