

**STATEMENT ON A PROPOSED PIPELINE THROUGH THE OAKVILLE
PRAIRIE BIOLOGICAL STATION**

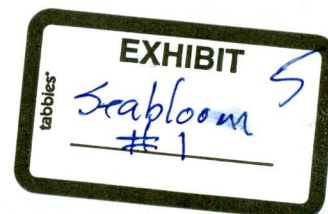
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I was disheartened to learn of Enbridge's proposal to pass its proposed Sandpiper crude oil pipeline through the University of North Dakota's Oakville Prairie Biological Station. It is also ironic to me that the project be named after a shorebird, of all things! If they could speak for themselves, it's doubtful that our various sandpipers would approve.

Oakville Prairie Biological Station was acquired by the UND Alumni Association in 1958 as a site where the Department of Biology could conduct ecological research on one of the few remaining remnants of native prairie in the Red River Valley. Its current size now covers nearly two sections of land, and includes the ND Game and Fish Department's Crawford Wildlife Management Area. For many years the site has served as a research base for UND faculty who, along with their students, have published a prodigious amount of ecological research on this native tallgrass prairie. In addition to the UND studies, other institutions, including the University of Georgia, University of Michigan, University of Saskatchewan, University of Illinois, and Clemson University have conducted research at the Oakville site. And, the site continues to provide a focus for ecological research at UND, including involvement by additional departments such as Archeology, Space Studies, and Geology.

Oakville Prairie is the only station in the northern Great Plains to receive recognition for its research potential by the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

In addition to its function as a research site, Oakville Prairie has provided educational opportunities for UND classes, Grand Forks and neighboring school systems, and the general public. It has been visited by scientists attending



professional meetings held at UND, including the American Ornithologists Union, Ecological Society of America, Midwest Prairie Conference, American Society of Mammalogists, Nature Conservancy, and the Great Plains Natural Science Society.

Oakville Prairie was featured in the March 1988 issue of North Dakota Outdoors magazine as one of the pristine natural areas of the state. To quote from the issue, “The natural areas in this guide have special qualities found only on undeveloped land. These qualities represent glimpses through a window in time on a portion of North Dakota’s presettlement landscape –a living history.”

The state of North Dakota has designated 100 animal Species of Conservation Priority, based primarily on declining populations and diminishing habitat. These 100 species are providing a focus for state and federal agencies as they develop plans for regulation, land management, and species recovery. Thirty of the 100 listed species are known to breed at Oakville Prairie. One more reason for protection of this invaluable prairie resource.

Preservation of the integrity of this pristine site over the years has been a struggle. Various entities have regarded this supposedly “waste” piece of land as a site for disposal of radioactive sheep carcasses, organic solvent disposal, and a recent proposal to construct a biohazard research facility. Now, we are confronted with a proposed crude oil pipeline!

I am fairly confident that pipeline companies make a concerted effort to ensure the safety of their structures. It is in their economic and public relations interest to do so. However, the recent track record of such projects is not good.

I also realize that newer methodologies are now employed in construction. But, wearing a different hat I attended Enbridge’s recent emergency management seminar at the Alerus Center, and it was evident that accidents are still expected to happen.

Construction activity alone will result in serious damage to the prairie. Ecologists believe that under the best scenario with careful restoration activity, vegetative recovery would take at least several years. A poor job could bring in different genetic strains than currently exist at the locale, and could introduce non-native invasive species.

Furthermore, pipeline spills appear to be increasing in frequency, and their impact on pristine areas can be devastating. Consider Enbridge's Kalamazoo River spill of 2010, the largest overland spill in US history (nearly 900,000 gallons), and I understand that cleanup is still going on. Closer to home, there was the Enbridge 126,000 gallon spill in Pembina County (2010), and a 50,000 gallon spill at Grand Marsh, Wisconsin (2012). In 2013, there was the Tioga, ND spill (this one not Enbridge) of 840,000 gallons. According to recent news reports, this one seeped at least 30 feet into the ground. I don't know the level of the water table at Tioga, but at Oakville Prairie it has been at less than 1 foot! The impact on soils and native vegetation would be devastating, not counting flows into adjacent braided watercourses and coulees ultimately draining into the Red River.

I am convinced that there are other route options for this pipeline which would avoid pristine areas such as Oakville Prairie.