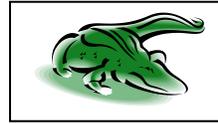# Okefenokee
Pre-class Activity

Directions: Below are some beautiful pictures from Okefenokee Swamp. Show them to your class one by one either through handouts or a projector. Ask the students to respond to the pictures by writing about what they think they will be learning about at the swamp and how this area might be different from where they live.
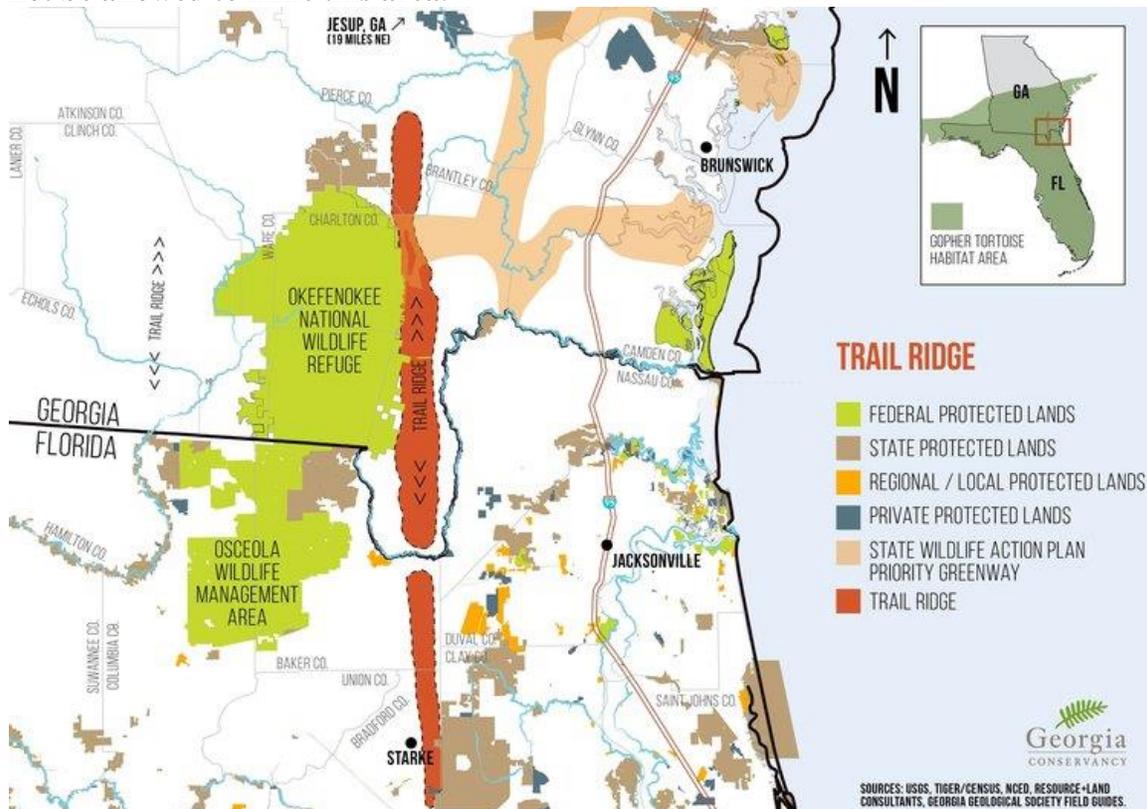
Introduction: You've had the opportunity to visit the very unique area of the Okefenokee Swamp. Now it's your chance to respond to a prompt concerning the outcome of the swamp. (The following prompt is not an accurate situation, but here to get you to think critically.)

Prompt: The Okefenokee Swamp is a National Wildlife Refuge, where all areas within the refuge are 'set aside' for conservation purposes. Recently, a mining company is applying for a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to use land right outside of the Okefenokee Swamp. The company is asking to mine the Trail Ridge land (in red below) to collect heavy mineral sand containing titanium and zirconium. These minerals are often needed for making modern electronics and more. Currently, the U.S. must purchase most of the titanium they own from other countries. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service considers the Trail Ridge area a 'dam' for the swamp because it keeps the swamp's water levels and water processes consistent. Without the 'dam', some worry about the water level changing in the swamp, which may negatively affect the animals, plants, and entire ecosystem. Using what you learned during your Driftwood trip to Okefenokee and your own research, **take a position for or against allowing this company to mine in a region so close to a National Wildlife Refuge. On a separate sheet of paper, write a letter to one of the Commanders of the USACE, Ms. Holly Ross, stating your position and at least 3 reasons why the company should or should not be allowed to mine this area.**

Picture courtesy of the Georgia Conservancy.