

Marsh March

Research protects salt marshes from sea level rise

Tuesday, August 31, 2021

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Demetrius Phofolos '23, a [neuroscience and behavior major](#) and 2021 [Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship \(SURF\)](#) recipient, strides across a ditch created by farmers two centuries ago in a salt marsh in Rowley, Mass. Working with research associate professor of coastal ecology and restoration [David Burdick](#), Phofolos is studying these ditches, which are threatening marsh survival by making the marsh more vulnerable to the flooding impacts of increasing sea level rise.

“Demetrius’s project extends our knowledge of a simple solution — cut the grass following the growing season and place it in ditches to catch suspended sediments in tide waters to shallow the ditches and prevent excessive oxidation,” says Burdick. “It’s a

complex problem with a simple solution — but how well does it work? Is it appropriate to use in over-ditched marshes across New England?” The answers are coming, Burdick says, but “don’t expect them to be simple.”

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