Outlook

November 4 Brackenridge Agreement - Request for Permanent Protection of Field Laboratory

From [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 1:19 AM
To Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>; Johnston, Liz <Liz.Johnston@austintexas.gov>

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Dear Chair Krueger and Members of the Environmental Commission,

I am writing as a University of Texas at Austin alumnus and lifelong Austin resident to express my strong support for protecting Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL) as part of the proposed amendments to the Brackenridge Development Agreement.

I appreciate the Commission's draft Recommendation 20261104-002, particularly its provisions requiring the University to retain BFL for at least fifty years, restricting transfers of impervious cover, requiring an environmental assessment, and providing the City an opportunity to acquire the property for conservation purposes if the University decides to close the laboratory.

These are meaningful proposals. However, I respectfully encourage the Commission to go further and recommend permanent, legally enforceable protection of the entire field laboratory.

Brackenridge Field Laboratory is not simply undeveloped land. Its approximately 82 acres constitute a nearly sixty-year-old scientific research facility encompassing diverse habitats, established experimental systems, and irreplaceable long-term ecological records. The research conducted there has contributed substantially to our understanding of biodiversity, invasive species, and ecological processes in Central Texas and beyond.

The scientific value of a field laboratory depends in part on continuity. Decades of ecological observations and experiments cannot simply be transferred to another location without losing important research value.

I am particularly concerned that the proposed development framework encompasses the laboratory property without clearly establishing permanent safeguards against future non-university development.

While a fifty-year retention requirement would provide welcome protection, it would leave the laboratory's ultimate fate unresolved. I believe permanent preservation should be an explicit objective of this agreement.

I respectfully request that the Commission recommend:

1. Permanent protection of the full BFL property through a conservation easement or an equally durable, legally enforceable mechanism compatible with continued research and education.
2. An explicit prohibition on non-university development within the laboratory's boundaries.
3. Exclusion of BFL acreage from transferable development entitlements, including impervious-cover and floor-area allowances benefiting development elsewhere.
4. Appropriate ecological buffers and protections against impacts from adjacent construction.
5. A comprehensive, independent environmental assessment before development parameters are finalized.

I support the preservation of Lions Municipal Golf Course, but that effort should not compromise another extraordinary resource on the same historic tract.

The Brackenridge agreement presents a rare opportunity to protect both public recreation and scientific research for future generations. I hope the Commission will recommend protections that reflect the laboratory's long-term importance to the University, the City, and the wider scientific community.

Thank you for your consideration and for the Commission's work on this issue.

Please include this letter in the written public comments for the November 4 meeting and distribute it to the commissioners.

Sincerely,

Stuart Robertson

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Outlook

Nov 4 Brackenridge Agreement - Protect the Field Lab & Conservation Programs

From [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 12:13 AM
To Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>
Cc Johnston, Liz <Liz.Johnston@austintexas.gov>

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Dear Chair Krueger and Members of the Environmental Commission,

I am writing as the founder of Central Texas Plant Rescuers, a volunteer native plant conservation program that uses one of the greenhouses at Brackenridge Field Laboratory. I am deeply concerned about the future of BFL as the City of Austin and the University of Texas consider amendments to the Brackenridge Development Agreement.

Our organization works to rescue native plants and seeds from land facing development, with a particular focus on endemic species, pollinator host plants, and plants of special value to native Texas bees. We rehome rescued plants in public gardens, preserves, and restoration projects throughout Central Texas. Brackenridge Field Laboratory is an important part of our ability to carry out this work.

This year, Central Texas Plant Rescuers donated more than 500 native pollinator plants to the Austin chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas for its spring and fall plant sales. These donations provided community access to 24 pollinator host plants and endemic species of special value to native bees. This is conservation in action. Plants that might otherwise be lost to construction are being preserved, propagated, and placed in gardens where they can support native bees, butterflies, and other wildlife for years to come.

Our use of the Brackenridge greenhouse helps make this work possible. Losing access to BFL through development would significantly diminish our capacity to care for, propagate, and distribute rescued endemic plants, including species that are threatened or otherwise of conservation concern.

I appreciate the Commission's draft recommendation, particularly its proposed fifty year retention requirement, environmental assessment, and provisions addressing the transfer of impervious cover. These are important steps toward protecting the laboratory.

However, *I respectfully encourage the Commission to recommend permanent, legally enforceable protection of the entire field laboratory property.*

I ask the Commission to recommend:

1. Permanent protection of the full BFL property through a conservation easement or an equally durable legal mechanism compatible with continued research, education, and conservation activities.
2. An explicit prohibition on non-university development within the laboratory's boundaries.
3. Continued access to appropriate greenhouse and research infrastructure for university and community conservation programs.
4. Exclusion of BFL acreage from transferable development entitlements, including impervious-cover allowances that could facilitate construction elsewhere.
5. A comprehensive environmental assessment and appropriate ecological buffers before development parameters are finalized.
6. Meaningful consultation with BFL researchers, conservation organizations, and community stakeholders before decisions affecting the laboratory are made.

I support preserving Lions Municipal Golf Course, but that effort should not come at the expense of another irreplaceable community resource.

Brackenridge Field Laboratory supports scientific research, education, biodiversity conservation, and practical community-based conservation efforts. Its value extends well beyond its acreage or buildings.

