

**RESOLUTION NO. 2021-\_\_\_\_\_**

**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION OF STRIP MINING IN THE OKEFENOKEE SWAMP**

**WHEREAS**, the Okefenokee Swamp is a unique natural, cultural, and economic treasure known worldwide and is the headwaters of the St. Mary's River and the Suwannee River; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately 85% of the Okefenokee Swamp is in the Suwannee River Basin and the Suwannee River and is frequented by citizens of Valdosta who value the both of these natural resources for water quality and habitat protection; and

**WHEREAS**, the Valdosta Mayor and Council have demonstrated their commitment toward water quality and waterway recreation and cleanliness by spending approximately \$100 million on sanitary sewer system improvements and by participating in many paddles and cleanups on local rivers and creeks; and

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor and Council have further demonstrated their commitment to water quality and waterway recreation by passing a Resolution on April 5, 2018 which supported the Withlacoochee and Little River Water Trail and the Alapaha River Water Trail, both organized by WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc. (WWALS); and

**WHEREAS**, Twin Pines Minerals LLC (TPM), of Birmingham, Alabama, proposes to strip mine for titanium dioxide on Trail Ridge which is within three miles of the Okefenokee Swamp and they have no experience in titanium mining, and;

**WHEREAS**, TPM proposes to use drag lines, which is a method never used for such mines on Trail Ridge in Georgia or Florida, and TPM has not met the burden of proof in demonstrating that such a mine would not contaminate the Okefenokee Swamp or the Floridan Aquifer, or possibly even lower the water level in the Swamp or the Aquifer;

**WHEREAS**, lowering the water level in the Okefenokee Swamp would reduce the areas that can be reached by boat both in the Swamp and on the Suwannee River, and it would increase fire risk in and around the Swamp causing a direct health hazard to communities and citizens nearby;

**WHEREAS**, strip mining, which is very likely to disturb and distribute mercury previously deposited through the air from Coal Power Plants in Georgia, will cause harmful toxicity to wildlife and humans if it gets into the Swamp and the Suwannee River; and

**WHEREAS**, TPM is still under a Florida Consent Order for a range of infractions at Chemours mine sites in north Florida, including letting wastewater escape, not doing required water quality testing, and not doing required reporting; and