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Franklin Park Ecological Restoration: Kick-off Meeting

Presented By:

Paul Sutton, *Director of Urban Wilds & Natural Areas*

Shannon Borucke & Jonathan Bacdayan, *Franklin Park Gardener Forepersons*

July 14th, 2025



City of Boston
Parks and Recreation

Presentation Agenda



Welcome!

Presentation Goals:

- Introduce the BPRD Franklin Park Natural Areas Team
- Discuss team preparation
- Outline restoration strategy and approach
- Provide next steps & future engagement opportunities
- Questions & comments?

Urban Wilds & Natural Areas Program



Program Mission:

- To protect, restore and maintain natural areas in Boston for plant and wildlife habitat conservation and passive recreation

Program Profile:

- Program initiated in 1998 within Parks & Recreation Department w/in Design & Construction
- Serves as land manager for a portfolio of 30 natural area properties
- Work encompasses design, construction, ecological restoration, monitoring, and maintenance
- Scope of work extended in 2025 to include the creation & oversight of a Franklin Park team

Areas of Expertise:

- Land management, ecological restoration, invasive plant management, conservation, horticulture, forestry, and design/construction

New Team Member Introductions



Jonathan Bacdayan (he/him)

- BA in Environmental Studies and MS in Environmental Science and Policy from Northeastern
- Past Experience: The Trustees, Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust, NU Arboretum
- Started in June 2025

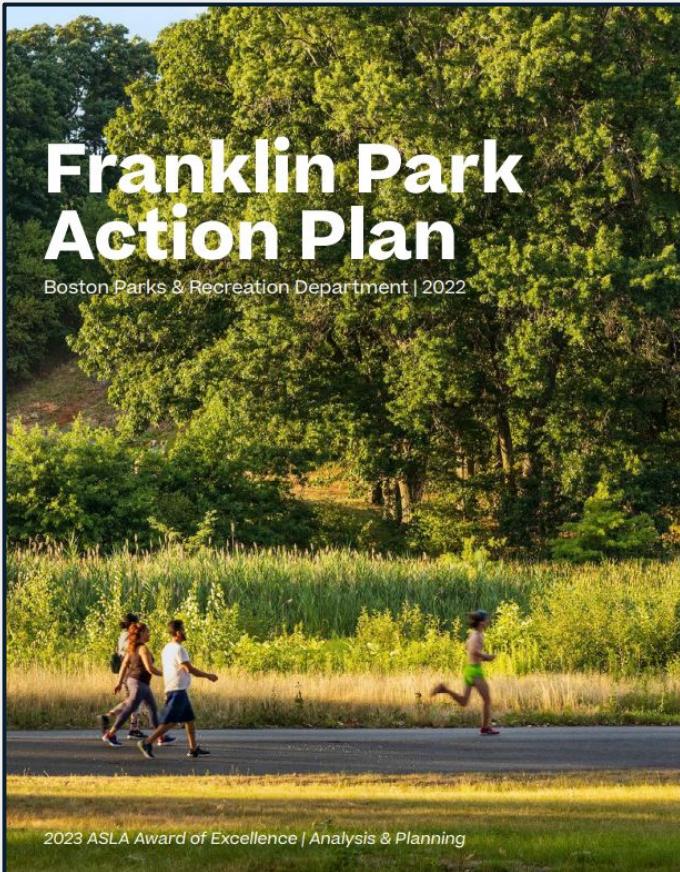
Shan Borucke (they/she)

- BS in Environmental Science: Ecosystems Concentration from SUNY Binghamton
- PINA Certified Permaculture Consultant & Designer
- Past experience: Queens Botanical Garden, Americorps Crew Lead, Boston Food Forest Coalition, Mount Auburn Cemetery
- Started in April 2025

First Steps



- **Read plans**
 - 2022 Franklin Park Action Plan
 - 2015 ENC Woodland Management Plan
- **Build Relationships**
 - Community organizations
 - Other Parks divisions
- **Site Walks**
 - Critical for understanding site context
 - Often done with partners
- **Analyze Site**
 - This site has a long history
- **Map Site**
 - All trails, entrances, edges & access points
 - Current management work areas



What is Currently an Ecological Threat?



Threat	Impact
Invasive species dominate understory	Disrupts growth of native species & limits visibility within park interior
Soil degradation & fragmentation	Invasive seeds crowd out native seed bank; increased compaction & erosion
Contaminated water systems	Damages biodiversity and crucial wetland systems
Lack of multigenerational tree species	No trees to replace existing canopy in the future; creates a major biodiversity loss
Unmanaged edges and entrances	Limits park access, uninviting, and increased storm damage
Increased pest pressure	More threats to species whose survival is crucial for the future
Lack of habitat corridors	Inability for wildlife to migrate within park; reduces biodiversity of pollinators

How did We get here?

