

Prairie Notes

August 22, 2004

Subject: Gas drilling in Tandy Hills Natural Area

Dear Mayor Moncrief-

The recent story in the Star-Telegram about proposed drilling for gas in Tandy Hills Natural Area and other east side parks has me worried. I live on View Street just across from Tandy Hills. I have been hiking and studying this incredible place since I was 17 years old. I find it an ideal place to go for sanctuary and solitude. My love and appreciation for this little patch of land was the sole reason my wife and I left Arlington Heights after 20 years to buy and remodel our home here, spending nearly \$200,000. so far.

As you may already know, this tiny strip of land is a "remnant prairie". So named because it is mostly unchanged since pre-settlement times. Very few such places still exist. It has never been built or grazed on. It has been abused over the years by people digging out topsoil, driving vehicles in and dumping trash, but those problems have been mostly curtailed. Gas drilling is another matter entirely.

Botanists, biologists and naturalists with the Fort Worth Nature Center, Botanical Research Center of Texas and many other groups have noted the uniqueness of this park land. According to the director of the Nature Center, it is the #1 place for wildflowers and native grasses in Tarrant County. It is the home of many rare and endangered plants found nowhere else in this region, including orchids and trout lilies. Amazingly, new plant species are still being discovered here to this day. It is also the home of many bird species and a rest stop/feeding station for migrating Monarch butterflies. Additionally, wild turkey, coyotes, raccoons, fox and other animals find food and shelter here.

Tandy Hills is a living laboratory. Science professors from at least two area schools have been doing research here for years. Naturalists throughout the state come here to study. It may also play a role as a "carbon sink", helping to reduce air pollution in the area, something I know you to be very concerned with. We citizens of Fort Worth are very fortunate to have this nature area, especially only 5 minutes from downtown. The mere existence of this little strip of land in a city the size of Fort Worth, preserved in such excellent condition is nothing less than a miracle. Gas drilling will upset the delicate balance that has been entrusted to us to preserve.

I pray that you will carefully consider what I have written. It will serve you well to contact experts from the Nature Center, BRIT and local universities. Frankly, I'm surprised such experts have not been interviewed about this matter before now. In my experience, one can't count on oil and gas companies to give unbiased environmental assessments when millions of dollars are at stake.

Mr. Mayor, I believe that for an opinion to matter one must be passionate about it. Otherwise, what's the point. When it comes to Tandy Hills I am truly passionate about preserving and even restoring it where necessary. There is no room for compromising in this case. Nearly all of the most precious natural land in Fort Worth has been taken by dam builders, housing developers and golf courses. A tiny fraction remains uncompromised by men with power seeking to cash in. The line must be drawn here. The trade-off is not worth any amount of money. There must be no gas drilling on city park land. Period. To paraphrase a scientist with the Nature Center, "You don't play soccer in the Kimbell Art Museum and you don't drill for gas in a nature preserve."

To help you better understand the beauty and uniqueness of Tandy Hills, I have enclosed a few photos taken in the park within the past year and a copy of a report prepared by the Nature Center. Please feel free to contact me if you want further information or want to discuss Tandy Hills. My wife, Debora, and I would be happy to escort you and your wife on a tour of the park, if you so wish. It's a great way to calm one's nerves after a trying day at the office.

Kindest regards-

Don Young