I hope the Commission will recommend protections that preserve not only the laboratory's scientific mission, but also the conservation partnerships and community programs that depend on it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Alison Baucom
Founder
Central Texas Plant Rescuers
Austin, Texas

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Outlook

Written comments: Item 2, Draft Recommendation 20261104-002 (Brackenridge), Nov 4

From [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 10:28 AM
To Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>

1 attachment (748 KB)
BFL CAMN VolunteerInfographics.pdf;

External Email - Exercise Caution

Dear Ms. Corona,

Please share the following written comments and the attached infographic with the Environmental Commission for Item 2 at its November 4 meeting, Draft Recommendation 20261104 002 on the City of Austin and University of Texas Brackenridge Interlocal Agreement. Let me know if you need anything else, and thank you for all of your coordination work!

Thank you,
Meredith Lovelace

Dear Chair Krueger and Commissioners,

Thank you for your careful work on Draft Recommendation 20261104 002. I'm writing as an individual and a member of the Capital Area Master Naturalist Chapter. Your draft is a major improvement for Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL), and I strongly support its provisions requiring UT to retain BFL, giving the City an option to acquire it as Water Quality Protection Lands, requiring notice before closure, and calling for a full Environmental Assessment Study. I respectfully ask the Commission to adopt it with the refinements below.

For context: over the past two years I've volunteered more than 260 hours at BFL, where I lead the volunteer run herbarium of more than 700 specimens. I've documented 537 species on its 82 acres through iNaturalist, and as the attached chart shows, I'm still finding new ones every spring. This year alone, 41 Master Naturalists have given 708 hours at BFL, and 142 have contributed 4,921 hours since 2019.

Strengthening the BFL provisions:

1. Spell out what "the same conditions as provided by the current BDA" means. It's unclear whether the 1989 BDA protects BFL at all; one speaker at the Planning Commission said a protection lapsed in

2020. Listing the conditions directly would be clearer: BFL's acreage stays undeveloped, in research use, and outside any development area.

2. Require BFL to appear on the BDA exhibits and the regulating plan as its own area. The City's current map labels it "Development Area."

3. Consider permanent protection, such as a conservation easement, instead of fifty years. BFL's value comes from decades of continuous research data.

4. Make the City's acquisition option enforceable, with a right of first refusal, a set time to exercise it, and a defined price basis such as appraised value restricted to conservation use.

5. Define "restrict the scope of research" in the five-year notice clause, so a gradual wind-down or a partial sale of the acreage also counts.

The lakeside trail:

6. I support the continuation of the Butler hike-and-bike trail along Lady Bird Lake, and I understand why the draft calls for a public easement within the shoreline setback. My concern is that extending the trail through the shoreline side of BFL could take about 8 acres of habitat that has been continuously preserved since the 1960s and remains vital, undisturbed habitat for the wildlife there. The easement would also take in existing BFL structures, including the boathouse, boat dock, Stream Trail, and footbridge over Schull Creek. I'd ask that the recommendation require the trail's route and design to minimize its footprint on BFL, and that BFL's staff and researchers be consulted on its alignment, so the trail and the field lab can both succeed. There is already a fine bike path and sidewalk on the Lake Austin Blvd side of BFL; perhaps it could be incorporated into future plans.

Additions and clarifications:

7. A buffer between BFL and new development, with dark-sky lighting standards on adjacent sites. Light pollution directly threatens BFL's moth and insect research.

8. A requirement that stormwater from new development not drain onto BFL land.

9. Naming BFL's leadership and researchers as stakeholders in drafting the regulating plan.

10. Requiring the Environmental Assessment to be completed and made public before the regulating plan is adopted or any development is approved, and to draw on BFL's existing long-term ecological data. My own observation records are public and could contribute to that baseline.

11. Impervious cover is listed as both 67 percent per parcel and a 70 percent maximum. It would help to choose one or explain how they relate.

Thank you for recognizing BFL's value to our city and our watershed.

Sincerely,
Meredith Lovelace
Capital Area Master Naturalist Chapter (writing as an individual)

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CAMN FIELD RESEARCH & VOLUNTEER WORK · BRACKENRIDGE FIELD LABORATORY

Volunteer service hours at BFL

Capital Area Texas Master Naturalists have served at the Field Lab since mid-2019.

SINCE MID-2019

142 volunteers

4,921 hours of service

About 35 hours per volunteer, on average

2026 SO FAR

41 volunteers

708 hours of service

What volunteers do at BFL

Monitoring wildlife

- Monthly bird surveys
- Bioblitzes for the City Nature Challenge and BFL species lists

Building collections

- Site-specific herbarium of BFL plants
- Curating the on-site Insect Collection

Restoring habitat

- Native plant pollinator garden
- Invasive species control

Serving the community

- Bird walks with Travis Audubon
- Tabling at TX Science Festival and BFL Open House
- Greenhouse for rescued native plants shared with schools and parks

6+ years

of plant surveys every 2 weeks

Since mid-2020, volunteers have been collecting phenology data on individual plants, marking which are leafing out, flowering, or going to seed. Researchers are using that data to build better models of how climate change is affecting plants in the central Texas area.

Source: Capital Area Master Naturalist chapter volunteer records. Figures as of 10/30/2026.

TEXAS The University of Texas at Austin

TEXAS Master Naturalist Capital Area Chapter