From: Steven Wang
To: Garcia, Ella
Subject: Development of Brackenridge Tract comment
Date: Tuesday, October 27, 2026 2:00:32 PM

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Hi,

The rich scientific history and decades-long experiments running at BFL are the reason I was able to come back to my home state of Texas, as is true for many other Texans that have had the privilege to do work in this plot of land. All the disturbances to the site for the last 150 years have been meticulously record kept, which offers unparalleled existing knowledge for experiments. I still remember my first visit to the BFL tract in the senior year of my high school, when I drove over from Houston to see this famous research station for myself. My visit deepened my appreciation for Texas ecological research and helped propel me thru an undergraduate education in ecology outside the state. I then came back to Texas for the unique research history this tract of land offered (and not somewhere with similar opportunities like the damned West Coast…). The Brackenridge tract is in a category of its own in Texas, an urban forest plot with decades of monitoring data. No other institution has something like this here, and future scientific study and University education in not only Austin but the state of Texas would suffer greatly for its development. Harder to do forest data when the trees are underneath 24 stories, which are unlikely to be community approved in west Austin anyways.

Thanks,
Steven Wang

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad

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From: Caroline Chessher
To: Garcia, Ella
Subject: Written Comment for Oct 27 Planning Commission Meeting
Date: Tuesday, October 27, 2026 2:00:09 PM

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Hi there,

I would like to submit the following written comment ahead of the Planning Commission meeting this evening:

"My name is Caroline Chessher. I am a graduate student in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at the University of Texas at Austin. This statement is based on my personal capacity as a scientist and community member and does not represent the University.

I urge the committee to consider that while it is of utmost importance to preserve the historical Muny golf course, this cannot come at the cost of losing another landmark of Central Texas' ecological and social history, Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL). Previous comments have noted the vast biological diversity that is encompassed within this land, which is one of the last remaining representations of Austin's unique ecology. I reiterate these comments, and also want to emphasize that BFL is a living laboratory full of human history, and much of the City of Austin's history is kept there and can be experienced in person - all of which can be read on the BFL website. Moreover, BFL is important to Austin's community today; it is a valued gathering place where students and citizens of all ages can truly access nature without stepping into the deep wilderness. Many of these children may not get the chance to experience green spaces that are managed as wildlife habitat, and thus would otherwise miss out on learning about the unique ecological heritage of their home here in Austin. Beyond the community, BFL has generated countless scientific discoveries and is at the forefront of the ecological sciences. It is of major value to the University as the flagship field station. Without it, UT Austin's academic community would lose access to accessible facilities and long-term ecological research and data that can never be replaced.

I urge the Commission to understand that this proposal is asking the Council to choose between protecting two of Austin's most valued historical green spaces.

I thank you for your time and attention."

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MEMORANDUM / PUBLIC STATEMENT

TO: City of Austin Planning Commission

RE: Brackenridge Tract Development Plan - Statement in Support of Preserving the Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL)

I am writing as a citizen of the state of Texas and University of Texas graduate to urge the City of Austin Planning Commission to reject any development plan that compromises, reallocates, or redevelops the University of Texas Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL). As a Regents Professor and Endowed Chair at Texas A&M University - and a former UT Austin graduate student - I can attest that BFL is an irreplaceable, globally unique ecological asset whose scientific, economic, and educational contributions far outweigh any short-term commercial real estate development.

My own career serves as direct proof of BFL's high-yield scientific ROI. In 1993, my initial observations on the grounds of BFL sparked a research trajectory that led to the discovery of density-dependent warning coloration in insects. Published in the premier journal Nature, this finding solved an evolutionary puzzle dating back to Charles Darwin and provided the long-sought key to understanding the swarming and color shifts of the Desert locust - a pest of Biblical proportions that threatens food security across Africa and Asia.

That foundational discovery at BFL directly launched my international research career leading to global impacts and commercial innovation. As a result of my work at BFL, I received USDA Postdoctoral Fellowship to work at Oxford University in the UK and conduct field research in West Africa. I then accepted positions with the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Montana, the University of Sydney in Australia, and ultimately my appointment as Regents Professor and Charles R. Parencia Endowed Chair in Cotton Entomology at Texas A&M University. My research in Texas has since expanded into applied agricultural biotechnology, yielding seven U.S. patents to date and commercial microbial crop products used to improve the growth of critical crops including cotton, corn, soybean, wheat and rice for farmers worldwide.

BFL is not idle land; it is a high-output research driver. The foundation laid during my time at BFL enabled me to secure over $24 million in research funding throughout my career so far. These resources have directly funded scientific workforce training through the education and mentorship of undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral scholars who now lead in academia, industry, and government - including a former UT undergraduate BFL researcher whom I mentored while a graduate student and is now an Associate Professor of Biology at Tufts University.

BFL promotes an informed public by enabling hands-on field courses in diverse habitats (grassland, riparian, forest, and agricultural) taught directly on site at BFL, equipping thousands of UT students with real-world environmental education right in the heart of Austin. Public science activities at BFL engage and educate citizens of all ages and backgrounds in biological

diversity and the value of conserving dwindling natural habitat in the middle of an ever-expanding urban landscape.

Having conducted biological research at major institutions worldwide, I can state with certainty that facilities like BFL are exceedingly rare. Its unique combination of diverse biological habitats situated within minutes of a major university campus makes it one of UT's true crown jewels. Redeveloping BFL would permanently destroy a living laboratory that continues to generate multi-million-dollar research initiatives, patent-backed innovation, and world-class scientific leaders.

I respectfully request that the Planning Commission recognize BFL's profound scientific and economic impact and recommend preserving this globally vital resource in perpetuity.

Sincerely,



Gregory A. Sword
4308 Whitwick Place
College Station, TX 77845