What is some of the history of stewardship in the park? What happened in the past to get us here today?



Deviation from Olmsted's original layout with a rapidly urbanizing city

- Circuit Drive & increased vehicular usage
- White Stadium
- Expanded golf course

Past municipal disinvestment of Franklin Park & reliance of community groups & leaders to maintain park

- Shattuck hospital
- New England Zoo (closure of Franklin Park Zoo)
- FPC, FP Golfers Assoc., Zoological society

Inequitable green space access and investment

- The correlation between white flight & redlining in neighborhoods & lower investment in park maintenance

Gaps in Maintenance capacity to steward the park

- Small full-time staff, large area
- Limited capacity to concentrate & utilize ecological-based landscaping methods to manage both recreational and natural areas

Importance of our Work

Why is this a priority? What will this provide for Boston's future?



1. Climate Change Resiliency for Boston

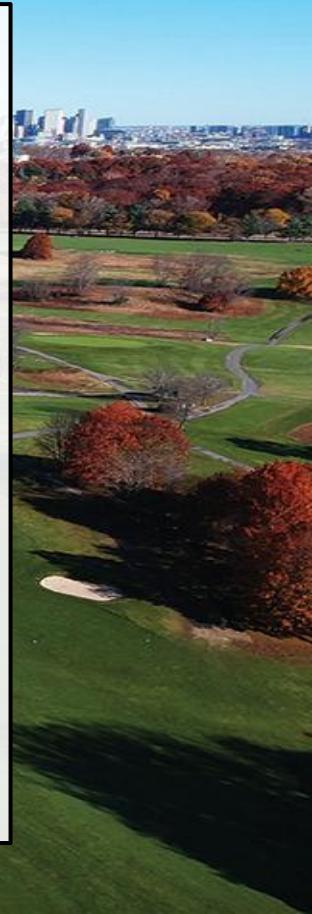
- a. Removes air pollutants & regulates temperature
- b. Regulates stormwater flow, increases overall moisture & mitigates floods
- c. Provides shade and wildlife habitat, reduces erosion, & stores carbon
- d. Communities most negatively impacted by climate change correlate with many of the abutting neighborhoods of Franklin Park

2. Social Wellbeing Benefits of Urban Forests

- a. "Crown Jewel" of Emerald Necklace & Boston's urban forest
- b. Many heritage & legacy trees, some older than the park
 - i. Trees $\geq 30"$ DBH filter 70x more air pollutants than young trees

3. Both ecological AND social values

- a. Working to dismantle historical inequities in green space access and usage in Boston (no longer choosing one over the other)



Community Priorities from the Action Plan



"I think more needs to be done, or prioritized, to improve the ecological health of the park. This is the most pressing issue for our city at this moment in history."



Residents in the five neighborhoods around Franklin Park listed either outdoor air pollution from vehicles or outdoor noise pollution from vehicles as the top environmental health concern at home.

"Recognize that the Park is in several neighborhoods and that every [edge is] in need of rehabilitation."



When surveyed by the Boston Public Health Commission, Boston residents rated environmental quality as their 5th most important concern.

"I think making various entrances to the park more inviting, as well as places for people to gather, such as a market or pop-up would make the community more likely to use the park."

"What is most wonderful about Franklin Park is that much of it is wild and relatively untouched. Don't ruin that. Boston has plenty of lovely sculpted gardens that entice the masses. It has only one Franklin Park...It's the only place in Boston of this size and kind."

Pollution



Boston has some of the highest asthma rates in Massachusetts. The trees lining our roads clean the air by filtering out emissions from cars.

Heat



Boston is an **Urban Heat Island** with higher peak temperatures than nearby rural areas. Trees provide shade and cool neighborhoods, reducing cooling costs and making the outdoors safer for residents in the summer.

Water



Trees improve water quality by filtering rain water and prevent flooding by reducing runoff. Trees are vital to keeping Boston **safe from flooding** by slowing stormwater.

Mental Health



Being around trees is good for **mental health**. They relieve stress, lower blood pressure, and can provide a sense of calm. This is especially important in the city, where there are higher levels of **stress-related health problems**.

Community



Trees have been shown to have lasting effects on the **sense of community**. They make streets more walkable by shading hot sidewalks and foster interactions between people. Communities with high levels of resident interaction are shown to be **safer overall**.

