



Conserve Nassau

1417 Sadler Road, #187, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

April 9, 2024

Director Jeff Cown
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Environmental Protection Division
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE
Suite 1456, East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334
Twinpines.comment@dnr.ga.gov

Subject: Comments Opposing Draft Permits for Twin Pines Mine

Dear Director Cown:

Conserve Nassau is a 501(c)(3) focused on economic, environmental, and social sustainability as well as ecological resilience in Nassau County, FL. In addition to our support of the important comments submitted by the Southern Environmental Law Center, we would like to provide a Florida perspective on the Twin Pines Mining venture.

Nassau County and southern Georgia share a landscape that is low in elevation and home to extensive wetlands. It is critical that we protect this environment in order to preserve our water quality and the future of the Floridan Aquifer. Even a test mine could easily disseminate pollutants and destroy the future of our water supply.

Of course, the Okefenokee is a national treasure that we all want to maintain in its natural state, and the St. Marys River is one of the few rivers that maintain much of their native viewshed and health, clearly a treasure to be maintained and an excellent core for a major wildlife corridor. Nassau County staff, together with North Florida Land Trust, are currently pursuing a major Florida Forever grant in an effort to conserve as much of the land along the northern part of the St. Marys River as possible. This Atlantic-to-Okefenokee (A2O) Conservation Corridor would provide considerable protection for the river as well as for much of our county. Nassau County staff have been collaborating with Georgia staff, who have been enthusiastic about the effort to conserve corridors on both sides of the St. Marys River, the potential for a far more extensive corridor, which could be invaluable to both states in preparing for climate change, sea level rise and the rising interest in ecotourism and agritourism. The A2O corridor connecting our shoreline and riverine habitats to core interior natural areas is critically important for many reasons—to protect water quality and the extensive wetlands in our county, to maintain native habitat and ecological viability, to provide ecological sustainability and resilience and to constitute a major step in building sustainability and resilience for our human population. Our migratory bird



population and all species are being developed out of their habitat. Even the permitting of only the demonstration mine holds the potential to destroy the potential of this effort.

In recent years, North Florida Land Trust has collaborated with the military to ensure buffers around bases that protect our national security. This corridor will greatly contribute to the security of the US Navy Submarine Base at King Bay by ensuring that the base retains its buffer, which also provides protection for the public.

Because of the current rapid development of Nassau County and South Georgia, it is urgent that we manage this development now and ensure that such mines are not allowed to destroy the environment our future depends on for survival. We therefore encourage the State of Georgia to disallow any mining on Twin Pines. **It's now or never.**

Sincerely,

Margaret Kirkland, Leonard Pearlstine, Elise Pearlstine, Cheryl Witt, Joyce Tuten, Wendelle Burdick, Frank Hopf, Lauree Hemke and Tammi Kosack

Board of Directors

Conserve Nassau

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