

Rethink Connecticut's Tidal Salt Marsh Restoration Efforts



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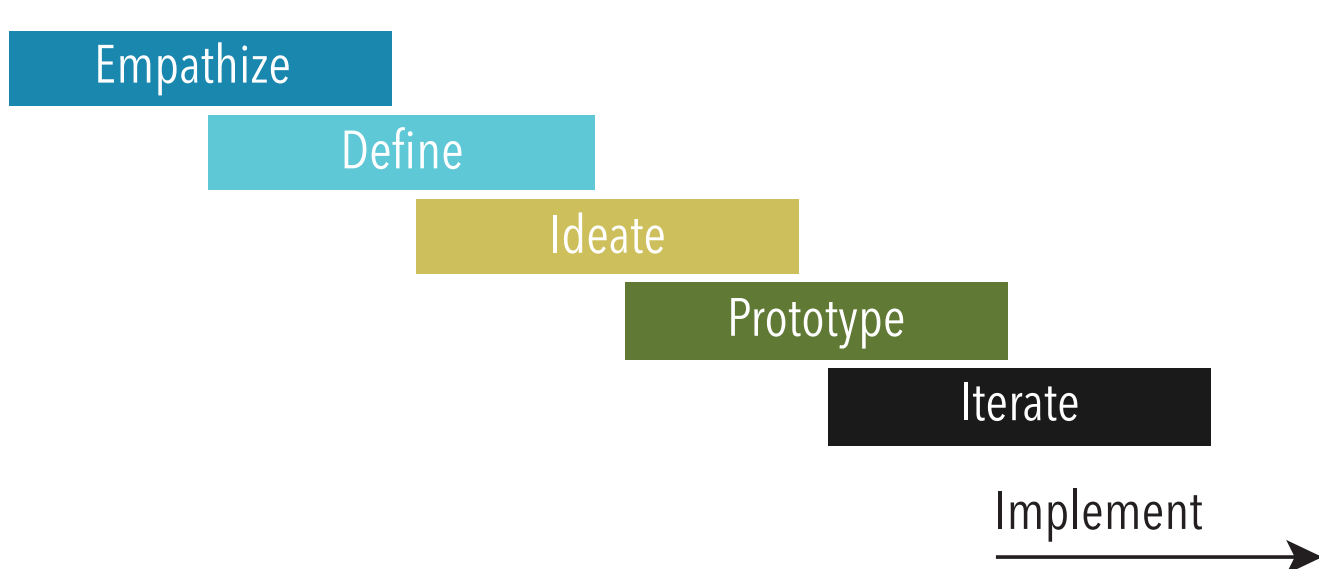
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"Salt marshes are coastal wetlands that are flooded and drained by salt water brought in by the tides." (NOAA National Ocean Service, 2014)

Abstract

Due to man-made and natural events over recent years, the salt marshes that protect Connecticut's coastline have been severely damaged. Salt marshes protect Connecticut's shoreline from storms and provide an irreplaceable ecosystem for the state's entire length between New York and Rhode Island. The Connecticut state government in collaboration with shoreline organizations have developed plans to create processes to begin restoring the coastal salt marshes. Some of these proposals are considered unsightly by shoreline residents and their communities. Without their support, restoring salt marshes will be a far more difficult process. Through the use of design thinking, our thesis will propose solutions that educate communities to the vital need for salt marshes both directly and regionally, to present solutions that they will accept, and to propose ways of assessing the solutions for their efficacy once they have been implemented.

The **Design Thinking** process combines empathy to enable deep understanding and reframing of a problem, creativity to generate insights and solutions and rationality to analyze and fit solutions to the context.



