

PRESENTED JANUARY 2024

Shoreline Access Needs Assessment: Results

- RI COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
- RHODE ISLAND SEA GRANT
- NARRAGANSETT BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE
- IMPACT BY DESIGN



Introduction

Recognizing increasing interest in and conflicts around shoreline access, the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) and Rhode Island Sea Grant (RISG) partnered to develop a shoreline access management plan.



Needs Assessment

We recognized we needed to do a needs assessment rather than rely on our own perceptions of what a Public Shoreline Access Management Plan needed to include.

We brought in NBNERR and Impact by Design, and with NOAA funding, our project “Developing an Equitable and Inclusive Shoreline Access and Education Plan for Every Rhode Islander: Achieving Environmental Justice for All” began the needs assessment process.





Step 1: Questions

We wanted to understand how people used the shoreline, where they went and how often, what they wanted to see at ROWs, and what barriers prevented them from using ROWs.



The Questions

1. Where do RoW users currently seek out information about RoW access and issues? Where would they prefer to get information?
2. Where do RoW users go to report a problem, if they do? Do they experience difficulties in reporting issues and receiving support?
3. Which access points are shoreline users using, and for what activities?
4. What are people's perceptions (e.g., quality, quantity, safety, availability, function, etc.) of access points?
5. What barriers are RoWs users experiencing in accessing RoWs? (e.g., lack of info about RoW use, lack of interest in going, lack of time to go, feeling unsafe/unwelcome)?
6. How and why do people want to see access to RoWs change (e.g., adding more bike lanes, restrictions, etc.)?
7. Are people aware that various organizations manage RoW/shoreline access, that they are different, and what these organizations do?
8. Are RoW users aware of RoW policies and general info about RoW access?
9. What concerns or negative experiences are people having related to RoWs? Do RoW users actively avoid specific RoWs and if so, why? Who do people believe are responsible for issues at RoWs?
10. How do people get to RoW access points (e.g., walk, bike, drive, bus)? How far do they travel to access points?
11. Are people in favor of a "dawn to dusk prohibition"? Why/why not?

Step 2: Interviews

Impact by Design interviewed members of different communities/interests (realtor, environmental advocate, community organizer, municipal planner, shoreline access advocate) to ground-truth the questions.



