



Outlook

Brackenridge Tract public comment: The Brackenridge Field Lab is worth more as a natural space than an urban development.

From**Date** Wed 10/21/2026 1:20 PM**To** Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>; Johnston, Liz <Liz.Johnston@austintexas.gov>

1 attachment (247 KB)

NAS2014_pg14.pdf;

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Dear Nicole and Liz,

I am writing in regard to the development plans regarding the Brackenridge Tract. I have noticed that in the Environmental Commission Briefing presentation "City of Austin and The University of Texas Brackenridge Interlocal Agreement," the map on slide 9 maps much of the Brackenridge Field Laboratory as "Development Area."

While it is not fully clear whether this means that the Field Laboratory land will be developed, **the current Brackenridge Field Laboratory is worth more as a [site for pioneering research](#) than as a apartment complex, a housing tract, or a business mall.**

The Laboratory is a valuable resource for field classes and for researchers that is a short drive or bus ride from campus. Pioneering work on [controlling invasive fire ants](#) has been conducted on this property, recognized by the National Academy of Sciences (2014, page 14 - see attached PDF). Research on [management of invasive grasses](#) that increase wildfire risk and degrades habitat for economically-important wildlife such as white-tailed deer and bobwhite quail is conducted on this property. Many of our graduate students rely on the field lab for their research, and many classes take their students there to gain hands-on experience for their future careers. Public events connecting Austinites to nature and Texas science are held there, including the award-winning [Science Under the Stars program](#). **To develop the land on which the Brackenridge Field Lab currently stands is to damage a core part of the University's Field Station Network, and thus to damage the prestige of the University of Texas at Austin.**

What will prospective students say, those who may do pioneering research to control fire ants or zebra mussels, or who could be our future land managers and professionals keeping our water sources flowing and our rangelands healthy? That "UC Berkeley cares more about their biology and environmental research, because they don't close their field stations like UT" ? Let us not create another "Fairfield Lake" situation: **I trust that the City and the University of Texas can do what is best for both our city and our University, and wisely reconsider any urban development on the Brackenridge Field Laboratory land.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Arnan Pawawongsak

PDF from National Research Council. 2014. Enhancing the Value and Sustainability of Field Stations and Marine Laboratories in the 21st Century. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://www.nationalacademies.org/projects/DELS-BLS-13-07/publication/18806>

Postscript: I have attached a few images of activities at Brackenridge Field Laboratory with sources of the images linked below.

[Science Under The Stars Facebook](#)

[Brackenridge Field Lab Shines in National Report](#)

[Bioblitz at the Brackenridge Field Lab](#)





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BOX 1-2

Invasive Fire Ants: The Hidden Value of Unwanted Guests



Red imported fire ants and a Phorid fly. Photo Credit: John & Kendra Abbott/Abbott Nature Photography.

In 1981, red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) invaded the Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL) in Austin, Texas, and triggered a cascade of scientific inquiry that has expanded into a long-term research program on effects and biological control of invasive species. Fire ants, native to South America, are invasive pests in the United States, Australia, the Caribbean, and some eastern Asian countries. The United States spends an estimated \$8 billion each year on fire ant control, damage mitigation, and medical treatment. Scientists at BFL have conducted extensive natural-history research, and the red ant invasion provided an opportunity to collect additional baseline natural-history data and track the effects of these invasive ants on the native arthropod community. Undergraduate students conducted some of the key initial studies of the ant invasion. A graduate student's work that documented how parasitoid (phorid) flies disrupt the foraging activities of a different ant species at BFL led directly to a major national program that uses phorid flies as biological control agents for fire ants (Feener 1981). Today, the BFL research group forms a key hub in the international fire ant research network, which includes collaborations that span continents. BFL maintains partnerships with more than 100 private landowners and agencies for region-wide evaluation studies and has established teaching and outreach programs about the challenges posed by invasive species in natural settings. The fire ant study has resulted in more than \$10 million in research funds over 20 years, more than 80 publications, and a broader expert research program on invasive species.

Good afternoon,

The Brackenridge Field Laboratory is an irreplaceable asset to the City of Austin and the University of Texas. I am appalled at the proposal to fast-track development on this tract without ample time for considered thought and public input. This field laboratory is home to decades of ongoing biological research, including UT's entire research and biological control programs for both Invasive Fire Ants and the invasive Tawny Crazy Ant which have immense biological and economic impacts for the state.

