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Research Team 1-CODE

Defining Our Problem

The current wicked problem that affects the people, animals, and plants is the pond in my neighborhood, behind my house. The water levels in the pond in my backyard back at home tend to rise a lot when it rains heavily. The water levels already rise slightly when it rains, but the water levels rise higher when the village of Lynwood doesn’t clean the excess grass out of the pond from when they come to cut people's yards. When the village doesn’t come to clean up the grass that they’ve cut, that excess grass goes into the pond drains and blocks them.

The pond in my backyard could therefore be considered a wicked problem. A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult/impossible to solve because of its complex and interconnected nature. There are six characteristics of a wicked problem: vague problem definition, undefined solution, no end point, irreversible, unique, and urgent. This pond is a vague problem definition because the mayor, clerk, and trustees don’t personally deal with the issue that residents in my community deal with; they don’t feel like it is a major deal. The rain itself is not the issue because one can’t control the weather; the main issue is the village not cleaning up after themselves. We also have fountains in the ponds, but a lot of the time the village either doesn’t put both fountains in and they don’t turn them both on. This is relevant because, although fountains in a pond make the scene look aesthetically pleasing, the main purpose of the fountains is to control the algae, add adequate oxygen, improve water quality/clarity, and reduce accumulation of bottom sediment. But with the fountains not being in the ponds and not turned on, they are not doing what they were placed to do. The rising water levels are affecting the people of the community, because days after it rains people are seeing dead frogs on the streets of their communities, but also dead frogs in their water wells. I personally have seen dead frogs in our water wells and on the streets, days after it has rained. I personally have seen the fountains either not be on or only one be put in, but even when there’s one fountain on, I can see from my window view and from just sitting on my patio that it is not on completely. When I stand near the pond close to the rock, I am able to see the drains; there are about 3-4 drains total in the pond. The rising water levels also affect the plants that are down by the pond. The water levels affect the plants because that rising water is oversaturating the soil which turns into the plants dying because they are not adapted to standing water. The standing water prevents oxygen which also kills the plant roots.The lack of oxygen causes the plant to be aggravated which leads to the roots not absorbing the right amount of nutrients and moisture. This problem has an undefined solution because since the village of Lynwood doesn’t come back to clean up the grass that has been cut, the drains will continue to get clogged. This problem has no end point because if the village does decide to clean the cut grass out of the pond, the new problem would shift to the amount of water animals that died from the rising water levels would need to be cleaned up around the neighborhood. The rising water levels are irreversible because if the village never comes back to clean up after themselves the clogging will continue to happen. This problem is also unique because although the drains being clogged might be the problem with water levels rising in my pond, it might not be the same issue for other ponds around the world that are having the same issues. This problem is also urgent because with water levels rising, animals in the water get out and make their way into water wells but having no way of getting out, so they end up dying. Wicked problems will always be a thing, but communities and individuals can come together to address them through collaborative, adaptive approaches, and recognizing that there might not be one single solution but ongoing compromise and innovation. In order to fully address the problem there needs to be clear communication among stakeholders, integrate diverse perspectives, and embrace the iterative process, flexible strategies for progress.