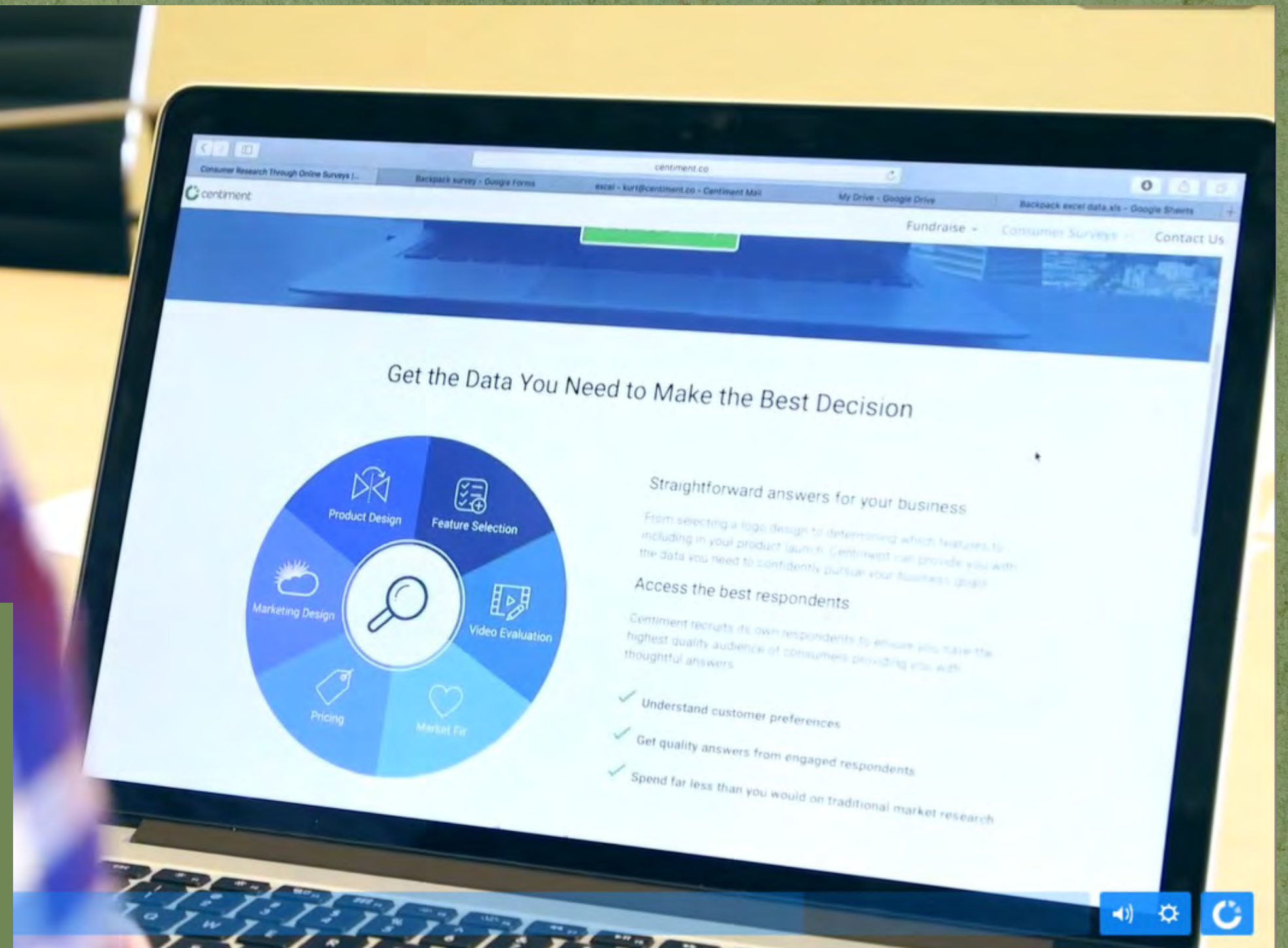
Step 3: Surveys

We developed a community (Q&A) survey and a map-based (Maptionnaire) survey. People who received the community survey could click through to answer the Maptionnaire questions.



Step 4: Dissemination

Surveys were disseminated through online tools Centiment (RI residents) and Pollfish (tourists), emails to listservs and organizations, social media outreach, and in-person data collection at shoreline rights-of-way in three municipalities around the state.



Results Highlights





SOURCES OF INFO

The top 3 **sources of information** to learn more about general shoreline access and related issues are:

- Word of mouth
- Online searches
- The DEM website



RECOMMENDATION

The top 3 ways to make **getting information on general shoreline access easier** are:

- Dedicated social media OR website where RoW users can get all of their info in one place
- A detailed map, app, or guide
- Identifying parking spot locations + their costs



DETERRENTS TO ACCESS

41% of locals said that there are **access points they avoid or use less** than they used to. The reasons for that include:

- There is no parking near these access points
- They are unsure if they're allowed to use these access points
- They feel unsafe or unwelcomed there
- Sometimes guards are blocking these access points
- These access points have a lot of litter or are poorly maintained

Six Suggestions

To make visiting RoWs easier:

- More/better parking and related information
- Better signage
- Access points that are more accessible to all
- An updated map / information on access points
- Better maintenance of access points
- Stopping locals from blocking public access points

Are There Enough?

When asked if there were enough access points for RoW users to access the shoreline in areas they like to visit, respondents from:

- Washington County were more likely to **Strongly Disagree**
- Bristol County were more likely to **Disagree**
- Kent County were more likely to feel **Neutral**
- Providence County were more likely to **Agree**
- Newport County were more likely to **Strongly Agree**





**What's
Next**

Forming Recommendations

The Community Leader Advisory Group will review needs assessment results, provide feedback, and share experiences and insights that will help identify and prioritize policies and actions that should be included in the Public Shoreline Access Management Plan.



Future Steps

- CRMC, RISC, and NBNERR will invite staff of agencies (e.g., DEM), organizations (e.g., Save The Bay), and municipalities to help identify how to incorporate the recommendations into a plan.
- CRMC will fundraise for:
 - Hiring a municipal liaison to aid cities and towns in working with CRMC and addressing municipal-level right-of-way issues (e.g., parking, maintenance).
 - Other implementation activities (e.g., communications tools, signage, other needs identified by Community Leader Advisory Group)



Resources

[CRMC: Rights of Way & Public Access page](#)

shoreline-ri.com