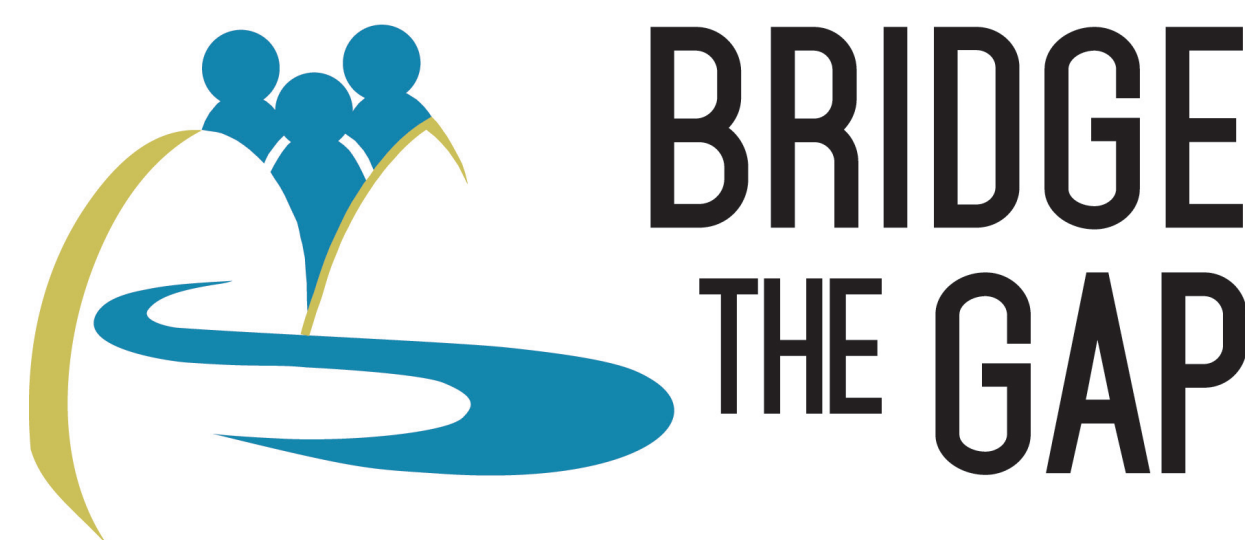
Research

Extensive research, through human centered design; included a survey of coastal residents, interaction and meetings with local residents, neighborhoods, local organizations, state and local government agencies and educational establishments was initiated. Through this research it became apparent that there is a gap between government organizations and the coastal residents of Connecticut.



Solution

The solution is to create a nonprofit organization which will create awareness for the coastal residents of Connecticut. It will take the needs of the government organizations and the needs of the coastal residents to bridge the gap between the two.



Key Findings



Education



Awareness



Action

Education Lack of knowledge and understanding of different viewpoints are key to connecting the different parties and supporting the restoration and preservation efforts of the tidal salt marshes in Connecticut.

Awareness Using news, events and information to promote awareness in the community about coastal salt marshes, making it easier through knowledge for the local residents to become involved in the restoration efforts.

Action Provides an understandable explanation of tidal salt marshes, their value and function and restoration efforts, as an educational tool in itself and subsequently creating an awareness and level of interest to the reader that will provoke action.

Programs

Informative Bulletins

- Flyers, pamphlets, postcards creating awareness within the local communities
- Liaison with the government for targeted audiences/ mailing lists

Salt 'March' Awareness Month

- A month of activities, awareness strategies, action for a specific month
- Proposed solution: The month of March (Marsh).

Property Owner

- Understanding the concept of salt marshes and reasons to protect them
- Creating a connection between property owners and restorers
- Responsibility of different parties and how to take action/funding
- Reason: to connect the private owner/s to a less overwhelming process

Adopt a Salt Marsh

- Similar to adopt a highway concept
- Reason: to create a sense of belonging, connection

Educational Tools

- Creating awareness through schools
- Organized events
- Educating students with a volunteer program for restoration efforts

Recreation

- An interactive map locating salt marshes along the Connecticut coastline
- Providing information about each marsh and the reasons to be respectful of them when visiting
- Create organized meetup groups

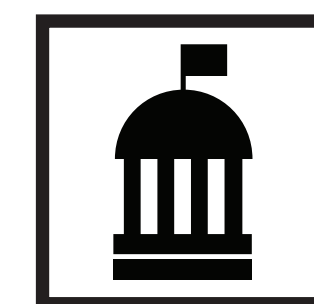
Funding

- Partnering with an organization or company that has mutual benefit ex. Toyota partnered with state parks to promote clean air, green car
- Cause marketing: encourage companies to support salt marshes/promotion

Conclusion



Professionals



Government



Residents

Bridge the Gap is an organization that will be actively involved in supporting the restoration and preservation efforts of Connecticut's tidal salt marshes, and at the same time will create awareness within the community of coastal and inland residents. The research for this thesis has brought to light that there is a need for not only the residents of Connecticut, but also for the professionals and government organizations that are already involved in these restoration efforts to be connected with each other. The individual needs of each entity became apparent but the collaboration of all three of them will definitely strengthen and add support to tidal salt marsh restoration and preservation efforts.