Resilience



As the planet's climate becomes hotter and drier, trees will become increasingly important to **benefit future generations of Bostonians**. The city will improve its **climate resiliency** by planting new trees and keeping mature trees alive for years to come.

Source: Speak for the Trees, "Benefits of Urban Trees"

Our Strategy: Target Priority Areas



Important factors:

- Action Plan recommendations
- Community input
- Capital project tie-ins
- Collaborative opportunities

Initial Areas:

- Long Crouch Woods
- Scarboro Pond
- The Wilderness



Restoration Approach: Consistent, Coordinated, Correct



Appropriate invasive control methods are key

- Using proven techniques for each species
- Sometimes this means targeted herbicide is necessary
- Avoid making the problem worse (ex. excess soil disturbance)

Enabling the native ecology

- Future canopy trees like oaks, hickories, and cherries are present, but are being crowded out
- Understory plants can slow invasive growth once established

Coordination and follow-through are vital

- Clearing invasive stands can take years
- Must revisit sites for treatment and resprout removal



Glossy buckthorn



Knotweed

Here's what we've already done!



Primary work areas:

- Walnut Ave/Seaver St edge
- Vista summit
- Bear Dens and Raccoon Cage

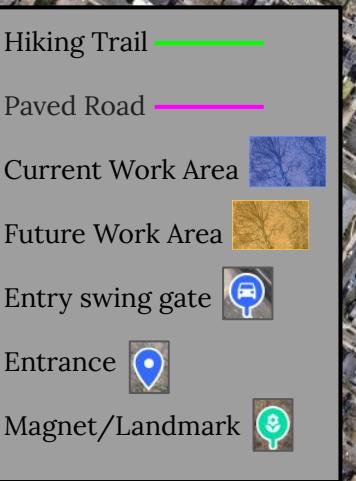
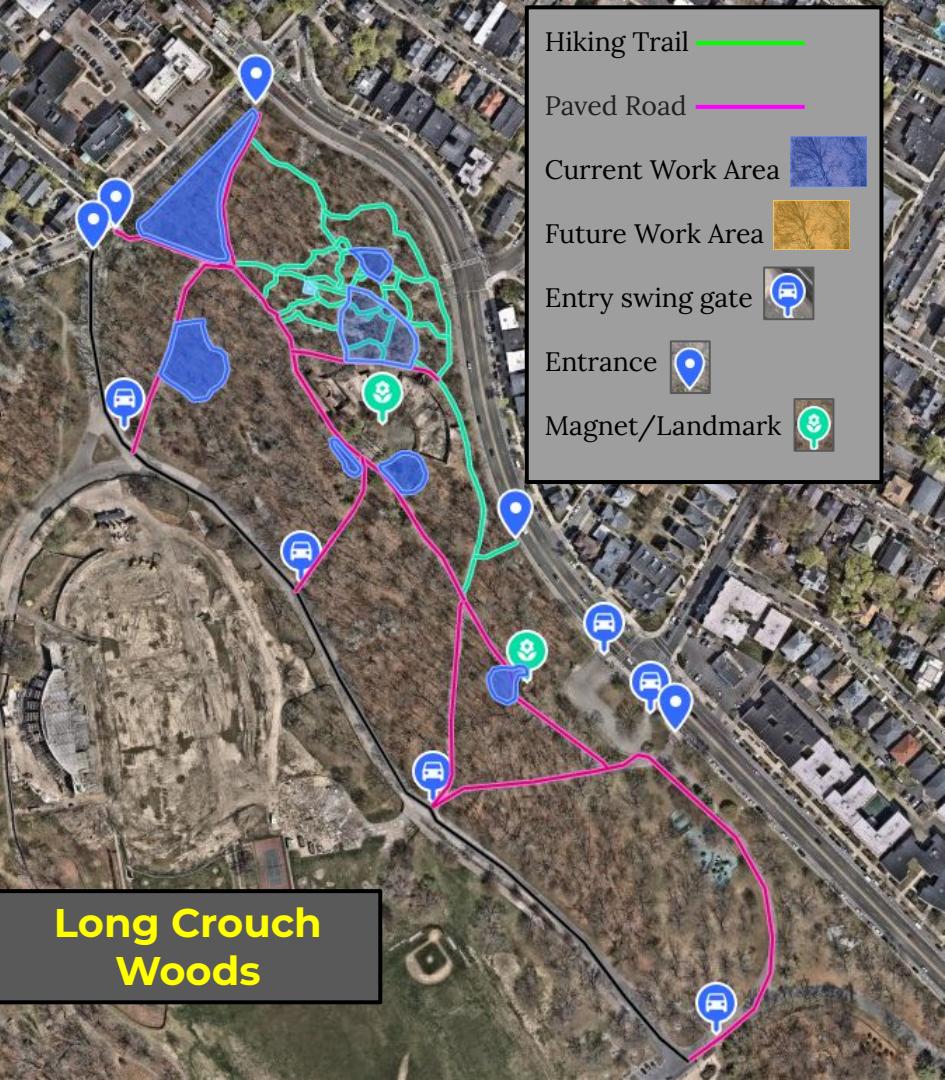
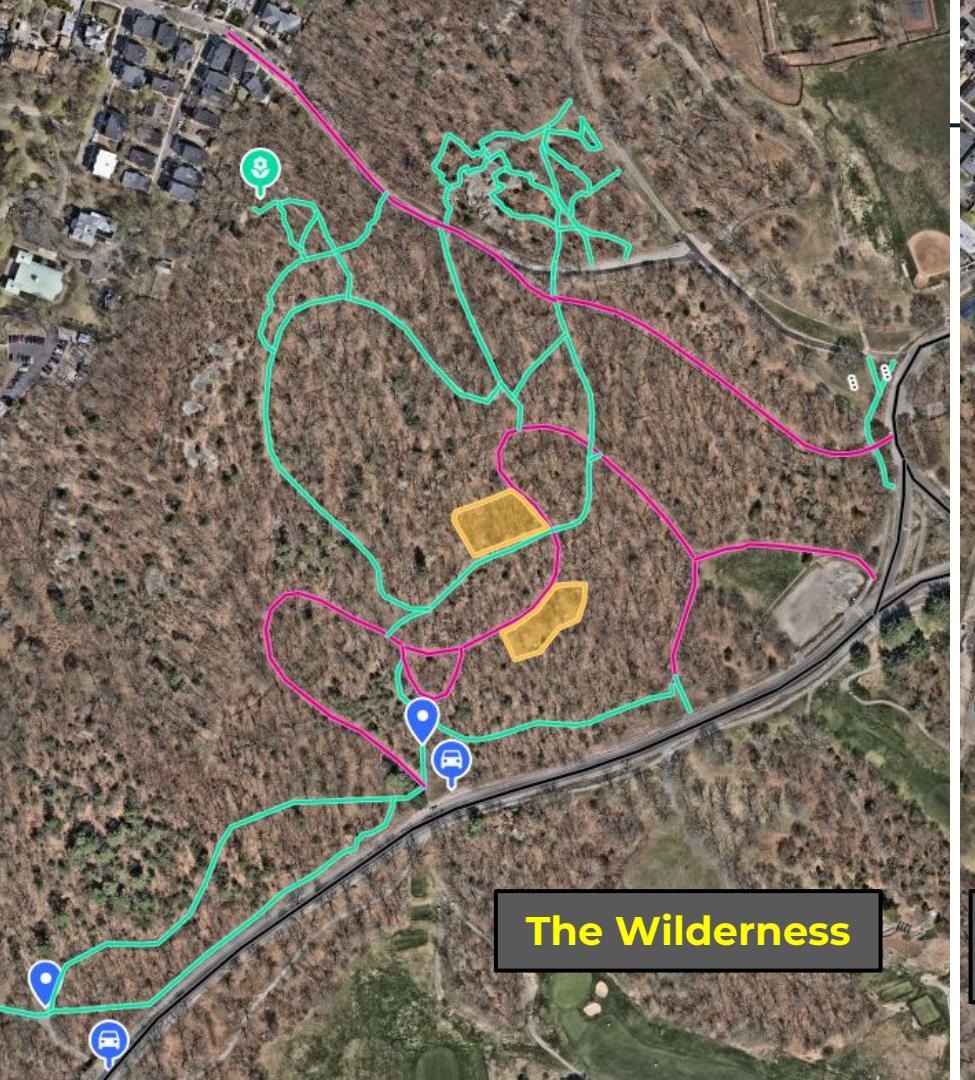
Over 700 work hours from staff and volunteers already this year!