The Brackenridge Field Laboratory is the crown jewel in the University of Texas Field Station Network and its loss would be short-sighted and catastrophic for biological research in Texas.

Development of this tract is not something to be rushed through in an ill-considered manner without time for thought and public awareness and input. I urge you to slow down this process and allow for the considered input that such project needs. If the City of Austin allows for this to be fast tracked, it will be making a mistake with far reaching consequences that cannot be undone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Christiane Krejs



Public comment Re Brackenridge Tract / BDA amendments (Environmental Commission, Oct. 21)

From [REDACTED]
Date Wed 10/21/2026 12:11 PM
To Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>

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Dear Nicole,

Please enter the following comment into the record for tonight's Environmental Commission meeting on the proposed amendments to the Brackenridge Development Agreement. I am a West Austin resident and a researcher at UT Austin, and I am writing as a private citizen. I would also like to speak at the 6:00 pm meeting:

"I oppose the proposed BDA amendments as written. I work at UT's Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL), 2907 Lake Austin Blvd., and I help work with more than 20 colleagues and research staff whose work depends on this site.

BFL is the flagship of UT's Field Station Network, a growing statewide system of research sites that elevates the UT network's standing across the state and the nation. BFL has and should continue to train thousands of UT undergraduate and graduate students in biology and related fields - these are the future leaders the state needs to guide responsible natural resource management in Austin and Texas. BFL also supports sponsored research that brings significant funding to UT. High quality research at BFL informs sustainable management of Texas's natural resources, including control of damaging invasive pests and weeds such as invasive fire ants, tawny crazy ants, Argentine cactus moths, pasture mealybug, and invasive several species of invasive pasture grasses from Africa - all of these pests and weed have significant impact on the financial cultural and recreational well-being of Austin's citizens. Development of BFL would harm all of this.

My understanding of the briefing is permitting a 75% impervious cover across 190 acres of the Bract Tract, and up to 85% in any single developed area. It also allows floor-to-area ratios up to 5:1, with buildings up to 105 feet south of Lake Austin Blvd, which could require demolition of all research buildings at BFL, buildings that UT and its laboratories have sunken millions of dollars into since the 1960s, including significant renovation of the main BFL building complex infrastructure since 2024. Cut and fill and construction on bare limestone slopes of the former quarries running through the steep BFL slopes would be unregulated.

The Bract Tract, BFL in particular, are some of the last wild land in central Austin. BFL supports rare species such as salamanders endemic orchids, arthropods only known from the site, porcupines and white tailed deer. BFL filters polluted runoff before it reaches Town Lake, and significantly reduces flood damage (an issue the city will need to contend with more and more as the last two years of devastating central TX floods have shown). Development at the proposed intensity threatens each of these critical ecosystem services. Further, development of the Bract Tract would also add considerable traffic to a crucial road corridor that was not designed to carry it.

I strongly urge the Environmental Commission to recommend that Council not approve the amendments unless they protect BFL in its current state. The short-term financial and development gains do not come close to outweighing the long-term costs to UT Austin, the City of Austin, Travis County, and the people who live in this area."

Thank you for your consideration,
Colin

Colin R. Morrison, PhD



Pronouns: he/his

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Brackenridge Tract Development

From

[REDACTED]

Date Wed 10/21/2026 12:21 PM**To** Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>; Johnston, Liz <Liz.Johnston@austintexas.gov>

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Good afternoon, I am writing to you today to oppose any development of the remaining undeveloped land in the Brackenridge Tract.

The Brackenridge Field Lab on this property creates opportunities for students at The University of Texas to learn practical skills outside of a university classroom and participate in research opportunities that are hard to come by as an undergraduate student. As an alumnus of the university, the field lab's unique urban position and nearby location gave me and my fellow students many learning and student-led research opportunities exclusive to this undeveloped land. Developing the Brackenridge Tract would significantly impact the education of environmental and ecology students at the university, and remove valuable learning opportunities from them.

The undeveloped nature of this land is crucial to its function as a field laboratory. I urge the city to consider the impact developing this land will have on the education of its student population.

Please pass my concerns to the Environmental Commission.

Thank you,
Paige Bourquin

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Paige Bourquin**The University of Texas at Austin**

B.S.A. Biology

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