



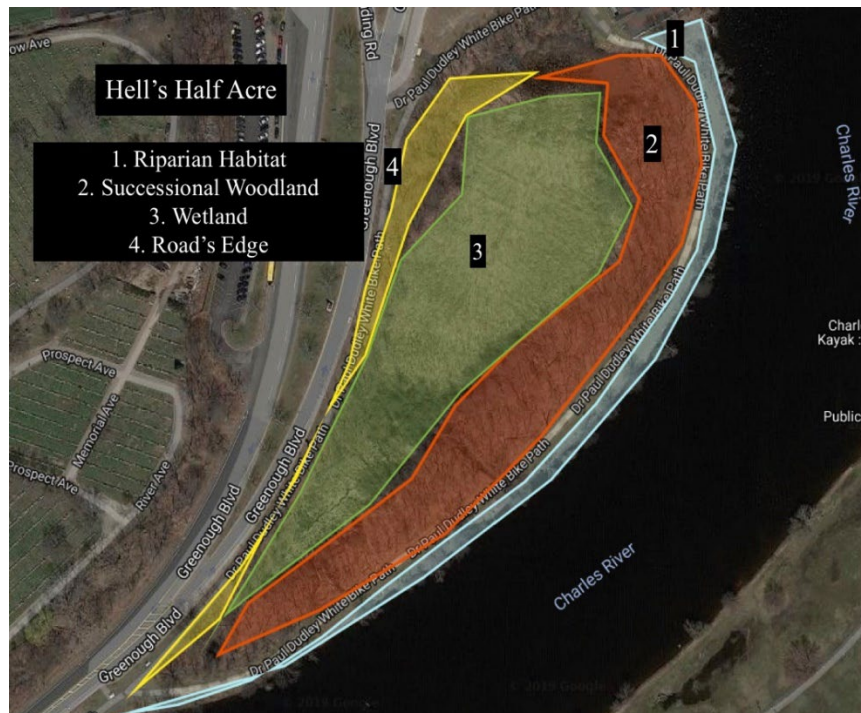
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: Charles River Environmental Watch (CREW)—Vegetation Monitoring

Opportunity to track native and invasive plant growth to determine effectiveness of restoration efforts in fifth year of treatment

Program Background

The Charles River Environmental Watch (CREW) Program is expanding to include a vegetation monitoring arm to the program. The CREW Vegetation Monitoring program is currently recruiting up to 21 volunteers to assist the Charles River Conservancy (CRC) with collecting data and tracking progress on our restoration efforts in a section of the Charles River Parks called Hell's Half Acre.

Hell's Half Acre (HHA) is three and half acres of urban wild, located in Cambridge, along the Charles River just east of the Watertown border. HHA has multiple habitat types, including 2000 feet of riverfront, successional upland forest, and wetlands, in addition to a pedestrian path that connects the Charles River parks to Greenough Boulevard.



HHA is an important area for wildlife and the public, however, to realize the ecological and communal potential of HHA, restoration efforts are necessary to remove and prevent further spread of invasive exotic plants. Invasive plant species limit biodiversity, thereby restricting native fauna's access to necessary food sources and nesting areas. When invasive plant

populations are controlled, native plants will have the opportunity to regenerate where there is an existing seed bank and will also have a better chance of succeeding where replanted. Native plants will not only support insect populations but also produce native nuts, seeds, and fruits, all of which offer essential food sources for wildlife, including amphibians as well as migratory and resident birds that use HHA.

Over the past four years, the CRC has worked in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, using a combination of manual cutting and removal by volunteers and herbicide application by professional contractors to reduce invasive plant populations found at HHA. **In year five of our restoration efforts, CREW Vegetation Monitoring members will help us collect data from the site to help determine the effectiveness of our restoration efforts and track native and invasive plant growth.** The data collected by CREW members will not only inform future management of HHA, but also the Charles River Basin parks and the [Charles River Vegetation Management Plan](#).

About Data Collection

CREW Vegetation Monitoring members will collect data using a data collection form and monitoring data base called Anecdata. Each member will be assigned at least one small test plot within Hell's Half Acre to monitor. Test plots will represent one of the four habitat types found in HHA (riverfront, successional upland forest, wetland, and road's edge), areas that have undergone herbicidal or mechanical (hand-pulling) treatment. The CRC will provide members with historic plant inventories from HHA as well as training in plant identification and monitoring. Members will conduct monthly site visits throughout the season (March-November) to log observations of native and invasive species present, their ground coverage, and whether that has changed since their last visit. The CRC will compile this data to keep an ongoing record of vegetation in HHA. This program will allow members of the community to participate in scientific efforts, further the goals of the CRC's restoration project, connect with their local environment, and meet likeminded community members.

C.R.E.W. Vegetation Monitors will

- support biodiversity, data-driven park management, native flora and fauna
- gain or increase their plant identification skills
- deepen their connection to and knowledge of their local environment
- be part of a community committed to stewarding our local natural resources.

How to join the CREW Vegetation Monitoring Program

To apply to be a member of the CREW Vegetation Monitors, please fill out the application found on our website! CRC staff will be in touch with you to arrange an interview that will help us get to know you better and gauge what site and responsibilities would be best suited for you. All prospective CREW Vegetation Monitoring members also get to attend training sessions and a site orientation. Once those are completed, the CRC will provide members with all the materials needed to care for your assigned sites and maintain email communication to provide any pertinent news and updates.

Eligibility

Prospective volunteers must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be physically able to monitor and perform minor maintenance of their assigned test plot area
- Have a strong interest in stewardship of urban parks and ecosystems
- Commit to stewarding their test plot(s) for at least one year
- Complete a background check and fill out a waiver

Responsibilities

- Perform monitoring of test plot(s) at least once per month, including native plant species, invasive plant species, and wildlife
- Document changes in the test plot(s) via photos and written descriptions using an online monitoring form after each visit
- Act as an ambassador to park users when visiting Hell's Half Acre
- Notify CRC staff directly about urgent problems