

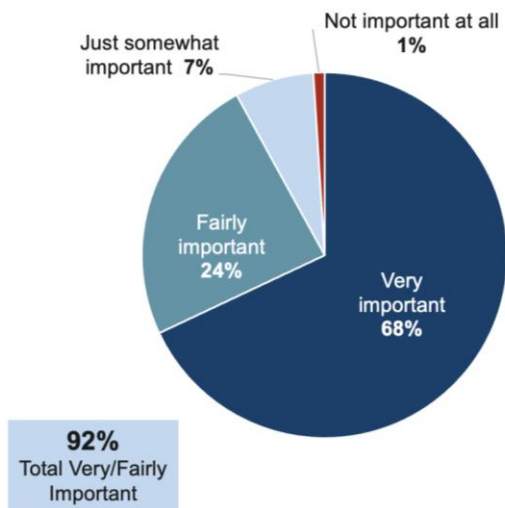
**To:** *Interested Parties*  
**From:** *Hart Research*  
**Date:** *June 26, 2024*  
**Re:** *Key Findings from Recent Survey of Georgia Voters on Protecting the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge*

A new statewide survey of Georgia voters by Hart Research on behalf of the Southern Environmental Law Center finds broad and intense support for protecting the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and widespread opposition to the development of a mine near it. Voters across the political spectrum overwhelmingly think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should take legal action to prevent the mine if the Georgia Environmental Protection Division moves forward with issuing permits.

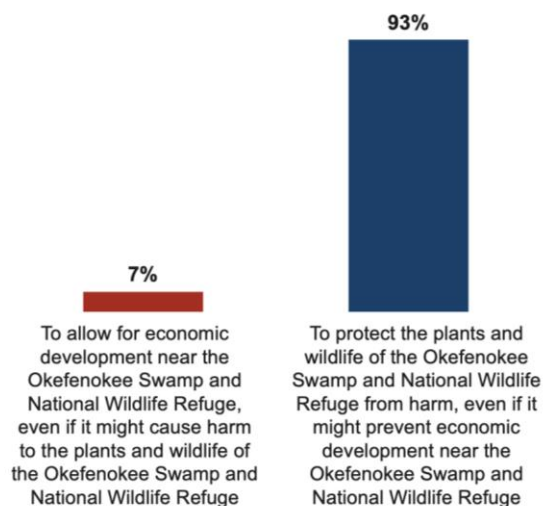
More than nine in ten voters feel it is important to protect the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Fully 92% of voters feel it is important to protect the Okefenokee from pollution and other environmental dangers, including more than two in three (68%) who feel it is very important. When the question is whether to protect the Okefenokee or allow economic development, 93% of voters feel it is more important to protect the plants and wildlife of the Okefenokee from harm, even if it might prevent economic development.

### Voters prioritize protecting the Okefenokee, even if it might prevent economic development nearby.

How important do you think it is to protect the Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge from pollution and other environmental dangers?



Which one of the following do you think is more important?



