

Ecological Services for FDR Park

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



An ecological core forms the heart of a historic Olmsted Park reimagined to serve 21st century Philadelphians.

SERVICES

Ecological Restoration

Spanning 348 acres, FDR Park is the largest park in South Philadelphia. Situated at the confluence of the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers on low-lying marshland that had been drained and used for agriculture for two centuries, it had also become one of the most vulnerable and threatened by the impacts of development and climate change. In 2019, an expansive golf course on the park's western half was closed down due to continual flooding and maintenance issues. While the site was enjoyed by visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic, it had become overrun with invasive species. To enhance Park resilience while improving its recreational offerings, the City of Philadelphia developed a master plan for new trails, facilities, and sports field. The plan also included the creation a 209-acre "ecological core" to enhance park habitat, water management, and nature experiences.

As ecological experts on a team led by WRT, Biohabitats helped project partners identify opportunities to mitigate construction impacts while enhancing resilience, ecological function, and biodiversity. Potential wetland mitigation sites were identified based on assessments of groundwater depth, vegetation, invasive species, and other constraints. Biohabitats then developed concepts to restore forested, scrub-shrub, and emergent wetlands, remove and manage invasive species, and rehabilitate a degraded creek and its riparian buffer. This planning took into consideration a separate, 33-acre wetland restoration in the park initiated by the Philadelphia Airport with assistance from Biohabitats.

To date, Biohabitats has designed and helped permit the restoration of a two-acre forested wetland and initiated design of 60 acres of stream and wetland restoration in the Park's ecological core that will mitigate impacts associated with athletic fields and facility construction. These projects will yield multiple benefits, including increased habitat for the Northern Red-bellied Cooter (*Pseudemys rubriventris*), a Pennsylvania Threatened Species.