

From: Don Young <donyoungglass@earthlink.net>
To: <letters@star-telegram.com>
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Subject: Tandy Hills Park Drilling

Dear Editor

Back in 1999 the manager of Fort Worth Nature Center said of Tandy Hills Natural Area, "Tandy Hills is essentially a historical museum." A member of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association remarked, "We have a living textbook on this hill." Biology professors from Texas Wesleyan University and Nolan High School bring their students to Tandy Hills to study one of the most biodiverse sites in the state. The Star-Telegram wrote this about the park in 1992, "Time has almost forgotten Tandy Hills." Unfortunately, in 2004 gas drilling companies have found it. This richly diverse and yet highly sensitive prairie preserve must now be protected from those looking to squeeze another dollar out of the Barnett Shale.

As recently as 1999, Fort Worth police were issuing tickets to bicyclists who had damaged park vegetation by making riding trails. The park allows foot traffic only. Now the City of Fort Worth is actively working with private companies to do more damage than the bicyclists could ever dream of. I'll say this for the bicyclists. When told the land was unique and sensitive, they stayed away. One can only hope city leaders and gas drillers will follow suit.

What makes Tandy Hills so special is the preservation of native wildflowers and grasses. Biologists say that this little slice of land is still very much as it was in pre-settlement times. I find that to be something of a miracle! A report by the Fort Worth Nature Center notes that the the quality of the prairie grasses covering these hills in an undisturbed state, are the best in Tarrant County, even better than the Nature Center. Another miracle!

The real eye candy of the park, however, is the wildflowers. Several hundred species strong and still growing. Again, according to experts at the Nature Center, "Tandy Hills is THE best spot for native wildflowers in Fort Worth." Rare and beautiful plants with lyrical names like Purple Paintbrush, White Winecup, Trout Lily, Compass Plant, Stork's Bill and Bluebell dot these flowering hills. There are large masses of Engleman's Sage, very rare in this region. There are even several varieties of orchids. And with three varieties of milkweed, the park is a major fueling station and rest stop for the Monarch butterflies during their annual migration.

One needs to know these details in order to understand why gas drilling should never be an option in Tandy Hills, or any other special area. Tandy Hills Natural Area is a PRESERVE. By definition, this land is a restricted area, set aside for protection of the plants and wildlife. It is also sanctuary for people who want or need a place out of doors to find peace and quiet near the heart of the city.

The best and most beautiful places in Fort Worth were long ago gobbled up by dam building, golf courses and housing developments. The tiniest fraction of places left untouched are now threatened by the very folks we entrust to protect them. Our own Mayor Moncrief comes from a family with oil and gas interests. Our various council

members have their own reasons for listening to the gas drillers siren song. Can we count on them to protect our nature preserves? How about J.P. Morgan who the city hired to manage their interests. Can we count on them to protect our parks? I don't care how "safe" they claim their drilling to be, this is a preserve. Case closed. Take your drills elsewhere.

Tandy Hills and other city parks are by definition NOT places to drill for gas. City leaders need to be protecting the few places we have left, not allowing them to be burdened by shortsighted greed. To paraphrase an official 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."

Don Young
3512 View St
Fort Worth, TX 76103
817-731-2787