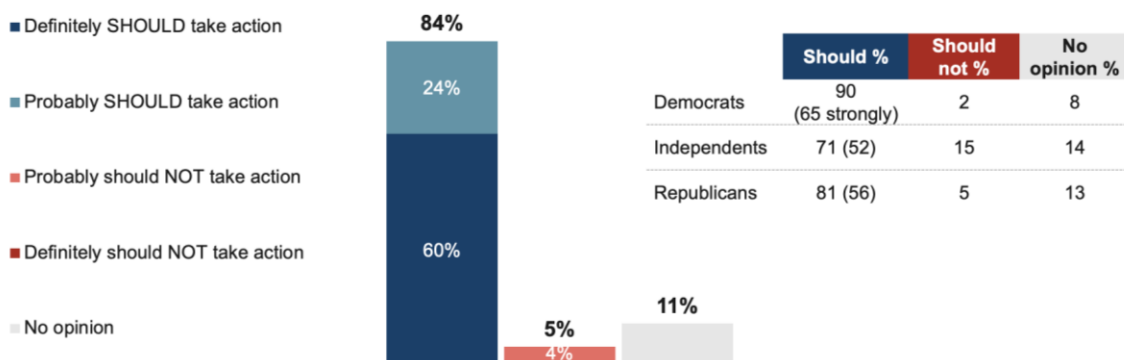
**Few voters have heard about the proposed mine near the Okefenokee, but their view on it is clear: voters across the political spectrum oppose it by a wide margin.** Just 19% of voters say they have heard a lot or some about the proposed titanium dioxide mine near the edge of the Okefenokee. When asked about the development of this mine, three in four voters (74%) oppose it, including a 55% majority who *strongly* oppose it. Just 9% of voters favor it, including 4% who strongly favor it, and 17% do not express an opinion. This “intensity gap” matters, as it shows that those who oppose the development of the mine care much more deeply than those who support it. Voters oppose it across party lines, with 69% of Democrats, 75% of Independents, and 78% of Republicans opposed.

When told that the mining company that seeks to develop the mine has applied to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for permission to do so, fully 68% of voters think that the EPD should deny the permit, and just 11% think it should approve it. One in five (21%) do not feel they know enough to say.

**Fully 84% of voters think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should take action to protect the Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge by preventing the development of the mine if the EPD issues permits.** When told that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service could take legal action to protect the Okefenokee by preventing the mine, 84% of voters believe the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should take action, including a full six in ten (60%) who think the agency *definitely* should do so. Just 5% think the agency should not take action to prevent the mine; 11% do not express an opinion. The top reason that voters think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should prevent the mine is to protect wildlife that live in the Okefenokee.

### Voters overwhelmingly believe the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of the Interior should prevent development of the mine near the Okefenokee.

If the Georgia Environmental Protection Division approves a permit for the development of a titanium dioxide mine near the edge of Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior - could take legal action to protect the Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge by preventing the development of the mine. If the Georgia Environmental Protection Division approves a permit for the mine, do you think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of the Interior should or should not take legal action to protect the Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge by preventing the development of the titanium dioxide mine?



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Democrats (90%), Republicans (81%) and Independents (71%) all support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stopping the mine – including majorities across party lines who think it *definitely* should do so. Across gender, age, education, and region of the state, at least three in four voters think the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should take this action if the EPD issues permits.

**Georgia voters trust the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take the right position on the proposed mine near the Okefenokee and believe the agency’s responsibility to protect it from harm overrides concerns about federal government intervention.** Fully 71% of voters say they trust the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take the right position on the proposed mine, including 72% of Democrats, 56% of Independents, and 74% of Republicans.

When asked which they agree with more, Georgia voters are more likely to agree that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a responsibility to protect the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge from harm (79%) than to agree that the federal government should not interfere with the EPD regarding the Okefenokee because the state agency is better able to make decisions that are right for Georgia (21%). Fully 86% of Democrats, 73% of Independents, and 74% of Republicans agree that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a responsibility to protect the Okefenokee.

Later in the survey, voters were presented with two statements: a) that the company seeking to operate the mine says it is safe and will not harm plants or wildlife in the Okefenokee, and b) that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says the proposed mine poses unacceptable risks to the Okefenokee’s plants and wildlife. Fully 90% of voters say they trust the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service more than the company (10%) on this issue.

**Most Georgians are familiar with the Okefenokee and nearly half have visited it.** More than three in five Georgia voters (62%) are very or somewhat familiar with the Okefenokee, and 89% have at least heard of it. Nearly half of voters have visited it (45%). Among those who are familiar with it but have never been to the Okefenokee, 47% are interested in visiting it in the next few years.

*From June 19-23, 2024, Hart Research conducted a statewide online survey of 601 voters. The credibility interval for the full sample is +/- 4 percentage points, with higher tolerances for subgroups of the sample.*