Multiple community work days already

- Deloitte corporate volunteers
- PowerCorps partnership



Urban Wilds staff and PowerCorps members working on knotweed removal in LCW



Walnut Avenue Edge

BEFORE



AFTER



Long Crouch Woods

Powercorps
work area,
7/2/25

BEFORE



Long Crouch Woods

Powercorps
work area,
7/2/25

AFTER



Long Crouch Woods

Powercorps
work area,
7/2/25

BEFORE



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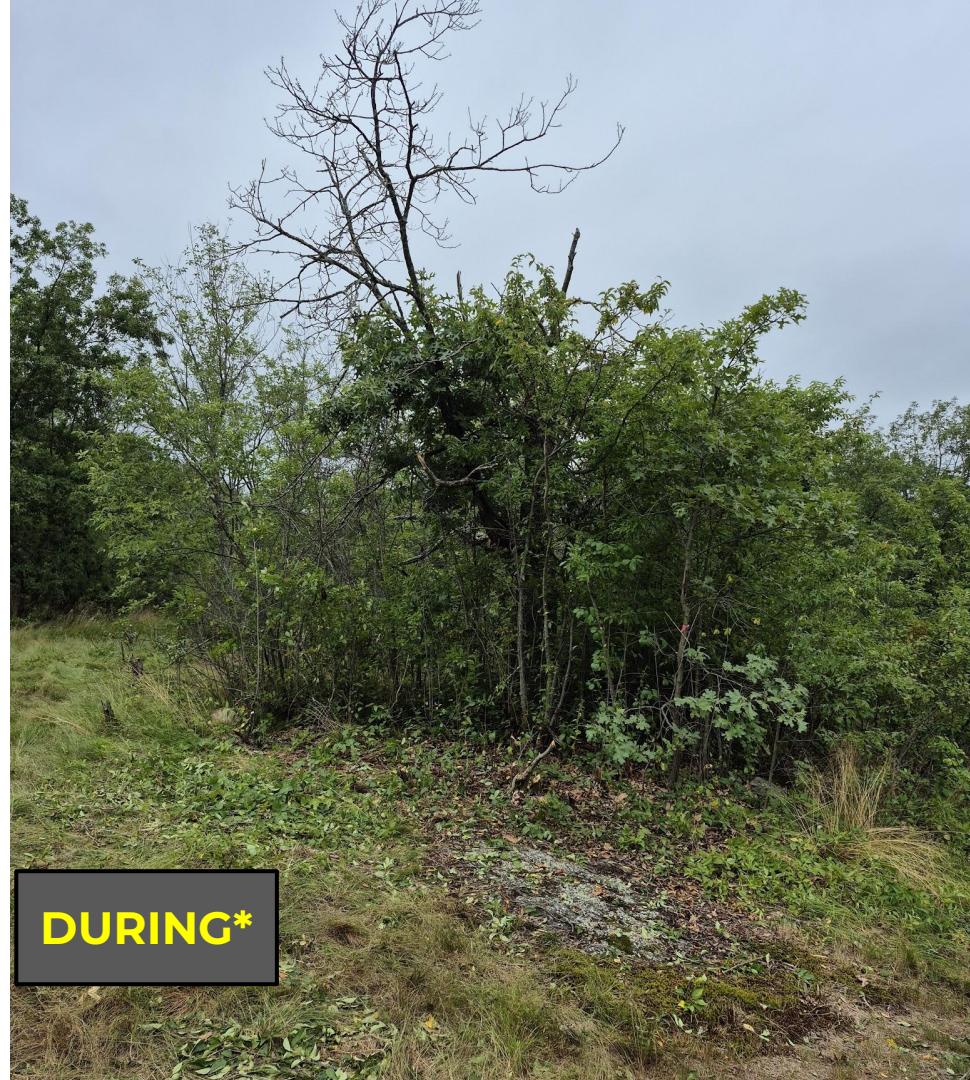
AFTER



Vista Summit at Bear Dens



BEFORE



DURING*

Vista Summit at Bear Dens

Powercorps work
area,
7/9/25

Brush clearing &
habitat wall in
progress

DURING



In Conclusion

Restoring the park will be a multi-year effort, and we are excited to be working with you!

We will hold another community meeting in late Autumn 2025

Get in touch with us:

- jonathan.bacdayan@boston.gov
- shannon.borucke@boston.gov
- paul.sutton@boston.gov

Save the date(s) for future events!

Urban Wilds Volunteer Workday: **Saturday, August 9th 10am-12pm**

Zoo NE Biodiversity Week: Plant Walk in Franklin Park: **Sunday, August 3rd, 12pm-1pm**

A scenic landscape featuring a wooden boardwalk bridge crossing a pond in the foreground. The bridge leads to a golf course with several green lawns and trees. In the background, a large, dense forest covers a hillside under a clear blue sky.

THANK YOU