



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Charles River Floating Wetland

The Charles River Conservancy and Northeastern University announce the installation of the Charles River Floating wetland, an innovative pilot project to further improve water quality.

Cambridge, MA—Tuesday, June 23rd, 2020—The Charles River Conservancy (CRC) and Northeastern University’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (NU-CEE), in partnership with Foth, an engineering consulting firm, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), is proud to announce the installation of a floating research wetland in the Charles River designed to explore an ecological approach to further improve water quality. Planted with more than 15 native wetland species, this 700 square foot, human-made island is the first of its kind in the Charles River basin and a model for innovative resiliency projects across the Commonwealth. It will be located downstream of the Longfellow Bridge, near the mouth of the Broad Canal.

Born from the Charles River Conservancy’s Charles River Swimming Initiative, this project will build on the EPA’s [Charles River Initiative](#) and the dedication of governments, environmental groups and nonprofits to improve the Charles River and focus on the growing threat of harmful algal blooms. “From our [Swim Park Feasibility Study](#) and subsequent [daily water quality monitoring at North Point Park](#) for two summers, we learned that local bacteria levels have improved to where swimming could be allowed on most days in the summer,” said **CRC Executive Director Laura Jasinski**. “However, algae blooms, which are fed by rising temperatures and stormwater runoff, can release harmful toxins, and are a growing barrier to swimming. To take full advantage of all the Charles River has to offer, we need to address these climate change realities. Climate adaptation pilot projects, like the floating wetland, are an important first step.”

The Charles River floating wetland project continues a multi-year partnership with **NU-CEE PhD student Max Rome**, who also led the monitoring program at North Point. “While development along the Charles has fundamentally changed the river’s ecology, there are lessons we can learn from its original state and nature’s inherent resiliency,” said Rome. “This floating wetland project provides an important opportunity to study how the wetland can bolster zooplankton populations, a natural predator of algae.”

Foth has also been a critically important member of the project team. The firm has provided pro-bono services along with extensive knowledge of Charles River and complex marine engineering projects. “This project has posed some unique design challenges,” said **Scott Skuncik, P.E.** “We are excited to be a part of this important research effort that reflects our company’s commitment to sustainability.”

“The Charles River is an incredible natural resource situated within the heart of the Greater Boston Metro Area offering visitors with a high level of access to state parkland and recreational opportunities,” said **Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner Jim Montgomery**. “DCR works closely with stakeholders and organizations, such as the Charles River Conservancy, in an effort to foster strong partnerships and encourage shared stewardship throughout the state parks system.”

“Protecting Massachusetts’ unique natural resources, like the Charles River, is an essential part of the Baker-Polito Administration’s strategy to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides**. “Building meaningful partnerships at the local level to help identify vulnerabilities and develop innovative solutions is critical to our success, and I applaud the Charles River Conservancy for their work on this project, which provides an important model for future adaptation efforts across the Commonwealth.”

For the Charles River Conservancy, using the floating wetland to increase environmental literacy is fundamental to their mission and one of the main project goals. “The floating wetland not only provides an opportunity for research but also a focal point for engagement around the river’s ecology. Many people still think of the Charles as dirty. That is no longer true, but we still have work to do.” said Jasinski. Although some research and activities related to the floating island have been affected by COVID-19, the CRC is continuing to work with partners to provide opportunities to learn about the wetland. “Keep a lookout for a video game created by students at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School and, hopefully soon, kayak tours.”

The Charles River floating wetland has been made possible by the generous donations from the Heather and Robert Keane Family Foundation, The Boston Foundation, The Sasaki Foundation, Carol and Paul Fremont-Smith, BioMatrix Water and the BSA Foundation. The wetland can be seen from the Paul Dudley White Bike Path along Cambridge Parkway in East Cambridge and the research will take place over two years.

About the Charles River Conservancy

The Charles River Conservancy (CRC), founded in 2000, is a non-profit that strives to make the Charles River and its parks a well-maintained network of natural urban places that invite and engage all in their use and stewardship.

For more information about the CRC, please visit TheCharles.org or call 617-608-1410. Follow the CRC on Twitter [@CharlesRiverCRC](https://twitter.com/CharlesRiverCRC), Instagram [@CharlesRiverCRC](https://www.instagram.com/CharlesRiverCRC) or Facebook [Facebook.com/CharlesRiverConservancy](https://www.facebook.com/CharlesRiverConservancy)

About Northeastern University’s Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering

NU-CEE is at the forefront of interdisciplinary research and education in the evolving fields of environmental health, civil infrastructure security and sustainable resource engineering. Integrating these research and educational strengths to focus on urban engineering, NU-CEE seeks to create sustainable and resilient urban environments. For more information about NU-CEE, please visit cee.northeastern.edu or follow on Twitter [@CEE_NEU](https://twitter.com/CEE_NEU), or for more information specific to this effort, please visit TheBeighleyLab or follow on Twitter [@spatialhydro](https://twitter.com/spatialhydro).

About Foth

Founded in 1938, Foth is an employee-owned, science and engineering consulting firm that delivers technical solutions for public and private clients around the globe. Professional services are focused in the areas of infrastructure, environmental engineering and science, and production solutions engineering and manufacturing. With over 600 employees in 26 locations, Foth is headquartered in Green Bay, Wisconsin. For more information visit www.foth.com.

About the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

DCR is steward of one of the largest state parks systems in the country. Its 450,000 acres is made up of forests, parks, greenways, historic sites and landscapes, seashores, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and watersheds. DCR protects, promotes, and enhances the state’s natural, cultural, and recreational resources.



About the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

EEA seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs works tirelessly to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

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