Outlook

11/4 comments on Brackenridge tract

From [redacted]
Date Tue 11/3/2026 6:32 PM
To Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>

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Dear Nicole Corona,

While I will not be able to speak at the 11/4 meeting due to another commitment, I want to take up your offer to share my comments below. Please let me know if there are other places or ways I should share my comments:

My name is Megan Raby. I am speaking on behalf of myself as a private citizen, but as a UT Austin professor and a historian whose scholarship focuses on the history of ecology and field stations, I am especially concerned about the preservation of the Brackenridge Field Laboratory. Field stations are special places for ecological science. Their value grows incalculably over the years as science accumulates around them. BFL was founded in 1967. This 59-year-old site is a unique, irreplaceable resource for ecological study and education in the heart of our community. BFL enables place-based, long-term research over time, creating the uninterrupted data sets necessary to track environmental and biological change over time—from bird surveys, to control of invasive species, to phenology records tracked across the seasons and decades. The accumulation of diverse studies in one place drives the generation of new questions and research connections that are simply not possible in temporary or short-term field sites. BFL also enables the combination of field and lab studies in close proximity to each other—and is accessible from UT campus by bus or bike. For these reasons, BFL is absolutely invaluable to training for future generations of students and researchers in our university community. Do not throw this irreplaceable resource away for short-term gain. The development or loss of any portion of the field station and its lands would irreparably harm this gem of the university.

Thank you,

Megan Raby
Associate Professor
Department of History
University of Texas at Austin

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Outlook

Public Comment for November 4, 2026 Environmental Commission Meeting

From [redacted]
Date Wed 11/4/2026 9:34 AM
To Corona, Nicole <Nicole.Corona@austintexas.gov>

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Hi Ms. Corona,

Please enter these written comments into the public record for today's Environmental Commission meeting regarding recommendations for the Brackenridge development agreement.

Thank you,
Christopher Li

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Christopher Li. I am an undergraduate at UT Austin and a student worker at the Brackenridge Field Laboratory (BFL), located on the Brackenridge Tract. I am writing to express my personal opinions.

BFL has held a place in my heart even before I was a university student. I first became aware of the field laboratory in high school through its public scientific outreach talk series, “Science Under the Stars.” Since then, it has helped to define my studies and personal career trajectory. In the same spirit, it is an invaluable site for biological research, particularly for long-term ecological research and/or invasive species (e.g., fire ants, giant reed, prickly pear moths, buffelgrass, Guinea grass, pasture mealybug, among many others) research. BFL is also home to numerous projects concerning switchgrass, a resilient biomass/bioenergy crop. Research at BFL is agriculturally and economically relevant, and frequently involves collaboration with other universities, governmental agencies and private entities such as ranchers.

I am of the opinion that the nature of the Brackenridge (Town Lake) Tract was mischaracterized in the initial briefing to the Environmental Commission. The areas on the map designated as “undeveloped land” have not been sitting there unutilized. Rather, they are the site of decades worth of longitudinal, ongoing research and record-keeping. The Brackenridge Field Laboratory attracts students, researchers and faculty to Austin and the university and engages members of the public at all ages through outreach events, employment and volunteering opportunities. Furthermore, as research and historical records accumulate over time, BFL becomes an increasingly valuable environmental and scientific resource for future generations.

I am truly grateful to the commission for its commitment to honoring input from the community, and the efforts it has made to preserve the laboratory in its recommendation to the city. The protections you are asking for are

commendable, and I simultaneously echo Meredith Lovelace's concern about the phrase "under the same conditions as provided by the current BDA agreement," as it is my understanding that the 1989 BDA does not place meaningful restrictions on the university in regards to development for university purposes. A redevelopment proposal for the Brackenridge Tract also came up in 2009 but the Board of Regents voted to preserve the field laboratory.

I also agree with her 6th point, regarding the proposed multi-use trail along the shore. Extending trails and increasing public access is a noble idea, but it is important to note that the current extent of the field laboratory goes beyond the area labeled "Development Area" on the map; it also includes parts labeled "open space." The lab is currently demarcated by a fence along its perimeter, corresponding on the map to the translucent dashed lines to the right of the Brackenridge Apartments and to the left of the Colorado Apartments.

Please do not allow the city to come to any agreement with the university without ensuring the protection of the field laboratory and the services it provides to the community. Thank you very much for your hard work and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christopher Li

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